

The General and the Bodhisattva: Commander Hou Jigao Travels to Mount Putuo

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Abstract

Mount Putuo, the Chinese Potalaka, is located in the Zhoushan archipelago not far off the coast from Ningbo. The abode of Avalokiteśvara/Guanyin was not only a popular pilgrimage site, but also played a strategic role for the naval control of the archipelago, especially in the Ming and Qing dynasties. In late imperial China, a number of military officials patronized the temples on Mount Putuo. In this paper we will follow Regional Commander Hou Jigao to Mount Putuo through a close reading of his travelogue (1588). Hou's travelogue offers a firsthand account of how a high-ranking military official experienced the island. As a case study, it serves as reference for future research into the connection between the military and institutional Buddhism in late imperial China, a topic that has received little attention so far.

Keywords:

Mount Putuo, Ningbo, Ming Buddhism and the military, travelogue, Puji Temple, Fayu Temple, Buddhist sacred sites

將軍與菩薩 ——侯繼高總兵遊普陀山

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摘要

普陀山乃位於寧波外海不遠的舟山群島之上。這裡不僅是觀音信仰的聖地，也是海上兵家必爭之地，尤以明、清兩代為最。明清，曾以一些將領為檀越，莊嚴普陀山。本文將隨總兵侯繼高的遊記，提供一位將軍眼中的普陀山。到目前為止，明清甚少有軍官與佛教接觸的記載，本文可以做為一個研究的開端。

關鍵詞：

普陀山、寧波、明代佛教與武官、遊記、普濟寺、法雨寺、佛教聖地

Introduction

Mount Potalaka was first described in the *Gaṇḍavyūha* chapter of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* (3–4th century) as the abode of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara/Guanyin 觀音.¹ The idea took hold in Indian Buddhism,² and a ritual manual, the *Amoghapāśakalparāja*, translated in 707 CE, describes how to paint an image of Mount Potalaka:

In the center paint Mount Potalaka, its form like Mount Sumeru. It has nine peaks, on which there are lotuses in bloom. Its central peak is round and flat [on top]. Paint various precious trees and flowering trees, with rich foliage. Below the mountain [island] there is the ocean with all kinds of fish and other sea-animals. On the central peak paint a precious multi-storied palace and precious trees. Within the palace [paint] a lotus, the Lion's precious seat. On the seat [paint Avalokiteśvara as] Amoghapāśa Bodhisattva, with one face and four arms.³

East Asian Buddhists in China, Korea and Japan were much taken by the image of Guanyin dwelling on a mountain near water, and emplaced the Potalaka at a number of littoral sites. In Chinese Buddhism the most important Potalaka site is undoubtedly Mount Putuo 普陀山, a small island near Ningbo in the Zhoushan 舟山 archipelago.⁴ Established in the 10th century, Mount Putuo became a popular pilgrimage site during the Song and Yuan dynasties, drawing visitors from Korea, Japan and inner Asia. Since then, in spite of occasional periods of decline, the island has remained popular as one of the “Four Great Famous Mountains” (*si da mingshan* 四大名山) of Chinese Buddhism.⁵

¹ CBETA/T 278, 9: 718a–718c; CBETA/T 279, 10: 366c–367b.

² E.g., T 1113B, 20: 498c12; T 1168A, 20: 676a27; or T 1094, 20: 402b8.

³ T 1092, 20: 305a1–3.

中畫補陀洛山。其山狀像須彌山王。山有九嘴狀開蓮華。其當心嘴圓大平正。山上畫諸寶樹華樹藤枝花葉。山下大海種種魚獸。當心嘴上畫寶宮殿樓閣寶樹。殿中蓮華師子寶座。座上不空羈索觀世音菩薩。一面四臂。

⁴ On Mount Putuo, in English see Chün-fang Yü, Chapter 9, and Marcus Bingenheimer, 2016. In Chinese, see Xu Yizhi.

⁵ This is a fairly recent set that was probably not used before the mid-17th century. It is first mentioned in the Putuo gazetteers around 1700 CE (ZFSH 9: 220). Usually the “four great mountains” are Wutai (as the abode of Mañjuśrī), Emai (Samatabhadra), Putuo (Avalokiteśvara) and Jiuhua (Kṣṭigarbha). Ming sources

During the Ming, Qing and even in the Republican era, Mount Putuo's problem was one of location, as the island lies in a strategically sensitive region. The Zhoushan archipelago consists of hundreds of small islands close to the mainland, with a mobile seafaring population, and situated in international trade lanes. It was a region that the central government had always struggled to control. The administrative apparatus of imperial China was designed to rule over an agricultural, sedentary population. It never quite came to grips with the in-betweenness of the archipelago, that neither belonged to the realm “within the seas” (*hainei* 海內) nor the expanse “beyond the seas” (*haiwai* 海外). At a time when sea-faring technology was still rudimentary, and military might could not be projected overseas, the Zhoushan archipelago could be ignored. This changed when, during the Song and Yuan dynasties, nautical technology improved, and larger ships expanded the reach of nations and their armies. From the 12th to the 14th century, the stern-post rudder, multiple masts, and bulkheads made ocean travel safer, but these technologies also contributed to the militarization of the East Asian sea.⁶ The Chinese navy was established in the 12th century and soon became a powerful player.⁷ During the Yuan, Chinese and Mongolian troops attempted to invade Japan in 1274 and 1281, and sent a punitive expedition of several hundred ships to Java in 1293. Less than one hundred years later, Japanese raiders in turn took advantage of the civil war that ended Mongol rule and repeatedly attacked the Chinese mainland, especially in Jiangsu and Zhejiang. After more than a thousand years of concern about invasions from the north, Chinese civilization found itself with another porous border that was difficult to patrol and defend—the eastern seaboard.⁸

As one of the countermeasures against the attacks by the “dwarf pirates” (*wokou* 倭寇),⁹ the founder of the Ming ordered an “ocean embargo” (*haijin* 海禁) in 1372. In 1387, the temples and habitations on Mount Putuo were destroyed by government troops under Tang He 湯和 (1326–1395) as part of

generally speak of “Three Great Famous Mountains” (Wutai, Emei and Putuo) (e.g., in an inscription of 1587 [ZFSH 9: 35], or the *Buxu gaosengzhuàn* 補續高僧傳 (CBETA/X 1524, 77: 514b16 [dated 1647])).

6 It is well known that nautics in East Asia between the 11th and the 15th was far superior to that in Europe or the Islamic World. See, e.g., Marco Polo's account cited in Joseph Needham, Ling Wang, and Gwei-Djen Lu, 465 ff.

7 Needham, Wang, and Lu, 476.

8 This third-border is discussed by Bodo Wiethoff.

9 Originally a designation for Japanese pirates (from “dwarf country”: *woguo* 倭國 an older, pejorative name for Japan in Chinese sources).

the campaign against pirates, and all monks and Buddhist images were moved to temples on the mainland. In 1393 a small naval garrison, manned with a hundred soldiers, was established on the island.¹⁰ With that began the military presence on Mount Putuo, which continues today.¹¹ Between circa 1390 and 1570, there was next to no Buddhist activity at Mount Putuo. In the Wanli reign (1573–1620), the island experienced a “late Ming revival,” and the temple complexes that had been destroyed two hundred years earlier were rebuilt and expanded.

Mount Putuo flourished until dynastic change again caught up with it. Events in the Ming-Qing transition in the 17th century mirrored the troubles of the Yuan-Ming transition in 14th century. With the central authorities tied up in extensive campaigns on the mainland, piracy and armed conflict increased on the eastern seaboard. Ming pretenders and European privateers all used the disorienting geography of the archipelago to further their interests. In 1671, the Kangxi emperor (r. 1661–1722) followed Ming precedent and ordered another ocean embargo. Again the monks of Mount Putuo were moved to the mainland. However, this time around the caesura was relatively short and an “early Qing revival” took place soon after embargo was lifted in 1684. Kangxi himself energetically supported the reconstruction of Mount Putuo as part of his campaign to assert imperial control over the seaboard. After Taiwan was conquered and integrated into the empire in 1683, the coastal border was generally under the control of the central government, with the European traders a minor irritant. In the 19th century, the opium trade again widened the scope of illegal trading in the eastern seaboard. The violence that came with the drug trade culminated in the Opium Wars and the Western interventions in the Taiping civil war. It introduced China to a new world order of national states, many of which met and encroached on China’s sea frontier.

Due to its location it is of no surprise that, like none of the other three “great and famous mountains,” strategic concerns influenced Mount Putuo’s history. Yet, it was not only the periods of decline that were caused by violence and armed conflict. The periods of revival and recovery too were often due to interventions by the military. A look into the “late Ming” as well as the “early Qing” revival reveals that on both occasions military officials

¹⁰ Wang Liansheng Gazetteer, 1077.

¹¹ The Chinese military controls the southwestern part of the island today. Its infrastructure exists parallel to and in competition with that of a burgeoning tourism industry. Most conspicuously, it lays claim to the tallest peaks of the island.

were involved at crucial junctures in the rebuilding and reconstruction of the temple sites.

In the early Qing a succession of Regional Commanders of the Dinghai garrison (*Dinghai zongbing* 定海總兵)—Huang Dalai 黃大來 (d. 1690), Lan Li 藍理 (1649–1720) and Shi Shibiao 施世驃 (1667–1721)—patronized Mount Putuo. I have discussed their role in the “early Qing revival” of Mount Putuo elsewhere, and focus here on the late Ming and a case study of Commander Hou Jigao 侯繼高 (1533–1602). The revival of Mount Putuo in the late Ming was realized against considerable opposition from conservative Confucian literati and members of the military.¹² After a fire in 1593 had destroyed Puji Temple 普濟寺, the main monastery on the island, the anti-Putuo clique submitted several petitions to the throne trying to prevent the temple from being rebuilt. However, a coalition of local military officials and literati, the eunuchs, and the empress dowager prevailed on the Wanli emperor, who came out in strong support for the rebuilding of the Puji Temple and the reestablishment of Mount Putuo as a pilgrimage site.

In the context of the debate surrounding Mount Putuo, the site had a strong supporter in Commander Hou Jigao.¹³ In 1588–89, Hou commissioned the poet and playwright Tu Long 屠隆 (1543–1605) with the compilation of the first gazetteer of Mount Putuo since the late Yuan dynasty. The compilation of a temple gazetteer (*sizhi* 寺志 or *shanzhi* 山志)¹⁴ asserted Mount Putuo’s historic position as a Buddhist sacred site. The compilation of the Hou-Tu Gazetteer was not merely an exercise in local history, but sought to confirm the reestablishment of Mount Putuo in the cultural geography of the archipelago.

¹² For a detailed account, see Kazuharu Ishino.

¹³ I use the title (Regional) “Commander” of Dinghai (*Dinghai zongbing* 定海總兵) here, since that was Hou’s rank when he wrote his travelogue. As for his actual responsibilities and the rank he held in his later career, it is equally correct to call him General, or perhaps Admiral.

¹⁴ Gazetteers are a distinct genre of Chinese historiography. Itself a container format, gazetteer compilers gather texts from different genres and add commentaries, prefaces and postscripts. Thus gazetteers contain different types of texts pertaining to a single site or region. In addition to topographic descriptions, they include poems, biographies, essays, timelines, maps and travelogues. For an overview of the corpus of temple gazetteers see Marcus Bingenheimer, “Bibliographical Notes on Buddhist Temple Gazetteers.”

Within this gazetteer¹⁵ we find Commander Hou's travelogue of a journey to Mount Putuo in 1588: the "Account of a Journey to Mount Potalaka" (*You Butuoluojiashan ji* 遊補陀洛迦山記). Travelogues are not only valuable for the historical description they offer, but are a precious source for understanding religious attitudes at a certain time and place. In his translation and analysis of Zhang Shangyin's 張商英 (1043–1121) account of a journey to Wutai Shan 五臺山, Robert Gimello comments on exploring religious phenomena "as they have been thoughtfully related and self-consciously interpreted by certain individuals who actually experienced them."¹⁶ What is true for religious phenomena in general is especially relevant for the experience of religious sites. Here, too, modes of action and description are conditioned by tropes and patterns provided by the wider cultural discourse about these sites, and although putative eyewitness reports often cannot be taken at face value, there is reason to privilege this particular genre to sharpen our understanding of the past. Commander Hou, frames his visit to Mount Putuo as part of a military inspection tour, not a pilgrimage, but visits the island's temples and numinous sites in the same order as a pilgrim would have done.

Commander Hou Travels to Mount Putuo

Biographical information about Commander Hou at first seemed hard to come by, as his name does not appear in any print biographical dictionary or index.¹⁷ However, as is so often the case now, an online search quickly produced his life dates and a biographical sketch.¹⁸

¹⁵ Hou-Tu Gazetteer, Fasc. 3: 5 ff.

¹⁶ Gimello, 90.

¹⁷ In addition to all the biographical reference works for the period listed in Endymion Wilkinson (893f), such as L. Carrington Goodrich, etc., I have consulted the *Mingdai difangzhi zhuanji suoyin* 明代地方志傳記索引, with more than 30,000+ entries from 299 gazetteers, to no avail.

¹⁸ A simple online search revealed a biography that originated on a blog (<http://www.liuxilife.com/bbs/read.php?tid=13169>, accessed Dec. 2011). The message was first posted 2010.05.05 and was subsequently copied to other sites (crucially to Baidu Baike 百度百科, the then largest online Chinese encyclopedia (baike.baidu.com)) and edited. When we contacted the author of the original blog post, he turned out to be Hou Yaoming 侯耀明 (1938–2011), a private historian and a descendant of Hou Jigao, who used the published collection of remaining Ming dynasty archives (*Zhongguo mingchao dang'an*

Hou Jigao came from an illustrious family of military officials that for several generations had been in charge of the Jinshan 金山 coastal region near Shanghai. He was a seventh generation descendant of Hou Lin 侯林 (d.u.), who had taken part in Zhu Yuanzhang's 朱元璋 (r. 1368–1398) uprising that resulted in the fall of the Yuan, and that had established Zhu Yuanzhang as the first emperor of the Ming. For his services Hou Lin was rewarded with the title of Assistant Commander (Rank 4a) in 1379.¹⁹ Military office being hereditary in the Ming,²⁰ his male descendants all held military positions, some—such as Hou Jigao—with distinction. Hou Jigao's patriotic rhetoric in his travelogue, as well as in the postscript of his Putuo Gazetteer,²¹ is not merely rhetorical, but an intrinsic part of his family history.

As a young man, Hou Jigao took part in the campaigns against the so-called “Japanese Pirates” (*wokou* 倭寇), who are mentioned several times in the account below. He fought under Qi Jiguang 戚繼光 (1528–1588), one of most effective and successful Ming generals, who might have been his role model. Like Qi Jiguang, who wrote poetry and essays next to military treatises, Hou was not only a successful general, but also a man of letters. Apart from his role in the edition of the first Ming dynasty Putuo gazetteer, he is the author of some of Mount Putuo's most emblematic inscriptions, from the large “*Tianhai Foguo* 天海佛國,” to the eulogy on the engraved Guanyin image kept in the Yangzhi Temple 楊枝庵.²² In addition to the texts preserved in the Hou-Tu Gazetteer, two more of his works have survived. The first, the “Report on the Defenses of Zhejiang” (*Quanzhe bingzhi* 全浙兵制) (1593) describes the coastal defenses in great detail, down to the price of nails needed

zonghui 中國明朝檔案總匯) as well as unpublished material from clan histories and local libraries in Zhoushan for his research in family history. The biography in the original post titled *Hou Jigao Zhuan* 侯繼高傳 is based on thorough research and contains an overview and a number of important details concerning Hou's career especially regarding his relationship to religion (this part was deleted in the Baidu entry). In the meanwhile, a posthumous private edition of the Hou Family history by Hou Yaoming, *Jinshan xiang Houshi jiazupu* 金山鄉侯氏家族譜 (Privately published, 2012), has reached me, which collects still more sources on Hou Jigao and his father.

¹⁹ Hou Yaoming, 81.

²⁰ Hucker, 78.

²¹ Hou-Tu Gazetteer, after Fasc. 6: no page number.

²² The *tianhai foguo* is located on the trail from the Fayu to the Huiji Temple. Photos are widely available on the internet. Hou Jigao has left more inscriptions on Putuo and other islands, but the main surviving example of his accomplished calligraphy is the postscript to the Hou-Tu Gazetteer (after Fasc. 6).

to build ships. The second work, “An Account of the Customs of Japan” (*Riben fengtu ji* 日本風土記), is an important Ming dynasty ethnography of Japan. It offers a concise and well researched account of Japan, including a Japanese reader and an illustrated description of Shōgi 将棋 rules.²³ The *Riben fengtu ji* shows the powerful Commander as a rather gentle, curious person, who carefully and playfully collects what is essentially strategic information. Hou’s career was by all accounts successful—at one point he was ranked 2A in the hierarchy of the imperial bureaucracy. He fought in battles against pirates into his sixties and, perhaps more difficult, survived an impeachment attempt in 1591 without major damage to his career.²⁴

“An Account of a Journey to Mount Putuo” was written some days after his second journey to the island in 1588.²⁵ It describes Mount Putuo through the eyes of someone who had greatly influenced its history.

An Account of a Journey to Mount Putuo²⁶

Potalaka Mountain is a remote island off the coast. It is considered the place where the Bodhisattva Guanyin used to preach the Dharma, and since the Tang it has been famous among Chinese and foreigners alike. As time has passed more and more people have hurried there to pay their respects.

Our family has lived close to the sea for generations, and whenever I heard the elders talk of [Mount Putuo] I felt deep admiration for it. Later, when I took up the responsibilities [of my father], I became extremely busy and worked without rest. I thought I would never have an opportunity to visit that Buddha land.

Hardly did I expect that—as happened some years ago—imperial favor would charge me with the defense of all of Zhejiang.²⁷ [Every

²³ See Kyoto Daigaku Kokubungakkai and Xiaolin Li.

²⁴ Hou Yaoming, 89.

²⁵ Hou’s first journey was in 1587, and his third was in 1589. Hou Yaoming, 90.

²⁶ I translate from the earliest, authorial version in the Hou-Tu Gazetteer (Fasc. 3, 5–11). The text is also included in the *Gujin tushu jicheng* 古今圖書集成 collection and (carelessly edited, with omissions) in the Wang Hengyan Gazetteer. Official titles are translated according to Hucker. The translation and part of the discussion was first published as part of Chapter 8 in Marcus Bingenheimer’s *Island of Guanyin: Mount Putuo and Its Gazetteers*; the material is reused here with kind permission by Oxford University Press.

year] during the spring and autumn floods, I take some forces on an inspection tour out on the ocean. Thus, in spring of 1587, I finally was able to pay my respects to the Bodhisattva (Guanyin) at the Baotuo [i.e. Puji] Chan Temple 寶陀禪寺²⁸ [for the first time], and satisfy my long harbored wish. After I had returned, I wanted to take up the brush and record the event, but was always too busy to follow through.

In spring 1588 there was again a big flood and on March 27th, 1588,²⁹ I assembled my troops and set out on an excursion. On the 28th we left Jiaomen,³⁰ went past [the island of] Jintang, and in the evening arrived at Port Luotuo. The Assistant Regional Commander Wu led his marines and rendezvoused with us. The next morning [on the 29th] we proceeded to Zhoushan where Wu and I went into town to look around.

Hou's account so far is similar to that of Yin Yingyuan 尹應元 (1551–?) who in June 1603, only 15 years after Hou's journey, went to survey the naval troops stationed in the area. As Censor-in-Chief Yin was met by the Regional Commander, who "expected Yin with several thousand elite marines."³¹ Yin's brief trip on June 21, 1603, which included many high-ranking military and civilian officials, was part of the debate regarding the reconstruction of the Puji Temple. Yin was sent by the emperor to make sure his wish to rebuild was made clear to the local officials. Yin remarked on the strategic importance of Putuo, which is located on the shipping lanes to the busy port of Ningbo: "Climbing this mountain, one can point out all strategic points from there."

In general, the military and the religious identities of Mount Putuo were separated in the gazetteers, which almost never mention the military presence on the island. Nevertheless the fighting seeps through: five of the seven

27 Hou Jigao was appointed Regional Commander (*zongbing guan* 總兵官) of Zhejiang 1585. Hou Yaoming, 88.

28 Below I use Puji 普濟, the current name of the temple, throughout to avoid confusion.

29 季春甲申朔. "Third month of spring on the day *jiashen*, the first day of the month." This is probably a mistake by Hou; the first day of the lunar month fell on March 26th 1588, the *jiashen* day was one day later on the 27th. All dates are converted from the Chinese calendar into the (proleptic) Gregorian calendar via the DDBC calendar database (available at <http://authority.ddbc.edu.tw/>).

30 Today's Zhenhai 鎮海.

31 Zhou Gazetteer, 378.

travelogues of the late Ming and early Qing mention pirates or sea battles. Zhu Guozhen 朱國禎 (1557–1632), for instance, relates a story of a “pirate ship” (*wozhou* 倭舟), which was forced to anchor near the eastern shore of Putuo one day before his arrival on May 31, 1617. Zhu reported: “It was all black and its upper parts like a city rampart. No one was seen on deck. It was 15 meters tall and three times as long.” After several days it was surrounded and fired on by Chinese ships, but “the bullets were like sand thrown against a wall and bouncing off again.” When a small boat was dispatched to close in on them, the larger ship shot at it with “steel bullets,” killing five men. That evening the wind turned and the larger ship set sail and left in the direction of Fujian and Guangzhou. Zhu laconically remarks that “our boats trailed it and I saluted them.”³²

Twenty years after Zhu raised his arms in salute to his navy, Zhang Dai 張岱 (1597–1679) relates how, in 1638, the sounds of canon fire alerted him to a naval battle that took place on both sides of Putuo island. According to Zhang, “bandits” (*zei* 賊) attacked fishing boats. In the nighttime battle several dozen people were killed, two boats burned and three were seized. Zhang, always fond of the curious, enjoyed the show: “Who would have thought that by coming here I would be able to observe a sea battle; how extraordinary!”³³

Today, although not mentioned in the guidebooks and obscured on the maps, a large part of the island is controlled by the Chinese Army, including a harbor and the highest peaks, which are closed to visitors. The strategic location of Putuo still plays a role in the stationing of troops in the 21st century.

Hou Jigao continues:

On March 30th we passed the island of “Qinglei Head”; before Qinglei there are thousands of islands, no one can record them all. Continuing further there is Shitongmen, a group of small islands that stand close together. The tides flow in and out between them from all sides, creating sixteen “gates” [through which a boat can pass], which is why the place is also called the Sixteen Gates. Our ship passed via [the one called] the middle gate, which was just wide enough for our war junk to pass through. Left and right ragged reefs stood like teeth. This is a very dangerous spot.

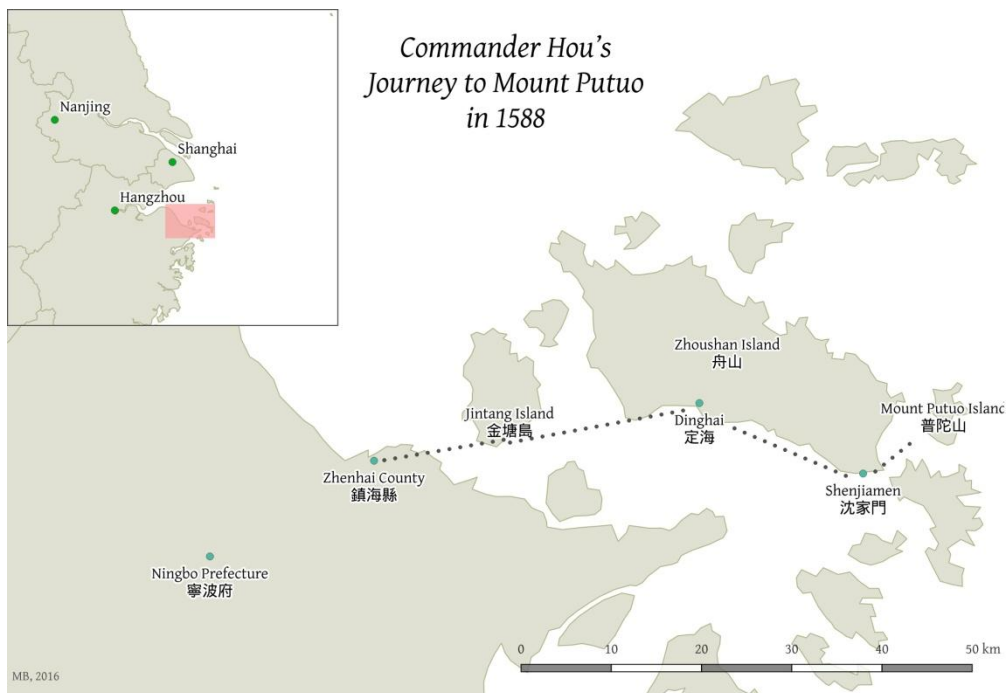
³² Zhu, Fasc. 26: 13a.

³³ Zhang, 50.

On the following day [the 31st] on leaving Shenjiamen,³⁴ our boat could not advance, because of adverse wind and rain.

On April the 1st³⁵ in the early morning the winds were up and our boats sped along. Soon we crossed the Lianhuayang [channel that lies between Zhoushan and Putuo] and arrived at [Mount] Putuo.

Hou's remark on the "thousands of islands" (*qianshan wandao* 千山萬島) that lie beyond Qinglei Head betrays his frustration. These islands were a major headache for him, as they were almost impossible to police against pirates. The complex geography of the archipelago was difficult to model for the navy. The map contained in Hou's work on the coastal defenses in Zhejiang shows that he and his staff did not have the cartographic skills to map the area well.³⁶



Map 1: Route of Commander Hou

³⁴ 29.946716845, 122.309160232. All place names ending on 門 here are small harbors.

³⁵ 己丑. Some versions of the text have 已丑, which is wrong.

³⁶ Hou, 100.

The passage concerning the Sixteen Gates south of Zhoushan Island reveals that Hou and his soldiers traveled in a *fuchuan* 福船-class war junk (the Wang Hengyan, in a *lectio facilior*, Gazetteer has 偃船). *Fuchuan* were large war ships with two masts. They had a large draft that was well suited for ocean travel, but which put them in danger when crossing narrow reefs such as the Sixteen Gates. *Fuchuan* were manned with up to 100 sailors and the party of Hou and Wu likely consisted of more than one boat.³⁷ This is the only hint we get as to the size of the group. The Sixteen Gates do not appear on any of the modern maps I have consulted. They have probably silted up since the 16th century, as in general the shore line of the coastal region around Hangzhou Bay has changed considerably.

The route Hou took, via Dinghai on Zhoushan and then crossing to Putuo from Shenjiamen, has been used throughout the centuries. The German architect Ernst Boerschmann went this way in 1907 as did the monk Zhenhua in 1949.³⁸ Even today (2014), more than four-hundred fifty years after Commander Hou's journey, travelers to Mount Putuo still pass by the same landmarks. Taking a bus from Ningbo, today, however, they cross the ocean via a vast network of bridges that has been erected in the last decade. In a mere three hours they cover the distance that took Commander Hou four days. One still leaves the mainland at Zhenhai, follows the route via the island of Jintang, and stops in Dinghai on Zhoushan Island, where Hou and Wu took a stroll in the city. A taxi takes the traveler to the ferry pier in Shenxiamen. The ferry ride takes some 15 minutes and one arrives at the southern tip of Putuo, not far from where Commander Hou went to shore.

From the Duangu³⁹ pier, walking for 2–3 leagues, we arrived at the Puji Chan Temple, and paid our respects to the Bodhisattva. Then Mr. Wu waited for me at the abbot's quarters, and after we had finished our vegetarian meal [there], we took a leisurely walk. From afar, we saw the staggered mountain ranges, here soaring, there falling steeply. The

³⁷ For an image and a detailed description of the “Large Fuchuan class” (*da Fuchuan shi* 大福船式) see Zheng, 1203–1204 (Fasc. 13: 3c–4a).

³⁸ Though they came via the same route, the two journeys ended very differently. While Boerschmann spent three pleasant weeks on the island doing research on the temple architecture of Mount Putuo, Zhenhua was drafted into the Republican army at gun-point. Boerschmann, 5 and 199–203; Chen-hua, 181–203.

³⁹ The pier was used into the 20th century. Today, however, visitors arrive at a new pier to its west. For the name *duangu* 短姑 see the legend related in the Zhou Gazetteer (Fasc. 2: 30).

evening clouds came, their shapes changing rapidly, too quickly for the eye to follow. In front of the [Puji] Temple, stones were piled up to make a stūpa, called the Prince's Stūpa, because during the Yuantong reign [1333–11 to 1335–12] of the Yuan dynasty Prince Xuanrang gave money to [re-]build it.

The Prince's Stūpa (*Taizi ta* 太子塔) is today referred to as *Duobaofo ta* 多寶佛塔 (Prabhūtaratna Buddha Stūpa). The donor, Prince Xuanrang 宣讓 (1286–1368), was a grandson of Kublai Khan and his gift is one indicator that Mount Putuo received imperial patronage during the Yuan. The square, five-storied stūpa is about 18 meters high and was built in 1334. Though often rebuilt, it has survived the various cycles of destruction and is still where it was at the time of Hou's visit, making it one of the oldest structures on the island. Judging from Hou's choice of words it must have been quite dilapidated by 1588. Inscriptions show that it was restored only four years later in 1592.⁴⁰ By the late 19th century it was once again crumbling as the photos published by Robert Shufeldt and Boerschmann show.⁴¹ It fell to Yinguang 印光 (1862–1940), the famous Pure Land master who resided on the island for many years, to have it restored in 1919 at great cost.⁴² The stūpa was badly defaced during the Cultural Revolution,⁴³ but has since been renovated.

The stūpa has undergone some revealing name changes. On the map of Mount Putuo in the Hou-Tu Gazetteer, the stūpa's stylistic features are clearly emphasized and it is labeled *Taizi ta* 太子塔. Intriguingly, the earliest map of the island from the 14th century labels this pagoda as *Fenfeng ta* 分奉塔.⁴⁴ This confirms that the stūpa is an architectonic allusion to the Guanyin chapter

⁴⁰ Wang Liansheng Gazetteer: 134.

⁴¹ While Boerschmann's well documented photos of his travels in China have been published several times in German and English (1923 [1982]), Shufeldt's collection is less well known. The local museum on Mount Putuo displays some reprints that are wrongly labeled "Major Robert Wilson." The originals are kept at the United States National Anthropological Archives (Inventory Nos: 04513300–04537900). Shufeldt's article contains a number of early photographs of Mount Putuo. One earlier photograph—a view of the bridge in front of Puji Temple—can be found in Thomson (Vol. 3, 28).

⁴² Wang Hengyan Gazetteer, 475.

⁴³ Wang Liansheng Gazetteer, 134.

⁴⁴ The Yuan dynasty painting *Fudaraku san seikyō zu* 補陀落山聖境圖 is preserved in the Jōshō Temple 定勝寺 in Nagano Prefecture. The painting has been studied by Seinoske Ide.

in the *Lotus Sūtra*. The words *fenfeng* (“to offer [one] part”) appear in the passage which describes how Guanyin divides her adornments and offers one part to the stūpa of Shakyamuni and the other to that of *Prabhūtaratna* Buddha, Shakyamuni’s interlocutor.⁴⁵ Either as *Fenfeng ta* (Stūpa of the Offering of One Part) or *Duobaofu ta* (Prabhūtaratna Buddha Stūpa) the stūpa is connected to Guanyin. *Taizi ta*, the name that was used in the late Ming, points to the donor Prince Xuanrang.

South of the stūpa the coast is covered with yellow sand and the place is therefore called “Golden Sand Beach”; it is here where the Bodhisattva appears. According to tradition this is the spot where Purple-bamboo Sandalwood Grove is located.⁴⁶

After about another three leagues we arrived at the Tidal Sound Cave 潮音洞. The stones around the cave soar high, overlooking the great ocean. Up on the top there is an opening from which one can peer down to see the huge breakers crashing into the narrow cave. It was as if a large bell was struck suddenly, or a wild tiger roared. Looking out eastward over the ocean, all one could see was ocean and sky. It was as though the pointed peaks of the Penglai Islands were rising out of the mist. One felt light as if riding the wind, carried along by an immortal. There used to be a building and a bridge from which to observe [the breakers coming into the cave], but it is now destroyed.

Further to the left there is the Sudhana Cave 善財洞, a narrow grotto; peering into its darkness, none of us was able to say how deep it was. According to tradition the Bodhisattva shows itself in wondrous ways in these two caves. [It is said that] if one prays with deep sincerity, Guanyin can often be seen. To my regret I am but a warrior, have not left the “burning house,” and dare not speciously hope [to see Guanyin].

The Tidal Sound Cave has throughout the centuries been considered the most religiously powerful site on Putuo. Most pilgrims went there, usually after first visiting Puji Temple, the main devotional center, as did Hou Jigao in 1588. Lu Bao’s 陸寶 (d.u.) journey in 1617 is an exception. He took a slow route clockwise around the island and reached the Tidal Sound Cave only on

⁴⁵ CBETA/T 262, 9: 57c5–6.

⁴⁶ The “Purple Bamboo Grove” (*Zizhu lin* 紫竹林) is the place where Sudhana meets Guanyin in the *Avatamsaka sūtra*. The addition of the fragrant “Sandalwood” to the name is a mistake.

the sixth day of an eight-day journey.⁴⁷ Some twenty years later, Zhang Dai, who was never much impressed with sacred sites, asked a monk at the Tidal Sound Cave if he had ever seen Guanyin himself. The monk answered that after the bridge had collapsed in a storm the Bodhisattva had moved to the Brahma Voice Cave (*Fanyin dong* 梵音洞) in the northeast of the island. Zhang remarks, “I did not dare to laugh out and quickly took my leave.”⁴⁸

Pace Zhang Dai, for the sake of religious studies the Tidal Sound Cave is a sacred place much in the sense Mircea Eliade has described. In Eliade’s definition, the sacred manifests itself in “hierophanies” at sacred spaces, which is what we find recorded for early visitors at the Tidal Sound Cave.⁴⁹ Visions of Guanyin, or at least the hope of them, are mentioned in the earliest descriptions of Mount Putuo. In a quote from Nanhu Daoyin’s 南湖道因 (1090–1167) *Caolanlu* 草菴錄 preserved in the *Fozu tongji* 佛祖統紀, Daoyin says, “Before the Cave there is a stone bridge, some of the pilgrims who come here and pray sincerely, see Guanyin sitting in meditation, some see Sudhana beckoning them, some only see a pure vase of green jade, some only see a *Kalaviṅka* bird flying and dancing.”⁵⁰

Towards the end of the passage above the authorial voice switches into a more private register. How are we to understand his statement that Commander Hou regrets being “a warrior” and does not hope to be able to see the Bodhisattva? In other passages he speaks proudly of his military exploits. Are we dealing with a rhetorical formula employed by sympathetic Confucians? Or does the line reveal an actual devotion to Buddhism? Would Hou in different times have called himself a Buddhist?

The hegemonic Neo-Confucian discourse from the period after the mid-Song was generally unfriendly towards Buddhism, often outright hostile. In the 16th and 17th centuries, however, various attempts were made to describe the two as mutually compatible both by Buddhists (e.g., Hanshan Deqing 憨山德清 (1546–1623) and Yunqi Zhuhong 雲棲株宏 (1535–1615)), as well as by sympathetic Confucian syncretists (e.g., Li Zhi 李贄 (1527–1602) or

47 *You Butuo ji* 遊補陀記, by Lu Bao 陸寶. First included in the Qiu-Zhu Gazetteer (Fasc. 11: 29). Lu stayed for seven days in the second month Wanli 45 (CE 1617.03.20 to 1617.03.27).

48 Zhang, 48.

49 Eliade, 11–13.

50 CBETA/ T 2035, 49: 388c1. The *Kalaviṅka* is a bird with a beautiful voice found in the Pure Land. Its imagery is connected with the jade vase through a passage in the Chinese *Śūraṅgama-sūtra* where a vase or pitcher in the form of a flying *Kalaviṅka* is used in a metaphor for emptiness. Cf. Yü, 373.

the Yuan brothers⁵¹). In the end, however, Confucian literati remained, in Timothy Brook's words, the "captive audience of Neo-Confucianism."⁵² It was difficult for them to admit Buddhist sympathies, especially if they held government office. During the Ming and Qing the Neo-Confucian discourse was not to be openly contradicted and heterodoxy was a serious, punishable offense for government officials.

Coercion aside, officialdom was widely seen as desirable and success in the examinations was highly coveted. Even if Ping-ting Ho's statement that in "Ming-Ch'ing society's one ultimate status-goal was attainable only through academic-bureaucratic success"⁵³ must be read in context—it was, for instance, not necessarily true for religious believers—the late imperial bureaucracy had certainly managed to imbue its membership with considerable prestige.

How Buddhist, then, was Commander Hou? As a member of the military his position did not depend on the examination system and the distinctive form of Confucian conservatism it tried to inculcate in its participants. This might have given him greater liberty in voicing support for Buddhism as long as it did not affect his loyalty and military prowess. However, there is not much evidence elsewhere that Hou privileged the Buddhist part of his identity. He is on record as promoting both Daoism and Buddhism on several occasions, but nowhere does he refer to himself as a Buddhist. Neither, it seems, did he take up a *jushi* soubriquet, like the Yuan brothers, or his fellow gazetteer editor Tu Long 屠隆 (1543–1605). Hou makes his main pronouncement on the subject not in his travelogue, but in the postscript to his gazetteer:

The rise of Buddhism started in the Eastern Han and the honors bestowed by generations are too far away to be recorded now. Starting with the essay of Han Changli from the Tang onwards the Confucians avoid discussing Buddhism. Since the Daoxue [i.e., Neo-Confucianism] elders of the Song dynasty it has become almost forbidden to talk about it. Those in the military, the warriors, who command soldiers and fend off intruders, they talk of "sternness overcoming love."⁵⁴ This is very different from the ideal of compassion.

⁵¹ Yuan Zongdao 袁宗道 (1560–1600), Yuan Hongdao 袁宏道 (1568–1610), Yuan Zhongdao 袁中道 (1570–1624).

⁵² Brook, 90.

⁵³ Ho, 89.

⁵⁴ Book of Documents, Ch. *Yinzheng* 胤征.

To a foolish person [like me], it seems they all just hold on to their respective truths and have not really started to explain the main principle of Buddhism. In my opinion the main principle of Buddhism is to take compassion as the central principle (*ti* 體) and guiding and educating others as the application (*yong* 用). [...]

When it comes to those expounding Daoxue, none is like Confucius and Mencius. When Mencius said: “If with a lenient mind one governs in a lenient way... [then governance will be easily successful],” is this not the same as [the Buddhist idea of] “compassion”? When Confucius said: “If one wishes to prosper one helps others to prosper, if one wants to succeed one lets others succeed.” Is this not the same as “guiding and educating”?

If the people in this world honestly took the Buddhist principle of compassion to heart, they would do no evil, and [perceive] everybody within China as part of themselves. [...]

As was well said by Master Liu: “Why should it not be possible for a person of great learning to let our Confucian ways govern his actions and his decisions, but to make use of Buddhism to improve his essence and return to the truth.” Trusting these words there is no need to avoid discussing Buddhism out of veneration for Daoxue.

I am a warrior, uncouth, without learning, and do not dare to say I have understood either Confucianism or Buddhism, but still in my days I have snapped up something of what my elders said and have tasted the purport of “compassion” as well as of “guiding and educating.”⁵⁵

Hou’s remark about not daring to hope for an apparition of Guanyin must be seen in this light. It was neither a mere rhetorical device nor should it be taken as revealing Hou to be a Buddhist. Like most officials Hou was thoroughly steeped in Confucian ideology, but due to the power of syncretistic ideas in the 16th century, Buddhist sympathies among the literati, especially from Jiangsu and Zhejiang, were nothing extraordinary. As Sakai and Brook have demonstrated, syncretistic ideas and rhetoric were widespread in the Lower Yangzi literati culture, and statements which express concern that officialdom precludes a more contemplative lifestyle are found elsewhere throughout Chinese history.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Hou-Tu Gazetteer, after Fasc. 6: 1–11.

⁵⁶ Hou’s words “to my regret I am only a warrior” 余愧武人 are closely echoed in a poem by Zhu Yi’e 朱一鶚 titled “Traveling to Mount Putuo” (first included in

Thus this Ming dynasty general could resort to Buddhist rhetoric in his (semi-)private reflections. On his travels Commander Hou finds a quiet moment to “peer into the darkness,” and reflects on his life and the roads not taken. After the moment of introspection at the Sudhana Cave he continues his travelogue:

We turned east⁵⁷ again and after three or four leagues came to what is called the Beach of a Thousand Steps. There was a monk called Dazhi 大智 who came from the Wutai Mountains and took up residence here. He built a hermitage called Ocean Tide. The hermitage had a high building, from where, with opened windows, it looked as if the vast ocean was just a few sitting mats away. The booming sound of the waves resonated in the steep valleys. The name of the hermitage is an allusion to the line in a Buddhist text where it says “the heavenly sound, the sound of the tide, surpasses all worldly sounds.”⁵⁸ Dazhi has attained insight into the mystery and attained the teachings of the ultimate vehicle. It is fitting that he does not stay together with the average monastic, has built his own abode, and rises beyond this world of dust. The summit behind the hermitage had a spring, and Dazhi had ordered his disciples to channel the water down through bamboo tubes. The tea prepared with this water was sweet and cooling. Slowly the sun went down and as the evening settled we returned to our boats.

The fact that the party had to “return to the boats” means that they were not staying in or near the temple compound. This strengthens the assumption that the party indeed consisted of several hundred men. Individual travelers such as Zhu Guozhen or Zhang Dai usually stayed in the main compound at the Puji Temple, which was best equipped to deal with visitors. Lu Bao, who during his eight-day sojourn explored the island more thoroughly than the other travelers, spent the nights in different monasteries.

Dazhi Zhirong 大智直融 (1524–1592) had a special connection with the group of Confucians who were sympathetic to Mount Putuo and were responsible for the Hou-Tu Gazetteer. He had come to Putuo in 1580 and been

the Zhou Gazetteer, 463): “To my regret I have the position of an official—looking back into emptiness, how pitiful seem our horses and chariots in the dust.” 自慚身是宰官身，回首空憐車馬塵。

⁵⁷ The Thousand Step Beach is north of the Tidal Sound and the Sudhana Cave. The party walked along the eastern shore of the island.

⁵⁸ This from Kumārajīva’s translation of the *Lotus Sūtra* (T 262, 9: 58a26).

involved in a confrontation that saw the official Long Defu 龍德孚 (1531–1602) take strong action against the monk Zhenbiao 真表, who in 1578 had become abbot of the Puji Temple. The earliest account of this event seems to be Tu Long's *Butuo shan lingying zhuan* 補陀山靈應傳 which is only included in the Hou-Tu Gazetteer.⁵⁹ Long Defu was sympathetic towards Buddhism and evidently gave his friend Tu an eyewitness account of what happened.

In his report, Tu contrasted the behavior of the newly arrived Dazhi with that of Zhenbiao, who had been in charge of the main temple for some time. According to Tu, Dazhi, who had settled in the northern part of the island near today's Fayu Temple and there founded the Ocean Tide Hermitage, strictly adhered to the Vinaya rules and had gained a large number of followers. The abbot Zhenbiao on the other hand was said to be arrogant and corrupt. People accused him of breaking the precepts (by drinking wine and eating meat) and handing out heavy punishments for minor offenses by others. In 1582 someone sued him before the provincial authorities and Long Defu was dispatched to investigate the matter. On the island, Long divided the temple property and reorganized its administration in order to diminish Zhenbiao's influence. Then he decided to set a warning example, burnt a copy of the *Lotus Sūtra*, had the monks kneel on the ashes and made them vow not to repeat their transgressions. After this humiliation he went into the main hall to pay his respects to the Bodhisattva, but suddenly felt unwell and developed a painful mark on his chest. As he swooned he found himself before a judge. Long was informed that his Buddhist sympathies did not count in his favor, but on the contrary: "if someone who upholds the way, harms the way, he is to be punished especially hard." He was consequently condemned to serve as "Three-Stone-Ox Country Official (*sanshi niu se guan* 三石牛齋官)" in the netherworld, a position that Long refused to fill. While Long's mind lingered in the netherworld, humiliated by a déclassé job offering, Dazhi performed rites of repentance and even vowed to take on the guilt that resulted from the burning of the scripture. After ten days Long saw a white light and finally awakened back into the world of the living. In the following days Dazhi used acupuncture to treat the mark on his chest. Dazhi's assistance was appreciated by Long, Tu, Hou and many other literati. Long wrote a poem of gratitude and Tu, who had been informed about Long's sickness and had worried about his friend, later wrote a stele inscription praising Dazhi. A number of other poems attest to Dazhi's popularity among the literati, so it is not at all surprising that

⁵⁹ Fasc. 3: 36–42.

he is mentioned by name in Hou's travelogue.⁶⁰ The Ocean Tide hermitage that he founded later developed into the Fayu Temple 法雨寺, the second largest monastery on Putuo, which has competed for eminence with the older Puji Temple ever since.



Map 2: Sites on Mount Putuo⁶¹

⁶⁰ The Hou-Tu Gazetteer alone contains ten poems on Dazhi by eight different authors.

⁶¹ Background data by Open Street Map Consortium. Thanks to Meichun Liu for help with the image touch-up.

Later gazetteers of Mount Putuo have omitted this account, probably on the principle that nothing is to be recorded that is in some way embarrassing to either the clergy or officialdom. However, a strong story is difficult to suppress; and even though Tu Long's account was omitted from the Zhou Gazetteer (1607), in 1617, thirty-five years later, Zhu Guozhen was still very much aware of the details and retold the tale with relish in his travelogue.⁶²

Editorial standards for collecting into gazetteers were relatively lax. Both on the level of characters, words and paragraphs, as well as on the level of larger textual units, gazetteers abound with omissions and additions. Writers and editors would have been aware of the fluid nature of non-canonical print literature. Perhaps this was one of the reasons why inscriptions played an important role in defining Mount Putuo. Commander Hou's account continues:

Once I obtained a painting of the Bodhisattva [Guanyin] [in the style employed] by Wu Daozi 吳道子 (c. 685–758). It was unpretentious and elegant. Recently I got a painting [of Guanyin in the style] of Yan Liben 閻立本 (d. 673). This one was majestic and beautiful. These two were both great calligrapher-painters of the Tang. I had [these two works] carved in stone.⁶³ Yan's work was previously owned by the former prefect of Ningbo, Cai Xiaoqian 蔡肖謙,⁶⁴ who inscribed the *Heart Sūtra* on it. The vice prefect Long Defu 龍德孚 also inscribed a verse.⁶⁵ On Wu's work I have myself written a few words of praise.⁶⁶ I brought [both carvings] along and at dawn [the next day] we returned to the Puji Temple and erected the steles on the precincts of the "front hall."⁶⁷

⁶² Zhu, *Yongchuang*, Fasc. 26: 13a–b.

⁶³ A number of stone inscriptions by Hou still exist. On Mount Putuo there are the four huge characters 海天佛國 on the path from the Fayu Temple to the Huiji temple on Baihua Mountain, and a smaller poem inscribed on the Pantuo Stone.

⁶⁴ Cai Guiyi 蔡貴易 (1538–1597, *jinshi* 1568). His chosen name is elsewhere only attested as 肖謙.

⁶⁵ Here referred to by his *hao* Long Quyang 龍渠陽. His title is given as 二守, which is not listed in Hucker, but we know that Long served as vice prefect (*juncheng* 郡丞) in Mingzhou (Ningbo). Long's verse of praise on the stone inscription is preserved in the Hou-Tu Gazetteer, Fasc. 4: 17a–b.

⁶⁶ This verse is preserved in the Hou-Tu Gazetteer, Fasc. 4: 7a.

⁶⁷ For the fate and whereabouts of the steles see the note in the Wang Hengyan Gazetteer, 572. Apparently both steles were destroyed, but a 1608 copy of the

After that we went to the Pantuo Stone, which is flat and so broad that more than one hundred people can stand on it. Perched on the stone over the ocean one can see the sun rise in the far east.⁶⁸

West of Puji Temple steep cliffs stand together narrowly like sliding doors; the place is called Gate of Heaven. Passing through the Gate of Heaven, one comes to the “Place of Samadhi.” Below it boulders were scattered, the grottoes were high and precipitous, so strangely formed that not even a master artisan could imitate them.

Deep within the temple compound there is Zhenxie’s Stone; this is where the Chan master Zhenxie [Qing-] liao 真歇清了 (1088–1151) practiced the way. Right in front of Zhenxie’s Stone stands another stone, called the Stone of No-fear. Although it is square and broad, it tilts to one side precipitously and no one is able to scale it. Next to it there is the Lion’s Stone. Apart from those there is Good Destination Peak, Vulture Peak, and Guanyin Peak. We viewed all of these, but could not ascend them all. This is about what Putou looks like.

Stele inscriptions were an important medium for encoding text on sacred sites in China. More than any other form of text, inscriptions epitomize the process of textualization, through which locations are rendered sacred by assigning elements of the religious *imaginaire* to elements of landscape. In this way the site itself is turned into a text. Epigraphy and architecture inscribe the landscape while becoming part of it. The various incarnations of a gazetteer encode the meanings of a site in a way that is itself location-independent; epigraphy, in contrast, is part of the site. The commemorative stele always commemorates itself as well.

In the Chinese context, epigraphy at sacred sites often also meant political endorsement. Because of the persistent, normative idea of central governance in Chinese culture, Chinese sacred sites tend to give pride of place to texts that connected them to the imperial center. Thus powerful office holders like

carving after the painting by Yan Liben is preserved today in the Yangzhi Monastery 楊枝庵.

⁶⁸ *Fusang* 扶桑. Sometimes meaning Japan, but here just the eastern limit of the horizon. The term is often used in the Putuo gazetteers. Though it is not possible to see Japan (which is some 750 km to the east), Japan must have “felt” close on Mount Putuo, which was situated directly on the shipping lane to Ningbo—the main port of entry for Japanese traders and scholar monks since the Tang dynasty. See Nara Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan 奈良国立博物館 for the Sino-Japanese interchange around Ningbo.

Hou Jigao or Yin Yingyuan were able to put up their own inscriptions, quite a few of which survived. The most visible inscription was probably Hou's four-character calligraphy *haitian foguo* 海天佛國 (Buddha Land between Sea and Sky), which is already attested in the Zhou Gazetteer of 1607.⁶⁹ It is carved in large characters on a cliff near the path leading from the Fayu Temple up to the Huiji Temple 慧濟寺.

Even stone inscriptions, however, were sometimes short-lived. In 1638 Zhang Dai was still able to visit the naming inscription that his grandfather had left at a pavilion he had commissioned near the Puji Temple sometime between 1602 and 1611.⁷⁰ Only sixty years later, after the almost complete destruction of the sites on Mount Putuo in the 1660s and 1670s, the Qiu-Zhu Gazetteer laconically marks the pavilion as “destroyed.”⁷¹

The recurring cycles of destruction and rebuilding are alluded to by Hou as he continues his account:

Ah! More than 1000 years ago the Bodhisattva has miraculously manifested herself on Mei's Peak [i.e. Mount Putuo] and worship [at this place] has grown from generation to generation. When the eastern barbarians suddenly grew restless, this region became infested by those sharks, those lizards!⁷²

In the end the people in charge had to remove all the statues and images and move them to the Zhaobao Temple [at the provincial seat in Zhenhai] and all their huts were burned down. This must be the “great crisis” of which the Buddhists speak.

It is only due to the awesome power of his majesty the emperor and the grand secretary, and the comprehensive planning by our imperial administration that the island barbarians were exterminated, and the ocean provinces were restored to order.

The Buddhadharma is forever bright; in the end, the teaching cannot be obstructed. Therefore, at the turn from the Jiajing to the Longqing era [1567–1572] the monk Zhensong 真松 came from the Longshu Temple on Wutai, and greatly promoted Buddhism, reviving its highest aims.

⁶⁹ Zhou Gazetteer, 108.

⁷⁰ Zhang, 47.

⁷¹ The stele-text is preserved in the Wang Hengyan Gazetteer, 238.

⁷² *Jingni* 鯨鯢. Actually, whales and salamanders. *Jingni* is used here to describe a hated foe (cf. HDC s.v. *nijing* 鯢鯨).

The “eastern barbarians” of which Hou speaks in such an unflattering manner are of course his nemesis, the *wokou* pirates. Pirates were an important “other” for Hou Jigao. Apart from his family history and his immediate experience in sea-battles in the 1550s and 1560s, both his travel account and his postscript foreground his role as navy commander. The pirate invasions during the mid-16th century were mainly the result of a change in Ming economic and foreign policy that strictly prohibited trade with other countries.⁷³ As former trading partners in China and Japan continued their now illegal trade, the Ming government tried to suppress it. Only with great difficulty was the court able to defeat, for instance, Wang Zhi 王 (v.l. 汪) 直, a powerful pirate-insurgent, who led his raiding parties deep into the mainland and was killed after having been promised amnesty.

Although in the passage above Hou directs his ire against the pirates, the actual destruction of the sites on Mount Putuo had been the work of government troops. In both 1387 and again in 1557, government forces forcibly evacuated the island, destroyed all dwellings and dismantled the temples to deny a safe-haven to pirates. In fact, if we exclude the “Dutch pirates” that raided Putuo in 1665 and 1669, there seems to be little evidence that “pirates” ever attacked Buddhist establishments on Mount Putuo. Forced evacuation and destruction of sites were the prerogative of the central government and took place for one reason or another in the 14th, the 16th, the 17th and the 20th centuries.⁷⁴ The latest caesura wrought on the island was the so-called Cultural Revolution, during which almost all temple buildings and inscriptions were destroyed and Buddhist activity on the island came to a halt for more than 10 years.⁷⁵

Details about all these events are scarce. The gazetteers are forthcoming with information about periods when Mount Putuo was revived or flourishing, but much less is said about periods of decline. Since the government was usually involved in the destruction, officials and clerics were well-advised not to foreground it in their descriptions of the place.

⁷³ Huang, 163 *ff.*

⁷⁴ For an overview see the Wang Liansheng Gazetteer, 1077–1084.

⁷⁵ The Wang Liansheng Gazetteer, 1095, states that 17,000 images and more than 34,000 fascicles of scriptures were destroyed. According to photos I saw on the island even some large stone inscriptions were erased and overwritten with revolutionary slogans. After the madness had ended the original inscription was restored.

In Hou's account above, the line "in the end [the Buddhist] teaching cannot be obstructed" (*jiao bu zhongpi* 教不終否) is a verbatim quote from a stele inscription by Wang Tang 汪鏜 (1512–1588) commemorating the re-establishment of the Puji Temple in the 1570s.⁷⁶ It was indeed only after the monk Zhensong petitioned the central government to reopen the island for worshipers that Buddhism was allowed to prosper again. Zhensong himself arrived on Mount Putuo between July 1572 and February 1573.⁷⁷ After Zhensong had gained permission to rebuild the main temple and monastics could return to Mount Putuo, the site started to flourish again. Writing in 1588, Commander Hou continues:

In recent years Buddhist activity on the island is several times what it was before. Moreover, last winter Her Majesty, our saintly mother, the Empress Dowager Cisheng, had Buddhist sūtras printed, images gilded, and temple flags embroidered. The [palace eunuchs] Director Zhang,⁷⁸ and Vice-Director Meng were ordered to take the imperial edict and bestow it on this [temple].⁷⁹

How wonderful to see the brilliant orders all carved on superb stones, guarding the temple's entrance and the peace of future generations!

Nevertheless, the prudent and profound lessons of the wise remind us to be constantly vigilant.⁸⁰ Even though these days under our brilliant ruler and able ministers, peace reigns from south to north and all the regions are free of worries in this time of civil, cultivated governance, since my family has received the kindness of our country, to be entrusted with military duties, how could I not be diligent and alert! The nation maintains soldiers for the sake of the people and from morning to evening I work relentlessly in order not to fail carrying out this intent.

⁷⁶ Zhou Gazetteer, 363.

⁷⁷ Zhou Gazetteer, 139.

⁷⁸ Both might have been benefactors of Buddhism independently of the emperor's order. Zhang Xian is mentioned by Hanshan Deqing as having donated money to rebuild a temple. *Hanshan laoren mengyou ji* 憨山老人夢遊集, Fasc. 22 (CBETA/X 73, 1456: 622b3).

⁷⁹ For details of this gift see the Wang Hengyan Gazetteer, 209.

⁸⁰ This paraphrases two *diangu* 典故 similes in the text.

The bestowal of the Tripitaka set by the mother of the Wanli emperor was an important event in the history of Mount Putuo as a Buddhist site. It is mentioned again and again in the gazetteers as a precedent of imperial favor.⁸¹ The texts bestowed were in all likelihood that of the Northern Yongle edition of the canon, the woodblocks of which were kept in Beijing at that time. In 1649, some seventy years after it was brought to Mount Putuo, the Ming loyalists under the Prince of Lu tried to use the canon to entice Japan to send relief troops to aid the loosing defenders of the Ming. The texts were actually sent to Nagasaki, but the attempt to trade them for military help failed and they were returned to Mount Putuo.⁸²

Through the support of the Empress Dowager a number of Buddhist establishments and individuals gained a measure of protection in a politically volatile time. Throughout the forty-eight years of the Wanli period the emperor, at least partly due to the influence of his mother, remained generally sympathetic to Buddhism.⁸³

The Grand Coordinators⁸⁴ have ordered the realm, pacified the people, and have turned this island into a prosperous place, protecting the country and sheltering its people. Luckily, sojourning here today I do not have to be ashamed. [Otherwise,] had we relied on the peace [provided by others] had shrunk from our work, feared hardships and dodged our responsibility, we would have been at fault.

On April 2nd, 1588, we set out again on the ocean and reached Taohua Island.⁸⁵ I wanted to visit the spot where An Qisheng⁸⁶ practiced inner alchemy, but none of those who came along knew

⁸¹ Mount Putuo was not the only site to receive a set of the canon from the Empress Dowager. Timothy Brook, 206 and 241, mentions gifts of the canon to Hanshan Deqing's monastery and the Guangming temple in Shandong.

⁸² For a firsthand account of these negotiations see Struve, 114–121. The gazetteers remember the episode in a more legendary fashion (Wang Hengyan Gazetteer, 189).

⁸³ See Zhang Dewei 2010 for a detailed discussion of the impact of imperial sponsorship on Buddhism during the Wanli era.

⁸⁴ *Futai* 撫臺 probably equals *Xunfu* 巡撫. Perhaps this is meant in the singular and refers to one particular Grand Coordinator, a position in charge of overseeing regional administration. Since the mid-Ming it was seconded to the military regional command. In the present context, Hou is referring to the military successes against the pirates.

⁸⁵ To the south of Putuo.

⁸⁶ A legendary Daoist master in Qin-Han times.

where it was. So I took a fast brig, and toured the ocean beyond the islands before I returned [to Putuo].

In the middle of the night suddenly the wind rose and rain started to fall. It did not stop [the next morning] April 3rd, and our war ship sat on the heaving waves like a little duck. The others ate, but the food quickly came up again.⁸⁷ I helped myself to more. Later at night the winds calmed down somewhat. I had to attend to some matters and desired to return to my office. Therefore I parted with Master Wu and on April 4th before dawn broke I ordered to hoist the sails. The sailors said the winds were adverse and asked me to postpone the departure a short while. I said: “Just go ahead,” and we left. In the early morning the winds indeed quickened and before midnight we arrived in Zhaobao. From Taohua Island, we must have covered a distance of more than 400 leagues! On the 5th I entered my district office in Zhenhai. Once the people in front of the hall [that were waiting for an interview] had been dealt with, I took up my brush to write this *Account of a Journey to Mount Potalaka*. Written in the sixteenth year of Wanli—*wuzi*—on the tenth day of the third month of spring.⁸⁸

Commander Hou’s returned to the island again the following year, and there probably were further visits during the time he stayed in charge of the coastal defenses.

In conclusion

It is important to remember that the perspective provided by travelogues is limited to that of the educated male literati writer, who observed the religious activity around Mount Putuo from an outsider perspective. We do not have any prose accounts by monastics traveling to Mount Putuo in the late Ming. In spite of its narrow scope, the travelogue genre makes this period in the history of Mount Putuo accessible in an unprecedented way. These texts, though brief,

⁸⁷ *Hù* 嘔 “vomit” (HDC, s.v.). The rare character, which has a number of other meanings, can also be read *qiào*—“to attack what is below from above”—which might be the way a humorous navy commander describes vomiting from the deck of a boat.

⁸⁸ The 10th day of the 3rd lunar month would equal April the 4th, not the 5th as the previous sentence leads us to believe.

relay firsthand experiences and offer a window onto the remarkable revival of Mount Putuo during the Wanli era.

Military patronage of Mount Putuo in the Ming did not end with Hou Jigao. Another navy Commander who was involved with Mount Putuo during this period was He Rubin 何汝賓 (active in Zhejiang 1622–1627). He was so popular that monastics and colleagues erected a memorial shrine for him.⁸⁹ Even during the tense times of the Ming-Qing transition, military officials continued to patronize Mount Putuo. In 1669 the Regional Commander Zhang Jie 張杰 (d. 1672) helped to rebuild a portion of the Fayu Temple after it had been burned by pirates.⁹⁰ As mentioned in the introduction, the early Qing revival of Mount Putuo was greatly helped by a series of military officials, beginning with Huang Dalai.⁹¹

Compared to their civil service colleagues military officials had easy access to man-power (their conscripts) and transport (horses, war-junks etc.). Moreover, due to the hereditary nature of military officialdom, office holders must have often been better connected among the local gentry than their changing civilian counterparts, and, perhaps equally important, they would have been personally invested in local temple sites.

Based on the gazetteers of Mount Putuo there is no doubt that military officials played a considerable role in its history. Anecdotal evidence seems to suggest that at other sites, too, military officials were involved in the patronage of institutional Buddhism, a connection that surely deserves more scholarly attention.

⁸⁹ Qiu-Zhu Gazetteer, Fasc. 11: 48.

⁹⁰ Wang Hengyan Gazetteer, 261.

⁹¹ For details of this early Qing revival see Bingenheimer 2016 (Chap.5).

References

Abbreviations

- CBETA/T. = *Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association* edition of the Taishō Canon (DVD Version 2011).
- CBETA/X. = *Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association* edition of the *Manji zokuzōkyō* Supplement to the Canon (DVD Version 2011).
- Putuo Gazetteer Reprint Series = *Putuo shan dianji* 普陀山典籍. Committee for the Management of the Mount Putuo Famous Site District 普陀山風景名勝區管理委員會, eds 2007. Xylographic reprints in traditional string binding and blue *han*-cases. With introduction and postscript. No ISBN.
- T. = *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經. Tokyo: 1924–1934.
- X. = *Manji shinsan zokuzōkyō* / *Wanzi xinzuan xuzangjing* 卍新纂續藏經. Tokyo: 1905–1912.
- ZFSH = *Zhongguo fosi shizhi huikan* 中國佛寺史志彙刊, compiled by Du Jiexiang 杜潔祥. Taipei: Mingwen shuju 明文書局, 1980–1985. 110 vols.

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