Sensing Guanyin's Abode: Sensory Experiences of Visitors and the (Re-)Production of Efficacy at Mount Putuo

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April 2024

A thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

Master of Arts

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Abstract

As one of the Four Sacred Buddhist Mountains in China, Mount Putuo attracts millions of visitors every year. It is famously considered the abode of Guanyin, a compassionate *bodhisattva* who listens to the sounds of sentient beings and helps anyone seeking her assistance. Given the existing studies of testimonies of seeing Guanyin's manifestations at Mount Putuo and the importance of sound implied by the name and scriptures of Guanyin, how to understand visitors' multisensory experiences more than merely seeing or hearing remains a question. This project mainly argues that in Chinese religious contexts, sensory experiences relate to the concept of efficacy (*ling*) and can reveal its dynamics at the micro level: visitors actualize and reproduce the efficacy of Mount Putuo and Guanyin by coacting with uncontrollable sensory stimuli that represent efficacy. Through ethnographic fieldwork at Mount Putuo, this thesis analyzes three common sensory experiences of visitors: *xianghuo* (incense fires), *qingjing* (purity and peace), and touching objects. I interpret how visitors make meaning of and represent these sensory experiences, highlighting that a presumably strong efficacy of Guanyin and Mount Putuo in response to their wishes underlies these sensory experiences. In turn, such efficacy is confirmed and reproduced by the sensory experiences of visitors co-present at Mount Putuo and the further spreading of visitors' representations of sensory experiences. With these findings, my study adds to the scholarships on Guanyin and Mount Putuo with broader examinations of the senses and contributes to the general understanding of efficacy and sensory experiences in Chinese religious life.

Résumé

En tant que l'une des quatre montagnes sacrées bouddhistes en Chine, le mont Putuo attire des millions de visiteurs chaque année. Il est célèbre pour être considéré comme la demeure de Guanyin, un *bodhisattva* compatissant qui écoute les sons des êtres sensibles et aide tous ceux qui demandent son aide. Compte tenu des études existantes de témoignages de voir les manifestations de Guanyin au mont Putuo et de l'importance du son impliquée par le nom et les Écritures de Guanyin, comment comprendre les expériences multisensoigneuses des visiteurs plus que simplement voir ou entendre reste une question. Ce projet soutient principalement que dans les contextes religieux chinois, les expériences sensorielles se rapportent au concept d'efficacité (*ling*) et peuvent révéler la dynamique de l'efficacité au niveau micro: les visiteurs actualisent et reproduisent l'efficacité du mont Putuo et du Guanyin en coactant avec des stimuli sensoriels incontrôlables qui représentent l'efficacité. Grâce à un travail de terrain ethnographique au mont Putuo, cette thèse analyse trois expériences sensorielles communes des visiteurs: *xianghuo* (feux d'encens), *qingjing* (pureté et paix), et toucher des objets. J'interprète comment les visiteurs prennent un sens et représentent ces expériences sensorielles, soulignant qu'une efficacité probablement forte de Guanyin et du mont Putuo en réponse à leurs souhaits sous-tend ces expériences sensorielles. À son tour, cette efficacité est confirmée et reproduite par les expériences sensorielles des visiteurs co-présents au mont Putuo et la diffusion des représentations des visiteurs des expériences sensorielles. Avec ces résultats, mon étude s'ajoute aux bourses sur Guanyin et le mont Putuo avec des examens plus larges des sens et contribue à la

compréhension générale de l'efficacité et des expériences sensorielles dans la vie religieuse chinoise.

Acknowledgments

My MA study at McGill is a lucid dream. I have transformed and achieved a lot in it, but I have to wake up and welcome the next scene of life. Nevertheless, my time at McGill could not be such a marvelous journey without so much help. This MA thesis is my gift as thanks to all.

It is my greatest honor to be a student of Professor Rongdao Lai. From everyday life to academic abilities, all my progress in the two years would have been impossible without Professor Lai's meticulous care. Professor Lai is a *bodhisattva* around me, whose path has influenced me to vow to become energetic, insightful, and compassionate like her. I sincerely hope that Professor Lai can overwork less and always share part of her compassion with herself.

To Professor Robin Yates, I appreciate his erudition in nearly any field of East Asian Studies and his rigorous pedagogy. I feel extremely honored and humbled to cruise the sea of East Asian Studies upon the milestone of his retirement. To Professor Andrea Farrans, I am grateful for the seminar on ethnography, which substantially benefited my research projects throughout my MA study. To Professor Hillary Kaell, I am thankful for her care for my applications and kindness to be my reviewer. Working with Professor Mikaël Bauer in Fall 2023 as a TA is also my pleasure, a warm buffer zone for my thesis writing. I also appreciate the courses taken with Professor Samuel Nelson and Dr. Beatrice Zani and the administrative support from Ms. Sarah Curci.

Among my friends, who I should be most thankful for is Yang, my extremely responsible *dashixiong* since the day Professor Lai connected me with him. I sincerely appreciate the company of Biao and Ziwei. Seeing them at Sherbrooke 688 was the fuel of my everyday life for

a long time. I am grateful to Bryan, Gaëlle, and Qi. Walking out with them, my *shimen*, was my best therapy when I felt anxious in Fall 2023. Then, it is a pity that I did not make it to farewell Masters and volunteers at Fo Guang Shan Flower Garland Temple due to my unexpected disease. I feel in debt that they brought warmth to my first winter in Montreal and the space for completing my course project. Also many thanks to Lingheng, Emma, Xin, Karen, Yunlu, Eldar, and Jiaqi for making EAS a large family and to Alex, Tiancai, Sam, Mriti, and Katie for letting me feel less anxious about social interactions in SRS.

I appreciate my parents for understanding me to leave a seemingly stable road in their eyes for an adventure to a foreign country during the COVID pandemic. My thesis owes a lot to my other family members and friends, who either introduced me to other potential interlocutors or became my interlocutors themselves. I also feel grateful for the contributions of my interlocutors. All of them are the co-producers of this thesis. As a Mount Putuo local sharing the birthday with Guanyin on the nineteenth of the second lunar month, I respectfully appreciate her blessings and fearlessness to let me meet everyone with pre-fated bonds and complete a thesis about Mount Putuo.

Finally, I owe my greatest gratitude and apology to two of my dearest family members who have been in the Pure Land, Wu Chunfeng and Yu Dayu. I am sorry for my failure to practice the final filial piety for them when studying away.

Notes on Conventions

I use *hanyu pinyin* throughout my thesis for most Chinese expressions, except for citations from Chün-fang Yü's (2001) book that refers to Putuo 普陀 as P'u-t'o and Guanyin 观音 as Kuan-yin. When precision is needed, I also provide Chinese characters following *pinyin* directly without intervening punctuation, and the default orthography is simplified Chinese, e.g., *xianghuo* 香火. Some important words under analysis in Chinese contexts are formatted in *pinyin* but not translated forms. For example, *xianghuo* is analyzed for its multiple meanings in everyday communication in the Chinese context, so I use *xianghuo* directly rather than its translation "incense fires" which appeared in earlier scholarship. The case for *qingjing* 清净/清静 is the same.

While most place names are also kept in *pinyin* (e.g., *Puji si* 普济寺 is translated as Puji Temple instead of the Temple of Universal Rescue), translated names of two famous caves at Mount Putuo are used for analyzing their naming in dialogue with previous research on them: the Cave of Tidal Sounds refers to Chaoyin Cave 潮音洞 (*Chaoyin dong*), and the Cave of Brahmā's Voice refers to Fanyin Cave 梵音洞 (*Fanyin dong*). For temple names, I do not distinguish the different terms used to indicate a place is a temple, such as *si* 寺 and *an* 庵, but just use "Temple", e.g., Puji Temple 普济寺 and Shuangquan Temple 双泉庵 (*Shuangquan an*).

All photos are taken by the author unless otherwise stated.

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Introduction

Although a mountain by name, Mount Putuo (*Putuo shan* 普陀山) is an island in Zhoushan City off the coast of Zhejiang Province, China. It is one of the Four Sacred Buddhist Mountains in China and the abode of Guanyin 观音, the Chinese name for Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara who is widely worshipped for her[1] compassion and responsiveness to people's sufferings and wishes. Millions of visitors travel to Mount Putuo every year to enjoy the seaside landscapes and worship Guanyin in the many temples on the island. The period between late spring and early summer is the peak season for visitors. The pleasant weather and light sea breeze are comfortable for walking on the hilly roads before the summer heat. At the dock, bus stations, and temples, visitors have not been too impatient to push and squeeze with muttering just to escape from the hot sun, although incense can burn vigorously in temples. Plants are also flourishing but without the loud chirping of cicadas, providing a refreshing and peaceful atmosphere for visitors to sit down and meditate.

As a local of Mount Putuo who just finished two semesters at McGill, I was glad that I started my fieldwork at such a time in 2023, with feelings of both familiarity and freshness. My

[1] According to Yü (2001), in China, Guanyin was perceived and depicted as a masculine *bodhisattva* at first but gradually transformed into a female deity since early Song in around the eleven century, although orthodox Buddhist monastics might not agree on the female gender attached to Guanyin. At today's Mount Putuo, most images of Guanyin in temples are kept asexual, and monastics generally hold the idea that Guanyin has no gender as a *bodhisattva* and can manifest in any genders. Nevertheless, most visitors consider Guanyin as a goddess and thus perceive the asexual images as more feminine. Thus, my thesis mainly use female pronouns when referring to Guanyin, but when I follow Yü (2001) to discuss Guanyin in Buddhist scriptures, masculine pronouns are used.

first trip was with my mother, and I asked her why now visitors were guided to wait for the ferry on the outdoor dock but not in the waiting room as I used to. She answered quite drily: “Staying outside makes people feel at ease.” At ease for what? “When seeing the ferries, one knows that oneself will soon leave for Mount Putuo.”

A ferry then reached the shore slowly. Visitors returning from Mount Putuo with smiles indeed seemed to bring comfort to people waiting to go there. Instructions came out from the staff’s transceiver. The staff then opened the fence in the waiting area and told the visitors in the front: “Dock Number Three.” Some excited visitors rushed with laughter, but close to the ferry, I heard a visitor’s complaint that the ferry smelled like car exhaust – the ferries burn fossils. Would such a bad smell give this visitor a bad first impression of Mount Putuo, or would it become a hardship to make the pilgrimage more sacred? These questions popped into my mind from my first day of fieldwork, but things changed a lot when summer came soon. Visitors were not always asked to wait outdoors, as the waiting room was air-conditioned. Some visitors would rush to the dock to avoid the blistering sun and get a better seat on the ferry to see the ocean. Once on board, some visitors would marvel at the coolness brought by the air conditioning on the ferry. In general, I heard more complaints about the heat rather than the smell.

Seeing the ferries and sea, smelling the fuel, and feeling hot or cool, visitors to Mount Putuo experience their trips through multiple sensations and express them through the descriptions, complaints, and exclamations blurted out. What do these sensory experiences mean for visitors to Mount Putuo? How about other sensory stimuli, such as the smell of incense at temples, the

sounds of nature or other visitors, and the physical contact with inscriptions and sculptures? More generally, what role do sensory experiences play in the visits to Mount Putuo? How do visitors understand and make meaning of their sensory experiences? To what extent are the sensory experiences related to Mount Putuo's sacredness in Chinese Buddhism and as the abode of Guanyin?

These are the main research questions for my project. In this thesis, I examine visitors' sensory experiences of *xianghuo* 香火, *qingjing* 清净/清静, and touching of certain kinds of sacred things at Mount Putuo. In this Introduction, I will first demonstrate that the senses should be a key topic in the study of Mount Putuo and Guanyin based on a review of earlier works and the relevant text sources. Turning to the experiences of contemporary visitors, I argue that visitors' sensory experiences can be based on the logic of *ling* 灵, the efficacy of Guanyin and Mount Putuo to respond to them, and the analysis of the senses can contribute to revealing the dynamics of efficacy at the micro level. Through the theoretical lens of "the contingent coactions between persons and things" (Ishii 2012), I view visitors' sensory experiences as their perceptions of the responses of Guanyin at Mount Putuo in the form of uncontrollable sensory stimuli, which can actualize and reproduce the efficacy of Guanyin and Mount Putuo.

Highlighting the Senses for Mount Putuo

Despite the centrality of sensory experience before a visitor even steps foot on the island, existing literature on Mount Putuo and Guanyin seems to pay little attention to it. Chün-fang

Yü's (2001) book *Kuan-yin* is a foundational work that provides a comprehensive analysis of Guanyin. It covers the early Buddhist scriptures that introduced Avalokiteśvara to China and the later domestication and popularization of Guanyin through tales, images, and pilgrimage centers, such as Mount Putuo. In Yü's (2001, 37–43) review of Buddhist scriptures, the topic of the senses always underlies Guanyin's name and the central role of Guanyin as a savior. The earliest Buddhist scriptures translated into Chinese interchangeably use Guanyin 观音 (Perceiver of Sounds) or Guanshiyin 观世音 (Perceiver of the World's Sounds) to refer to Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. The interpretations of this name usually emphasize "the connection between the bodhisattva's perception or observation and the sounds made by the faithful who called out his name" in both scriptural and commentarial sources (Yü 2001, 38–39). For example, the *Lotus Sūtra* (*Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法莲华经) is one of the most important scriptures that depict and praise Avalokiteśvara. Kumārajīva's translation, the most popular version of the *Lotus Sūtra* in China, "makes perfect sense" (Yü 2001, 38) of the name Guanshiyin in the chapter *The Universal Gateway of the Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds* (*Guanshiyin pusa pumenpin* 观世音菩萨普门品):

> At that time the bodhisattva Inexhaustible Intent immediately rose from his seat, bared his right shoulder, pressed his palms together and, facing the Buddha, spoke these words: "World-Honored One, this Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds – why is he called Perceiver of the World's Sounds?"
>
> The Buddha said to Bodhisattva Inexhaustible Intent: "Good man, suppose there are immeasurable hundreds, thousands, ten thousands, millions of living beings who are undergoing various trials and suffering. If they hear of this bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds and single-mindedly call his name, then at once he will perceive

the sound of their voices and they will all gain deliverance from their trials. (…)" (Watson 1993, 298–99)

尔时，无尽意菩萨即从座起，偏袒右肩，合掌向佛而作是言："世尊！观世音菩萨以何因缘，名观世音？"

佛告无尽意菩萨："善男子！若有无量百千万亿众生受诸苦恼，闻是观世音菩萨，一心称名，观世音菩萨即时观其音声，皆得解脱。……"

In Chinese interpretations of the name Guan(shi)yin, commentators have provided "fanciful interpretations of the 'sound' part of the name" more than the calling of only Guanyin's name in the *Lotus Sūtra* (Yü 2001, 43). My task, however, is not to follow up on the review of scriptures and commentaries, as most visitors to Mount Putuo know little about them. Rather, I suggest that the emphasis on Guanyin as the "Perceiver of the Sound" in Buddhist tradition likely influenced the early construction of Mount Putuo as Potalaka, the abode of Avalokiteśvara in scriptures. Yü (2001, 375) analyzes a key mechanism of the making of Mount Putuo as the Chinese Potalaka in history, i.e., the "dynamics between pilgrims and sites": the records and storytelling of pilgrims can promote the sites, and visitors attracted by earlier testimonies can constantly reproduce new records and spread them. In the earliest gazetteer of Mount Putuo by Sheng Ximing, Yü (2001, 376) finds that Sheng expressed doubts about "the discrepancy between the mythical grandeur of the sacred island home and the prosaic reality represented by the remote and desolate P'u-t'o" but then qualified Mount Putuo as Potalaka due to a dream he had. In the dream, a person told Sheng that *bodhisattva*s manifest themselves everywhere as long as people seek them there with faith and that the Cave of Tidal Sounds (*Chaoyin dong* 潮音洞) has long been noted for miraculous happenings, such as sightings of Guanyin. Based on these, Sheng then qualified

Mount Putuo as Potalaka. Yü (2001, 383–404) highlights the importance of the miracle tales of seeing Guanyin at the Cave of Tidal Sounds not only for Sheng but throughout the history of Mount Putuo as Guanyin's abode and mentions the later development of the Cave of Brahmā's Voice (*Fanyin dong* 梵音洞), which Bingenheimer (2016, 99–104) believes was a copy of the Cave of Tidal Sounds to reproduce the sacredness for a temple built later and add to the whole fame of Mount Putuo as Guanyin's abode.

While both Yü and Bingenheimer pay little attention to the acoustic dimensions of the two places but emphasize the testimonies of seeing Guanyin there, I consider the soundscape fundamental to understanding these testimonies and the two places' importance for Mount Putuo. Bingenheimer (2016, 101) argues that one clue of such a relationship of copy is the naming, as both "Tidal Sounds" and "Brahmā's Voice" are metaphors from the *Lotus Sūtra* referring to the sound of the Buddha preaching the Dharma. Nevertheless, in the chapter *The Universal Gateway of the Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds*, a sentence in the verse reads:

> Wonderful sound, Perceiver of the World's Sounds,
> Brahma's sound, the sea tide sound –
> they surpass those sounds of the world;
> therefore you should constantly think on them. (Watson 1993, 305–6)
> 妙音观世音 梵音海潮音 胜彼世间音 是故须常念

In the first two lines, both "Tidal Sounds" and "Brahmā's Voice/Sound" are paralleled and directly in analogy to Guanyin's voice, and the same lines also appear in the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* (*Lengyan jing* 楞严经). These lines show that the two caves' names are both specific equivalents

to Guanyin's voice, more than general metaphors from the same *sūtra*s simply. While Bingenheimer also reasons his argument of copying from the perspectives of geography and function, I add to his argument that the two lines are the decisive evidence to support the naming of the Cave of Brahmā's Voice as a copy of the Cave of Tidal Sounds.

More importantly, the verse highlights the importance of sounds, which is not well interpreted by both Yü and Bingenheimer. If the tidal sounds can just be Guanyin's great voice, then it is the tidal sounds that in the first place suggest Guanyin is there and thus can manifest herself to visitors. Therefore, the miracles of seeing Guanyin's manifestation at the Cave of Tidal Sounds cannot be fully understood without focusing on the roaring sounds of tides rushing into this naturally formed cave. It is highly possible that the earliest miracles of seeing Guanyin there were the results of associating the loud tidal sounds with Guanyin's voice according to the verse.

Also, only from the same acoustic perspective can the Cave of Brahmā's Voice be understood as a copy of the Cave of Tidal Sounds, as the Cave of Brahmā's Voice is not named because of the real "Brahmā's Voice" but the sounds of the tide. In fact, the Cave of Brahmā's Voice can hardly be a "perfect" copy of the Cave of Tidal Sounds, as the two caves have different landscapes. The Cave of Tidal Sounds is lower to the land where visitors can reach, so people look down at the cave to see and hear the tide (Figure 1). Sometimes, the waves in the cave even splash up, bringing visitors an olfactory experience of the waves' smell in addition to watching and listening to the tide.

Figure 1 The Cave of Tidal Sounds

By contrast, the Cave of Brahmā's Voice is between high cliffs (Figure 2), so visitors are farther away from the cave and can only view it at a distance on a platform of the temple built near the cave. The distance and the shadow of high cliffs make the cave partially hidden, leading to people's enthusiasm to look for Guanyin's manifestations within the Cave of Brahmā's Voice (further discussed in Chapter 1), and the unobstructed Cave of Tidal Sounds now seems to lack such a mysterious dimension to attract visitors. Although with these visible differences, the most prominent similarity between the two caves is the soundscapes of tides. The two caves both provide special auditory experiences of the surging sound of tides, as the tides in the ocean are squeezed when entering the narrow caves. Thus, the Cave of Brahmā's Voice is also a cave of tidal sounds, a copy of the Cave of Tidal Sounds only meaningful given the acoustic similarities.

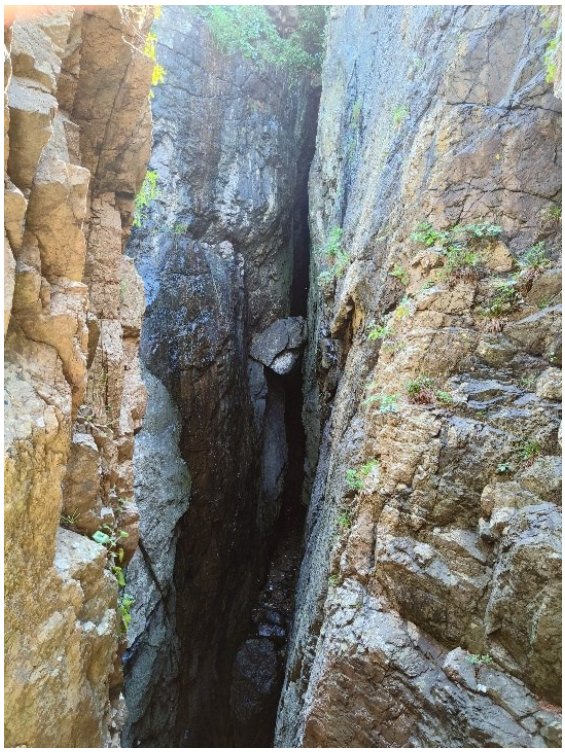

Figure 2 The Cave of Brahmā's Voice

The text-based approaches adopted by Yü and Bingenheimer may make it difficult to capture all sensory details of Mount Putuo, but as an ethnographer, I am in turn motivated to highlight the sensory experiences as fundamental to understanding visits to Mount Putuo. While most visitors have no knowledge of Buddhist scriptures and the metaphorical meanings of the "Tidal Sounds" and "Brahmā's Voice", it is still common to hear visitors marvel at the euphonic sounds at both caves and discuss where Guanyin can manifest herself in the caves. Nevertheless, seeing (Guanyin's manifestation) and hearing (the tidal sounds thus Guanyin's sounds) are only part of the sensory experiences at Mount Putuo. In nearly all temples, most visitors burn incense and thus create multisensory stimuli for themselves and others. Some visitors would attend the morning service in the temples to find inner peace in the sounds of monastics' chanting. In

addition, a recent tourist attraction for visitors is Impression Putuo (*Yinxiang Putuo* 印象普陀), a tourism performance about Guanyin's power to respond to people's everyday emotions, especially relieving the pains in everyday life. The performance uses many modern technologies to create lights, colors, sounds, and movement of stages and objects, and it markets them to exactly highlight the multisensory and immersive experiences provided to the audience. Recently, visitors have also been enthusiastic about Chan Buddhist coffee served in coffee shops outside the temple and the perfume of the incense smell sold in a newly built Guanyin cultural park.

In short, the special sensory experiences mark people's visits to Mount Putuo, which include hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, and others to cover the whole sensorium. This generalization is nothing new for sociologists and anthropologists. For example, in Durkheim's collective effervescence and Turner's communitas, sacred experiences include a sensory dimension that emerges from social interactions with peers and stimulates emotions. In the Chinese context, Chau (2006; 2008a) further contextualizes Durkheimian approaches to understand the intense multisensory immersion in the concurrent noises, sights, smells, tastes, and heats in events like temple festivals as the representation and reproduction of sociality. Chau (2006; 2008a) develops his analytical concept of "red-hot sociality" from the local everyday words *honghuo* 红火 (literally "red and firey", but Chau translates it as "hot and fiery") and *re'nao* 热闹 (hot and noisy) and highlights the role of participants as active producers of the sensory experiences for each other through their convergence in the events.

Although the discussions of red-hot sociality have extended to other dimensions of social life in China and paved the way for broader sensory studies of larger Asia (Steinmüller 2011; Coates 2017; Richaud 2021; Wu and Huang 2023; Low 2023), it is hoped that my research on Mount Putuo will enrich on-going conversations. In the cases of the two caves mentioned above, the sensory stimuli are the naturally formed tides, which are not produced by visitors on site and do not attract visitors due to the existing red-hot sociality of participants' convergence. Rather, these natural sensory stimuli are believed to be produced by Guanyin who lives at Mount Putuo and has her own agency to respond to visitors. In other words, Guanyin attracts visitors there to look for her, rather than to experience the sociality in visitors' convergence. If a Durkheimian approach views the sacred just as the manifestation of society, what are the relationships between Guanyin, nature, and society in the sensory experiences of visitors? In other words, which one is the most fundamental for providing sensory stimuli for visitors? As Puett (2013) criticizes, "unmasking" people's beliefs as some disguised ideological constructs that create and sustain the social order like a detached social scientist can reflect "implicitly Protestant political theologies" and neglect how people have made their own beliefs meaningful. Would attributing the sacred sensory experiences to sociality simplify what are indeed sensory stimuli and how people make meaning of their sensory experiences themselves? How do we understand visitors' sensory experiences as they do themselves?

Combining Efficacy and the Senses

Existing studies about travels in contemporary Mount Putuo tend to analyze visitors to Mount Putuo with frameworks based on a presumed category of "tourists". These studies assume that the presence of "tourists" would either profane the pious pilgrims and religious community or promote the secularist and atheist agendas of contemporary China to control religions, although not all visitors to Mount Putuo are "tourists" (Lin 2015; Wong 2011; You 2018; Bruntz 2014; Vidal 2020). As Olsen (2010) points out, when comparing "tourists" to "pilgrims", many scholars actually contrast the essentialized "ideal types" of tourists and pilgrims, which can be far away from the social facts and show a Eurocentric assumption of pilgrimage. The compared "pilgrims" are usually "the historical romanticized image of the pious, aesthetic Christian pilgrim from the Middle Ages traveling for penitential reasons", but "tourists" in comparison only want to escape their mundane life and are superficial and hedonistic in their destination (Olsen 2010, 849). Thus, my project uses "visitors" to refer to people traveling to Mount Putuo in general but does not categorize them into "tourists" or "pilgrims". Although later chapters still engage with Turner and Turner's classical model of pilgrimage rooted in Christian contexts, I will correspond to the post-colonial efforts to provincialize the religious-secular divide to the Western Christian contexts rather than universal (Asad 1993; 2003; Casanova 1994; Fitzgerald 1997; 2003) and benefit from the reflections on the category of "religion" in Chinese contexts (Ashiwa and Wank 2009; Chau 2011; Main and Lai 2013; C. K. Yang 1961; M. M. Yang 2011; Meyer 2022).

Although starting with dualistic frameworks, studies of Mount Putuo have presented various

motivations of Mount Putuo visitors with contextualized concepts. Particularly, Wong, Ryan, and McIntosh's paper (2013) and You's (2018) dissertation highlight visitors' practices of making wishes to deities with vows (*xuyuan* 许愿) and fulfilling their vows as thanks (*huanyuan* 还愿), which constitute a fundamental pattern of pilgrimage in Chinese contexts (Naquin and Yü 1992, 12). For Naquin and Yü (1992, 11), this pattern shows the personal exchanges with the resident deities at the sacred places who have high efficacy (*ling* 灵)[2], a key factor that makes a place a popular pilgrimage destination. During my fieldwork, my interlocutors often mention that the efficacy of Mount Putuo is a primary reason for them to visit it. While You (2018, 29–30) has emphasized efficacy as the core of visits to Mount Putuo that seek Guanyin's power and manifestation, the concept can be better connected with earlier anthropological works that have conceptualized it. Strictly limited to the human-deity interactions of religious life, efficacy refers to the power of a deity to respond to worshipers' wishes, requests, and orders through result-producing and manifestation (Ahern 1981; Capitanio 2012; Chau 2006; Sangren 1987). Moreover, places can also be efficacious and thus attract visitors, and the efficacy of a place usually has multilayered sacred meanings including various religious significances, natural values, and political implications (Naquin and Yü 1992; Robson 2009). Scholars have already agreed that efficacy is a fundamental idea of Chinese religious life and that the production of

[2] *Ling* 灵 is also translated as "numinosity" in previous scholarships, and both translations are sometimes interchangeably used in one research, such as the quotation "numinosity of nature" (Naquin and Yü 1992, 22) below.

efficacy is a snowballing process. Ideally, the more manifestation of efficacy the better (Dean 1998, 24). Practically, efficacy attracts participation in rituals or other practices, which produces and spreads testimonies of efficacy to attract more participation (Ahern 1981; Capitanio 2012; Chau 2006; Naquin and Yü 1992; Sangren 1987).

While the snowballing model seems reasonable at the macro level, what visitors feel as efficacious and how they participate in the circulation of efficacy needs more exploration at the micro level. For this project, sensory experiences stand out as a suitable approach for understanding the dynamics of efficacy in micro. In the studies of efficacy, burning incense has been described as a practice of communication with presumably efficacious deities who are capable of responding through the shape of incense (Feuchtwang 1992; Qu 2022). At Mount Putuo, a massive amount of incense is burned in temples and produces thick smoke, high heat, and strong smells, which shows the potential connections between efficacy and the senses. Here, a return to Yü (2001) and Bingenheimer (2016) is necessary, for they both highlight the importance of records, testimonies, and tales of visitors seeing Guanyin's presence for the establishment and continuous vitality of Mount Putuo as Guanyin's abode. As mentioned above, their studies rely on textual sources, which tend to emphasize the visual experience of seeing Guanyin's manifestations. Hearing is also significant. Guanyin's efficacy of saving everyone who seeks her help is also based on the acoustic interactions, expressed in the two caves through the sounds of tides. This also corresponds to Naquin and Yü's (1992, 22) argument that many

destinations' efficacy is usually based on the "numinosity of nature"[3] and then develops with various sacred meanings that can attract a variety of pilgrims with different interests.

In other words, the efficacy of Guanyin and the efficacy of Mount Putuo are entangled with each other, which shows that efficacy can have multilayered meanings: not only religious but also natural. More importantly, efficacy is directly perceivable through multiple sensations, from visual and acoustic to olfactory and thermal. The two ideas imply that efficacy is a more extensive concept in Chinese religious life to cover some special dimensions of nature and society and associate them with an unseen world, in which deities and other spiritual beings have the power to create sensory stimuli for people in the perceivable world. In this way, this project puts efficacy, a key category in studies of Chinese religion, into conversation with the growing studies of the senses with this main argument: the dynamics of efficacy at the micro level, which remains to be further studied, can be understood through sensory experiences.

Although Chau's (2022) later reflections on sociality through his new concept of "actants amassing" pay attention to nonhuman actors such as animals and ghosts, the sensory experience of *honghuo* in his model is still a result of convergence, a macro status now including various

[3] "Numinosity" refers to *ling*, as mentioned in the earlier footnote. The original usage of the term serves the two authors' analysis of mountains as typically pilgrimage sites throughout the history of China: compared to lowlands as the preferred, common residential areas in China, mountains are special, necessitate difficult journeys, and can thus become sacred (Naquin and Yü 1992, 11). Thus, their original wording is "intrinsic numinosity of nature" to highlight the contrast of natural landscapes between mountains and lowlands, such as "summits, cliffs, vistas, caves, springs, rocks, trees" as intrinsic to mountains (Naquin and Yü 1992, 22). To avoid confusion about the meanings of "intrinsic", I omit this word here.

actors beyond human participants. My argument here is to understand the sensory experiences of people as the performance of their interactions with other actors in the micro, be they human or nonhuman actors. Moreover, I consider the sensory experiences of the interactions with nonhuman actors as what Ishii calls "the contingent coactions between persons and things". Such coactions actualize the links between the human actors and nonhuman actors and are crucial to the formation of the unseen, divine world, as the "contingency, uncontrollability, and unpredictability are indispensable features" of the sacred things that represent or suggest the power of spiritual beings (Ishii 2012, 381).

Ishii (2012) mainly engages with Gell's (1998) theories of the agency of artifacts and the ontological turn in anthropology. This approach, with broad connections to theories like actor network theory and object-oriented ontology, strongly emphasizes objects as actors, but my study remains human-actor-oriented in the sense of focusing on visitors' sensory experiences. One reason is that this project, as an MA thesis with limited research scope and fieldwork duration, aims to understand the roles of sensory experiences in Chinese religious life and the relationships between the senses and efficacy, instead of explaining the relationships between the efficacy of Guanyin and the agency of nonhuman sensory stimuli to cause sensory experiences of human actors – although this can be a valuable potential task for my future studies of Mount Putuo.

Moreover, my fieldwork of visitors' sensory experiences at Mount Putuo echoes Palmer, Tse, and Colwell's (2019, 906) ethnographic observations that "anthropocentric personhood remains a fundamental category of experience" in the life course of Guanyin statues and

worshippers' engagement with them in Hong Kong. Their research raises a conceptualization of Guanyin as a "demi-person" (Palmer, Tse, and Colwell 2019) to complicate the relationships between her agency (or "efficacy" in this thesis) and her representations (Guanyin statues for Palmer, Tse, and Colwell, sensory stimuli in this study), but my study does not focus on such relationships, as mentioned above. Thus, focusing on visitors' sensory experiences while acknowledging the efficacy/agency of Guanyin through sensory stimuli is a suitable balancing act for me to better contextualize my study of Mount Putuo given the earlier insights about efficacy and Guanyin. Then, the framework of "the contingent coactions between persons and things" is mainly used for such acknowledgment of the efficacy of Guanyin and Mount Putuo behind sensory stimuli, as Ishii's own cases also imply the sensory experiences as "contingent coactions": the uncontrollability of people on ritual objects in situations of "direct contact" (Ishii 2012, 383) shows the response from nonhuman actors in the unseen world, in which the sense of tactility is exactly an interface for coactions between persons and things. An extension from tactility to all the senses can also be supported by Taussig's ([1993] 2018) theorization of tactility as a habit of knowing that underlies the whole sensorium (further discussed in Chapter 3). Thus, I use Ishii's theory in the sense of confirming the efficacy of Guanyin and Mount Putuo behind sensory stimuli, which can better serve this study's purpose of bridging the analysis of the senses and efficacy at the micro level.

In short, the sensory experiences can be efficacious for people because they interact with nonhuman actors who create perceivable sensory stimuli that are not controllable by human

actors, such as the tidal sounds and Guanyin's manifestation in the case of Mount Putuo. As a result, visitors' sensory experiences can represent their interactions with Guanyin and Mount Putuo, the two efficacious actors capable of creating contingent sensory stimuli as their response to visitors. Such sensory experiences thus actualize the efficacy of Guanyin and Mount Putuo and make the spreading and reproduction of their efficacy possible.

This framework can be what underlies the "dynamics between pilgrims and sites" in micro for Mount Putuo to accumulate its fame as Guanyin's abode through the records and testimonies about her manifestations. More than just seeing manifestations and representing through texts, my research broadens the perception of Guanyin's and Mount Putuo's efficacy as multisensory. In this project, I focus on the efficacious sensory experiences of visitors at Mount Putuo, open to what visitors believe as efficacious and which senses matter. Specifically, I examine how certain sensory experiences become efficacious, how visitors make meaning of and represent their efficacious sensory experiences, and how the sensory experiences contribute to the reproduction of the efficacy of Guanyin and Mount Putuo.

Methods

During the two-month ethnographic fieldwork at Mount Putuo from late June to late August in 2023, I interviewed, observed, and traveled with visitors to explore the sensate dimensions of their visits. Most of my participant observations were conducted in a fixed place at a time, especially in temples. During the observations, I kept fieldnotes and had informal chats with

visitors at the temple. Also, I conducted formal interviews with 10 interlocutors who were willing to share sensory experiences at Mount Putuo in depth. These interviews usually lasted around one hour. In addition, I joined the visits to Mount Putuo twice, once with two interlocutors and the other with one. Such a method of "walking" (Ingold and Vergunst 2008) is suitable for both studies of the senses and travelers, allowing me to perceive the sensory stimuli empathetically and chat with my interlocutors at any time to know about their sensory experiences and feelings.

My identity as a local benefited me in building mutual trust with interlocutors and conducting in-depth dialogues, and I was self-conscious about my positionality and based the interactions with my interlocutors on my dual identities as an ethnographer and a local. For example, during the interviews, my interlocutors would ask me about the local life at Mount Putuo out of curiosity. When I traveled with interlocutors, they would expect me to introduce the spots that we visited. I responded to their expectations with my local experiences, which were usually beyond the research but promoted our mutual trust. As a result, the trust and understanding between my interlocutors and me contributed a lot to a better coproduction of the ethnographic data in the fieldwork.

During the fieldwork, I also noticed that new media are now important for Mount Putuo visitors. Many visitors would refer to previous visitors' social media posts before traveling and share their own experiences after traveling, which can include visitors' self-representations of sensory experiences at Mount Putuo. Thus, in addition to the offline ethnographic techniques, I

also follow the suggestions of Golub (2010) and Zani (2021) to approach the internet as a site partially connected to the offline realities of Mount Putuo and collect ethnographic data online. I paid particular attention to *Xiaohongshu* 小红书, a Chinese image-based social media in which users can share everyday life in the form of posts and comments. Users can easily refer to them through searching and the platform's AI-based algorithms of recommendation and add to them with new comments for other users. Such information transmission on *Xiaohongshu* has formed its special *zhongcao jingji* 种草经济 (economy of "grass planting", a metaphor for the recommendation of products or services), in which the AI algorithms can gather users sharing similar interests and lead to a certain kind of information explosion regarding particular things among certain customers, especially young and fashion-chasing users (Sun and Ly 2022). Mount Putuo is such an attraction among certain users that there have been rich posts on *Xiaohongshu* about visits to Mount Putuo. I collected post content related to my research questions and recruited posters who were willing to share more about their sensory experiences for interviews. Constructing both online and offline as the social realities of visits to Mount Putuo, I cross-use the data from the offline and online to better understand the sensory experiences of visitors to Mount Putuo.

Structure

This thesis consists of three chapters, each examining a common pattern of visitors' sensory experiences at Mount Putuo. In Chapter 1, I focus on the meaning of *xianghuo* 香火 as a

common everyday expression of sensory experiences at Mount Putuo. Literally, *xianghuo* means incense fires and can be measured to indicate the popularity of a sacred site or a deity. Mount Putuo is usually described as a place with vigorous *xianghuo*, and most visitors enjoy the vigorous *xianghuo* as hot, noisy, and firey sensory stimuli. Thus, *xianghuo* directly associates with Chau's concept of red-hot sociality mentioned above. Nevertheless, Chapter 1 complicates the understanding of red and hot sensory experiences in Chinese religious life by revealing two intertwined dimensions of *xianghuo* at Mount Putuo: (1) the factual *xianghuo* as the outcome of every visitor's burning of incense to communicate with Guanyin for her blessings and (2) the metaphorical *xianghuo* that comes from people's gathering to pursue Guanyin's efficacy such as her manifestations, which can attract more visitors to participate in the engagement with Guanyin and confirm their sensory experiences of Guanyin's efficacy with each other. Both dimensions emphasize Guanyin's efficacy in the first place for visitors to make wishes and expect Guanyin's response, which is the basis for the gatherings and interactions of visitors in the efficacious spots at Mount Putuo.

Chapter 2 deals with the notion of *qingjing* 清净/清静, literally "purity and peace". *Qingjing* is an ideal in Chinese religious life that has various meanings, but it has entered everyday communications and mainly refers to the quiet atmosphere without bothering. In this sense, *qingjing* is an antonym of *xianghuo* and red-hot sociality, but Mount Putuo visitors pursue *qingjing* as an ideal sensory experience that can be possible even in Mount Putuo's vigorous *xianghuo*. I specify three logics behind visitors' perceptions of *qingjing* at Mount Putuo and their

relationships to *xianghuo*. The first logic is "absence". In temples without *xianghuo*, visitors can find *qingjing* as a quiet, peaceful, and solemn environment. Such *qingjing*, however, is usually not the absolute quietness but the internal mental relief or inner peace that visitors feel through the sensory stimuli that they can hardly notice in the vigorous *xianghuo*. This implies the second logic, "complementarity". When looking at Mount Putuo as a whole, temples with vigorous *xianghuo* and the *qingjing* temples are mutually complementary to show the efficacy and purity of Guanyin's abode in general. Furthermore, *xianghuo* can also stimulate *qingjing* directly through the logic of "distraction": the intense sensory stimulation of *xianghuo* can make visitors feel lost and thus provide a space for them to contemplate their wishes made to Guanyin and confusions in such *xianghuo*. The three logics all emphasize internal calm more than the external quiet environment, and they suggest that *qingjing* and *xianghuo* can constitute each other on the same basis of Guanyin's efficacy to present different ideals of sensory experiences.

In contrast to these everyday expressions of sensory experiences, Chapter 3 focuses on a taken-for-granted behavioral pattern of visitors at Mount Putuo: getting the efficacy of certain sacred objects through physical touch with them. To interpret the meanings of tactility, I first examine how visitors know what can be touched or not. The basic principle is a taboo: one cannot touch sacred images of the Buddhas and *bodhisattva*s inside temples because touching them is considered a sign of disrespect. Based on this taboo, sacred images outside and other objects in monasteries, such as inscriptions, can therefore be touched. While visitors believe that touching objects can provide them with efficacy, they seem to take this belief for granted without

a specific mental process to justify it. To make sense of such seemingly unreasonable touch, I connect Taussig's theories of mimesis and tactile knowing and the indigenous Chinese religious concept of *ganying* 感应 (sympathetic resonance) to understand physical contact as habitually activated by verbal contact, which is possible under the cosmological assumption that a limitless chain of sympathetic associations links everything and can be intervened by human actors. Finally, I show that the same logic of tactility is also reflected in visitors' practices of photography at Mount Putuo. Moreover, the spreading of visitors' photos on social media provides more convenient ways of "touching" efficacious elements but can also attract more potential visitors to make contact with the "originals" at Mount Putuo, providing rich opportunities for Mount Putuo's efficacy to be reproduced.

In sum, I show in this thesis that the efficacy of Guanyin and Mount Putuo can be understood in micro through visitors' sensory experiences at Mount Putuo and play a fundamental role in them. Visitors not only perceive but also actualize and reproduce the efficacy of Guanyin and Mount Putuo through their senses and representations of sensory experiences. The sensory reproduction of efficacy as such contributes to the popularity of Mount Putuo as an efficacious destination for more visitors.

Chapter 1: Sensing Vigorous *Xianghuo*

At Mount Putuo, "incense fires are vigorous" (*xianghuo wang* 香火旺)[4], as most of my interlocutors said. According to Naquin and Yü (1992, 12), *xianghuo*, incense fires, measure the popularity of a temple or a cult. At Mount Putuo, such measurements are often expressed through comparative and superlative adjectives in everyday communication. Among all Buddhist sites in China, Mount Putuo has one of the most vigorous *xianghuo*. Within Mount Putuo, the "three main temples" (*sanda si* 三大寺), which are Puji Temple 普济寺 (*Puji si*), Fayu Temple 法雨寺 (*Fayu si*), and Huiji Temple 慧济寺 (*Huiji si*), and Nanhai Guanyin 南海观音, a 33-meter-high outdoor Guanyin statue, have the most vigorous *xianghuo* among other temples. Also, the *xianghuo* of Shancai Cave 善财洞 (*Shancai dong*) is more vigorous now than before, as more and more people come to make wishes for wealth because of the character *cai* 财, literally meaning "wealth", in its name (further analyzed in Chapter 3). On the other hand, temples without *xianghuo* can be tagged as *qingjing* 清净/清静[5]: pure and calm. Moreover, by contrast to having the most vigorous *xianghuo*, Mount Putuo is also known as "the Purest Place in This

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[4] While *xianghuo* is a noun in Chinese, *xianghuo wang* can work as an adjective in everyday communication. As *wang* is not a proper noun under analysis but a word of degree attached to *xianghuo*, I translated it as "vigorous" to avoid confusion. As a result, I use "vigorous *xianghuo*" as a noun or "*xianghuo* is vigorous" as a sentence: both change the original order of words in Chinese but keep the meaning. When "*xianghuo wang*" is used directly, it is still an adjective as in Chinese.

[5] *Qingjing* can be a noun or an adjective in Chinese, depending on the context. To maintain this characteristic in Chinese, the usage of *qingjing* as a noun or an adjective in the thesis also depends on the context.

World”[6]. When I asked one of my interlocutors what was her impression of Mount Putuo from the perspective of the senses, she said Mount Putuo is just a “contradictory” (*maodun de* 矛盾的) place that is both *xianghuo wang* and *qingjing*.

What do *xianghuo (wang)* and *qingjing* mean as the sensory impression of Mount Putuo? The simplest answers from my interlocutors are synonymous substitutions in Chinese. For example, *xianghuo wang* means *re’nao* 热闹 (hot and noisy), and *qingjing* can be *qingliang* 清凉 (cool and refreshing) and *anjing* 安静 (quiet). As mentioned in the Introduction, *re’nao* and its synonym *honghuo* have attracted scholarly attention (Chau 2006; 2008a; Steinmüller 2011; Richaud 2021; Coates 2017), but this study suggests that connecting the senses with efficacy can further reflect on current analysis of red-hot sociality. Here, the approach of sociality also seems ambiguous for *qingjing* as “contradictory” to red and hot: while Chau (2006, 158) acknowledges the various patterns of sociality that may include those not hot, he essentializes “not red-hot” as “a fear of, or distaste for, social isolation” (Chau 2006, 153). As Steinmüller (2011, 267) points out, red-hot sociality has been “unequivocally evaluated positively” but actually has various meanings in different contexts. For Mount Putuo, the fact that *qingjing* can also be an ideal sensory experience and co-exist with *xianghuo* exactly calls for a more nuanced understanding of both “red-hot” and “not red-hot” sensory experiences.

In this chapter and the next, I respectively examine *xianghuo* and *qingjing* as two

[6] “*Renjian diyi qingjing di*. 人间第一清净地。”

sensescapes to shed light on the efficacy of Mount Putuo based on reflections on Chau's sensory approach. For Mount Putuo, I show that the dialectics between the individual and the social indeed play an important role in perceiving while presenting the efficacy of Guanyin at Mount Putuo. However, beyond Chau's Durkheimian narrative in which the sacred is the manifestation of society, I highlight the efficacy of nonhuman actors, which are Guanyin and Mount Putuo in my case. Guanyin and Mount Putuo are so efficacious that they respond to visitors by making sensory stimuli that are uncontrollable by visitors. Both *xianghuo* and *qingjing* are the result of the "contingent coaction" (Ishii 2012) between visitors and the sensory stimuli made by Guanyin or Mount Putuo, in which their efficacy entangles with the sociality of visitors.

In this chapter, my focus is on the specific meanings of *xianghuo* and the implications of this word when used by visitors in their everyday communication at Mount Putuo. I distinguish between factual *xianghuo* and metaphorical *xianghuo* to show the dialectics between the individual and the social in two different directions but on the same basis of efficacy. Factual *xianghuo* refers to the flames of the incense burned by each visitor, which are remarkable sensory stimuli in the efficacious temples. On the other hand, metaphorical *xianghuo* measures the popularity of a temple and describes the sensory experiences in the crowds of visitors who collectively seek to interact with Guanyin and confirm their experiences of Guanyin's efficacy with other visitors. The two meanings often overlap, and both represent the efficacy of Guanyin.

Factual *Xianghuo*: Everyone's Contribution

Guanyin has three "birthdays", namely "three nineteenths", and thus three festivals of the incense offering (*xianghuiqi* 香会期)[7] for Mount Putuo. Before and on the nineteenth day of the second, sixth, and ninth lunar months, tens of thousands of visitors flock to Mount Putuo to worship Guanyin and celebrate her festivals. The three "birthdays" are not real birthdays but accordingly refer to the day Guanyin was born, achieved enlightenment, and ordained. In everyday communications, "Guanyin's birthdays" is commonly used, even if the speaker may know that they are not real "birthdays". Moreover, nearly no visitor cares that the popular account of Guanyin's three "birthdays" has no canonical basis, and many visitors probably know little that these dates refer to the tale of Princess Miaoshan 妙善, the influential Chinese female manifestation of Guanyin (Yü 2001, 413). Regardless of the wording and sources, what is important for most visitors is that Guanyin shows her efficacy the most in the beginning of these days, so one should worship Guanyin at these times for better opportunities to receive Guanyin's

[7] *Xianghui* usually refers to pilgrim associations. Today's Mount Putuo has no organization or association for pilgrims, although the word is probably a continuation of earlier usage in different meanings. Here, the word *xianghui* seems to have a unique meaning in the context of Mount Putuo: the important peak seasons associated with the three important dates of Guanyin. Thus, for analytical clarity and brevity, I translate *xianghuiqi* as the "festival of the incense offering", briefly "festival" or "Guanyin's festival". These festivals of the incense offering, however, should not be confused with Nanhai Guanyin Cultural Festival (*Nanhai guanyin wenhua jie* 南海观音文化节) and Mount Putuo's Spring Tourism Festival (*Putuoshan zhi chun lvyou jie* 普陀山之春旅游节). The two festivals are initiated by local governments mainly for tourism promotion, and they are not strongly associated with Guanyin's legends and are held annually according to the Gregorian calendar instead of the lunar calendar. For an analysis of the two festivals, see Bruntz (2014).

responses and blessings (Ashiwa and Wank 2023, 290).

My fieldwork covered the second festival in 2023, which was on August 5. China stopped its zero-COVID policies at the end of 2022, so this was the first time visitors could visit Mount Putuo to celebrate Guanyin's "birthday" without any restrictions after three years – for the first festival on March 10, 2023, the celebration the night before was canceled due to a fog advisory for overnight ferries. Many people infected with COVID at the time were also unable to visit. A week before the second festival this time, a typhoon was predicted to hit Mount Putuo exactly on the nineteenth day of the sixth lunar month, but it finally took a U-turn from the prediction and thus would not influence the celebration. The announcement of the celebration in the main temples at Mount Putuo and the overnight ferries on August 4 only came out in the afternoon on the same day. Many people cheered that it was Guanyin's power to drive the typhoon away and set out, but the wise visitors had long waited at Mount Putuo days before, regardless of the typhoon warnings and last-minute announcements. That night, the three main temples were packed with people waiting for midnight to offer incense and participate in the celebratory ceremony for Guanyin[8]. Many visitors spent the night outdoors in the square in front of Nanhai Guanyin. While a lot of tour groups visited Nanhai Guanyin only for a while and then left for other temples at Mount Putuo, the large crowds remained stable there even until the end of

[8] In China, a day is traditionally divided into twelve two-hour periods (*shi'er shichen* 十二时辰). The first two-hour, from 11 pm to 1 am, is *zishi* 子时 (the two-hour of Rat) or *yeban* 夜半 (midnight). At Mount Putuo, the ceremony started on the arrival of *zishi* at 11 pm.

August 5.

I went to Nanhai Guanyin and Puji Temple on the morning of August 5. At the two sites, moving was impossible without waiting in lines, sweating profusely, bumping into others with apologies or complaints, and taking only a small step at a time. Amidst the noises and sometimes quarrels, exhausted visitors who had been there for a night without sleep sat on the ground. The main hall of Puji Temple was holding Dharma services for donors who were generous enough to pay a premium for Guanyin's efficacy at its highest. Monks' chanting could be heard even in the corner of the temple because of the high-end audio system in the main hall. Visitors burnt incense in such an extremely noisy environment marked by human voices, not different from a red-hot temple festival with numerous participants as depicted by Chau.

Bathed in these sounds, one could hardly ignore the clouds of smoke rising from the incense burners and enveloping the air above. With flames blazing and twisting in the air, all incense burners were full to the brim with incense that was continuously thrown in by visitors. The overwhelming heat from the violently burning incense deterred some people from approaching the burners to put their incense graciously. Covering their mouth and nose with hands or masks, several visitors still sneezed and coughed because of the pungent smell of burning, but the flames jumping out of the burners also allowed brave visitors to light their incense conveniently. Of course, visitors were not alone in adding fuel to the fire. At Puji Temple, I encountered a monk who asked a security guard to burn a Guanyin scroll painting, maybe an offering from a donor, in the already overflowing burner. My local interlocutors told me that while there had been no off-

season for Mount Putuo since the end of zero-covid policies, the nineteenth day of the sixth lunar month witnessed the most vigorous *xianghuo* so far this year.

In their recent book on Nanputuo Temple, Ashiwa and Wank (2023) included a similar account of the celebration of Guanyin's festival in 1999, which was also marked by the intensive influx of visitors, the soundscapes of rituals and crowds, and the thick smoke of incense fires. Just like Chau's (2006; 2008a) analysis of temple festivals, the sensory experiences of vigorous *xianghuo* are red-hot, noisy, immersive, and dazzling. While Chau's *honghuo* might have no real red fires in the cases of temple festivals, *xianghuo* can be factual in the popular temples at Mount Putuo: it refers to the fires produced by the intense combustion of incense, which necessarily produce sensory impacts including heat, smell, and the visions of jumping flames and smoke.

One of my local interlocutors has the skills to make incense with hands. He told me that when lighted, high-quality incense sticks should produce no flames but smolder stably and slowly. It is through smoldering that the pleasant smells and healthy benefits of the ingredients can be maximized. By contrast, in temples, too much incense burns together in the limited space of the burners, so the high temperature and rich fuels easily and sometimes unavoidably cause flames. This would not only waste the positive values of incense but also cause a pungent smell that may lead to air pollution and even respiratory illnesses. Thus, he would never use his precious hand-made incense in temples but just the mass-produced, cheap incense.

When hearing this in the conversation, I felt no criticisms from an incense maker about the low-quality incense burnt unfavorably in the temples. Rather, his neutral tone seems to show that

it is important to do the "correct" thing in the context of Mount Putuo. In temples, burning incense like others is exactly correct. Baicong[9] is a visitor who came to Mount Putuo for the first time on the weekend in late July 2023. He had a specific purpose to worship Guanyin for his wish to have a child after learning from friends that Mount Putuo is an efficacious site to seek a child from Guanyin. While he lives in a province with a very strong tradition of deity worship, the important purpose of his trip to Mount Putuo motivated him to make a detailed plan that covers nearly all temples enshrining Child-Giving Guanyin. More importantly, he decided to worship Guanyin at Mount Putuo in the "local" way, instead of the familiar way at his hometown. He told me that he found some online posts from previous visitors or self-identified "locals", which suggest visitors burn nine sticks of incense if they make wishes for three generations of family members, six if two, and three if one. Also, he followed these posts to burn all remaining sticks of incense when he made the final stop at Nanhai Guanyin before returning home. He said he was glad to see that many people indeed burned a bundle of incense at Nanhai Guanyin instead of three, six, or nine sticks because this showed that he did a proper thing to complete his visit to Mount Putuo.

When I asked what "*xianghuo wang*" means in the context of Mount Putuo for him, Baicong said he first heard of this word from the owner of the family inn that he booked. Once he heard of it, he felt this word is very good (*henhao de* 很好的). He believed *xianghuo wang*

[9] All names of my interlocutors appeared in the thesis are pseudonyms.

has two meanings. First, only when there are many visitors, *xianghuo* can be vigorous. More importantly, when visitors come to Mount Putuo, it is because everyone burns incense and makes a contribution to making the flames that *xianghuo* can be vigorous, which reminds me of a Chinese proverb that praises the unity of individuals' contributions, "when everybody adds fuel, the flames rise high"[10].

Compared to the incense maker, Baicong attaches more positive values to the massive burning of incense but similarly understands the flames as a cumulative result of the high quantity of incense being burnt. Moreover, his attribution of the vigorous *xianghuo* to every visitor's incense burning regardless of how many sticks to be burnt exactly shows the logic of Chau's (2008a) "sensory-production model": every visitor is attracted by the vigorous *xianghuo* and (re-)produce the *xianghuo* for themselves as an active participant. Nonetheless, the motivations of Baicong to make wishes for the efficacy of Child-Giving Guanyin at Mount Putuo and follow a "local" way of burning incense can hardly be overlooked. Indeed, the vigorous *xianghuo* may be attractive for every *homo sociologicus* in an essentialist sense, but the attraction has its specific meanings at Mount Putuo to represent the efficacy of Guanyin at Mount Putuo to fulfill the wishes of visitors like Baicong.

Feuchtwang (1992, 133–34) has analyzed burning incense as open communication with the deities by formal deference. In such human-deity communication, fire, smoke, and scent of the

[10] "*Zhongren shichai huoyan gao*. 众人拾柴火焰高。"

smoldering incense not only represent the deities but are the deities' direct responses to ritual participants, which are sensuous and pervasive in the atmosphere to maintain communication without words. Based on this insight, Feuchtwang (1992, 156–57) turns to build an archetype of burning incense in rituals: the first person interacts with the deity, "a postulated subject", always refers to the postulated following people who would seek similar responses from the same deity. Such an archetype serves Feuchtwang's (1992) thesis of "the imperial metaphor" of popular religions and is insightful for analyzing the origins and differentiations of a cult, but this can simplify the variety of the scales of burning incense and the relationships between participants co-present. Feuchtwang focuses on the rituals in which only several sticks of incense smolder, as the long time of smoldering allows divination to be done through throwing blocks and paying attention to signs such as evenly burning of the incense or flaring up from the bottom. Similarly, Qu's (2022) recent paper on the practices of "incense seeing" also highlights the negotiation of human and nonhuman agency through viewing and interpreting the shapes of flames and burnt ends of incense. All of Qu's cases are also individuals seeking help and several sticks of incense being burnt so that the incense can be well observed for each individual.

Following them, the analysis of burning incense and vigorous *xianghuo* should include the efficacy of Guanyin as a nonhuman agency, which actively invites communication from human actors through incense burning and thus plays a crucial role in the production of sensory stimuli for visitors. Furthermore, it is also Guanyin's efficacy at its highest at Mount Putuo and on her festivals that attracts numerous visitors, to the degree that even if every visitor at Mount Putuo

burns only three, six, or nine sticks of incense as Baicong did, the aggregation of all sticks in the limited space of incense burners always causes flames beyond smoldering. While the wishes of Mount Putuo visitors like Baicong are usually personal, their incense burning does not correspond to Feuchtwang's and Qu's analysis because of the impossibility of matching the incense with each visitor and seeing the shape of incense in vigorous flames. Rather, visitors refer to each other based on the sympathetic sensory experiences of the vigorous *xianghuo* contributed by every visitor, with Guanyin's efficacy as a self-evident background that needs no authentication of the earlier past or the specific shapes of the incense flames and incense ends.

If Chau's (2006; 2008a) metaphorical "red-hot sociality" can only increase based on the explanation of people's instinctive pursuit of the social as *homo sociologicus*, the factual *xianghuo* at Mount Putuo presents a material dimension to understand the relationships between the senses and sociality: incense takes time to burn, so the factual *xianghuo* can constantly provide multisensory stimuli for visitors until the fuel provided by them runs out. Although the incense of each visitor may produce different smells and colors of smoke, one visitor must breathe the air mixing all other visitors' incense particles and then add to it when burning incense for personal communication with Guanyin. Scientists may call the random motion of particles in the air "Brownian motion", but I would like to highlight that the sensory experiences of vigorous *xianghuo* are thus almost unavoidably shared by visitors co-present at Mount Putuo, such as the smells, heat, and sights of jumping flames, twisting air, and rising smoke.

To sum up, the immersive, intensive sensory experiences of the factual *xianghuo* are

desirable because they represent the strong power of efficacious Guanyin at Mount Putuo to respond to their personal wishes. Every visitor burns incense to communicate with Guanyin, contributing to *xianghuo* while inevitably sharing sensory experiences with other visitors. Such inevitability keeps a distance from the Durkheimian explanations of the attractiveness of the social to the individual but corresponds to the "contingency, uncontrollability, and unpredictability" (Ishii 2012, 381) that actualizes Guanyin's efficacy. Even the dialectics between the individual and the social in the vigorous *xianghuo* are the result of Guanyin's and Mount Putuo's efficacy that gathers visitors holding their personal wishes from home to the same place. Thus, factual *xianghuo* shows the "contingent coaction" (Ishii 2012) between visitors and sensory stimuli created by the efficacious Guanyin as her response to visitors at Mount Putuo.

Metaphorical *Xianghuo*: Perceiving Efficacy Together

As analyzed in the Introduction, in scriptures and legends, Guanyin's efficacy does not necessarily require incense as the medium for people to ask for her help. Instead, people can directly interact with Guanyin through sounds, visions, and even the whole sensorium. In this logic, *xianghuo* can extend to a metaphorical meaning as the measurement of the popularity of a temple or a site, regardless of whether incense is burnt and forms vigorous flames.

At first sight, *xianghuo* as a metaphor seems similar to *honghuo*, so the sensory experiences in a temple that is popular but has few visitors burning incense may not be so different from Chau's (2006; 2008a) analysis of a temple festival marked by the "red-hot sociality" among

human actors. Metaphorical *xianghuo* at Mount Putuo, however, still points to the importance of the efficacy of Guanyin in the making of sensory stimuli for visitors. In this section, I will provide three cases in which *xianghuo* is vigorous but is not necessarily about real flames. Compared to the analysis of every visitor's contribution to the real flames of incense above, the metaphoric *xianghuo* emphasizes how the efficacy of Guanyin can be perceived by visitors together. It is through the sympathetic sensory experiences of Guanyin's manifestation and loud, lively discussions among visitors to confirm their perception of Guanyin's efficacy together that the metaphorical *xianghuo* is identified.

Nanhai Guanyin's Gaze

As the first large project of Mount Putuo in the reform era, Nanhai Guanyin has had various efficacious narratives that have been constantly reproduced since its grand opening in 1997[11] (You 2018). One of my interlocutors, Louche, shared with me her mother's passion for eye

[11] China initiated "reform and opening up" (*gaige kaifang* 改革开放) policies in 1978 to move to a market economy. During this reform period, the religious policies also turn from radical and ideological to mild and pragmatic, which are now largely "classical secularism" (Gao 2022). At Mount Putuo, the local state started to restore religious activities and invited monastics back in 1979. The priority of restoration was the reconstruction and renovation of old temples, but in the early 1990s, building a new and large outdoor statue of Guanyin was proposed by Abbot Miaoshan 妙善 and then received strong support from the local government. Later named Nanhai Guanyin, the statue was built in 1997 and had various miraculous tales during and after construction. The most famous tale was that on the day of its grand opening, a ray of sunshine shot out from the clouds and shined directly on the statue when the "eye-opening ceremony" (*kaiguang* 开光, a ceremony to consecrate the image) started, and Guanyin also manifested herself on the clouds for twenty minutes during the ceremony (You 2018).

contact with Nanhai Guanyin. Louche usually visits Mount Putuo with her family. Her mother visits Mount Putuo often and is eager to take all family members together at least once a year. Although believing her mother is indeed pious, Louche does not always agree with her mother's practices for her. At home, Louche's mother usually practices incense seeing for her children. After visiting Mount Putuo alone, she would share her experiences at Mount Putuo with Louche and Louche's sister if the wishes were for them and received an efficacious response from Guanyin. For example, before Louche's *gaokao* 高考 (China National College Entrance Examination), her mother visited Mount Putuo for Guanyin's blessing and returned home with the testimony that when she worshipped Guanyin, the rain suddenly stopped with the sun coming out, and she saw Nanhai Guanyin in the clear sky touchingly.

When visiting Mount Putuo, Louche would always visit Nanhai Guanyin with her family. For her, Nanhai Guanyin is a place with vigorous *xianghuo*, but the vigorous *xianghuo* is metaphorical and not so comfortable for her: too many people make offerings and donations to Guanyin there, but she is not as pious as her mother to enjoy the *xianghuo*. During one visit to Mount Putuo, her family's offerings were taken by other visitors only a moment after they put their offerings on the table in front of Nanhai Guanyin. Moreover, she is usually required by her family to conduct some ritualized moves. For example, she needs to bow to the four directions among the crowds who hold so much incense that she cannot even open her eyes due to the thick smoke. Once, another visitor's incense ash even fell on her head when that visitor was bowing.

Also, her mother always pulls the whole family to look at Nanhai Guanyin from different

angles, arguing that “no matter from which angle you look, you always find Guanyin looking at you”. While this usually means wandering through all the noisy and crowded visitors around a huge square, Louche acknowledges that her family treats the wish-making at Nanhai Guanyin seriously. This is why they bring offerings and expect these offerings to not be taken by others. More importantly, knowing “when you are looking at her (Guanyin), she is also looking at you” is encouraging when Louche shares this with her family members. Guanyin’s gaze on them implies that their wishes are heard and will tend to be realized thanks to her efficacy, which is also the reason why Luoche’s perception of the vigorous *xianghuo* of Nanhai Guanyin is metaphorical: visitors consider Nanhai Guanyin as efficacious to respond to their wishes and thus come with offerings and donations.

Guanyin’s Manifestations at the Cave of Brahmā’s Voice

As a site with vigorous *xianghuo*, the Cave of Brahmā’s Voice can push the logic of Guanyin’s gaze further. The cave has no statue of Guanyin within it, so eye contact with Guanyin is not achieved by simply looking at the eyes of a huge statue. Rather, as mentioned in the Introduction, visitors wait for or actively look for the manifestations of Guanyin in the cave with their naked eyes. During my fieldwork, I visited the Cave of Brahmā’s Voice several times, and my observations in the afternoon of July 12 can be most noteworthy for analysis. I first went to the upper hall of the cave’s temple to burn incense. When I went to the lower hall to visit the cave, I heard a tour guide introduce the cave to his clients: “With *yuan*, you see Guanyin; without *yuan*,

you listen to the tidal sounds" (*youyuan kan guanyin, wuyuan ting chaoyin* 有缘看观音 无缘听潮音). This line again shows that the Cave of Brahmā's Voice is acoustically a copy of the Cave of Tidal Sounds. Moreover, this line highlights visitors' *yuan* 缘 with Guanyin.

Yuan is a Buddhist term referring to "the conditions of phenomenal existence", but it has also been commonly used by both Buddhists and non-Buddhists in everyday communication in contemporary China to explain seemingly random relationships as fateful or prearranged (Fisher 2014, 85–85). Here, I want to bring in Fisher's (2014, 85) emphasis on the implication of certain "pre-fated bonds" between two parties, which are not limited to humans but can be between a person and a deity. For the Cave of Brahmā's Voice, it is thus the "pre-fated bonds" that make the manifestation of Guanyin visible to visitors, so the vision of Guanyin's manifestation is a "contingent coaction" (Ishii 2012) that actualizes the efficacy of Guanyin. In the case of the Cave of Brahmā's Voice, such "pre-fated bonds" in the tour guide's introduction are between Guanyin and visitors and are performed through the visual experiences of Guanyin's manifestation. While the sounds of the tide can also be an attraction according to the tour guide, viewing Guanyin is more desirable as proof of the uncontrollable, pre-fated connections of coaction between Guanyin and visitors. Such uncontrollability, the "indispensable features" (Ishii 2012, 381) of the sacred, shows Guanyin's efficacy, which is more desirable and rarer at Mount Putuo than the natural soundscape of tides open for appreciation at any time.

Walking down the stairs to the lower hall of the temple at the Cave of Brahmā's Voice is a long journey, in which the sound of tides crashing on the rocks on the shore would get louder and

louder with more and more echoes. The entrance to the lower hall faces the sea, and visitors need to enter the hall and go down to reach the viewing platform facing the cliff. With some guardrails at the forefront of the platform, a table for placing offerings and receiving donations is less than a meter from the guardrails. Visitors can not only stand between the table and guardrails but also kneel on the kneeling cushions before the table. The setting of a table and cushions resembles those before an image of a deity in temples, suggesting that one can view and worship Guanyin in the cave, even if there is no statue in real.

When I reached the platform, there were around 20 visitors (Figure 3). Five or six of them stood between the guardrails and the table and occupied all the space at the forefront. Before the table were two visitors kneeling on the cushion and gazing at the cave through the apertures among the visitors standing before them. More visitors were behind them, holding their smartphones to take pictures of the cave and walking around to find the best angle for photography. It was an afternoon, so the sun faced the platform, darkening the inside of the cave while leading to overexposure issues for these photographers. Some complained that they could not see Guanyin, but I heard more talking in dialects that I could hardly understand. Such bubbles of dialects are common at Mount Putuo, partially because of the huge variety of dialects in China and partially because a lot of visitors travel in groups and are comfortable speaking dialects to companions. Maybe some of them were checking where Guanyin could be when they looked at the photos together or used fingers to point to some places in the cave. These voices easily drowned out the sound of tides.

Figure 3 Visitors Looking at the Cave

Then, a middle-aged male visitor came with his companions. Other visitors' social bubbles of dialects seemed to break up when he loudly introduced the Cave of Brahmā's Voice and the manifestations of Guanyin in Mandarin. Standing behind the table, he started by saying that this was the best position to view Guanyin: someone can see a sideway Guanyin with a man kneeling in front of her, and below this is another Guanyin sitting down, but everyone sees different Guanyin and needs some luck. His words soon stirred the enthusiastic discussions of almost everyone, but this time, most visitors spoke Mandarin and talked to not only companions but also strangers, leading to a noisy atmosphere. Some visitors walked to this man for "the best" position even from the forefront of the platform. He continued to talk about how to view Guanyin. Once he said, "It is hard to see (Guanyin) in the backlight (of the cave) today". Then, he raised his hand to block from his sight the table that reflected the sunlight and then exclaimed in a relaxing tone: "In this way, (Guanyin is) still very clear over there!" Hearing this, another middle-aged

man asked him where Guanyin was, he described that one was on the left cliff with a "pointed hat"[12] and a man kneeling in the front. "Looking for Guanyin is looking for her hat. When you see the hat then you can see Guanyin."

A young lady gazed at the cave for a while and then turned to the man, "Is the Guanyin a side image with her hands clasped in front of her chest?" He soon responded "Yes" several times, saying that "You really have good luck". I knew this image of Guanyin very well, as I was guided by a visitor to find it when I conducted my earlier fieldwork in 2021. At that time, discussions among visitors were similarly lively with such a "leader". The cracks on the left cliff resemble the contour of Guanyin sitting on a lotus with her head down slightly (Figure 4). This can be the largest, clearest, and maybe most famous image that can be found on the cliff of the Cave of Brahmā's Voice. In all my visits to the cave, I could always easily find it. Also, in my last visits to the cave in my fieldwork, I was with two interlocutors who came to Mount Putuo more for leisure and had nearly no knowledge of Buddhism and Mount Putuo's efficacy. I told them the Cave of Brahmā's Voice is famous for Guanyin's manifestation, but they saw nothing in the cave at first. When one interlocutor took a photo of the cliff and asked me for help, I pointed out this image on the cliff. He suddenly found it and was surprised that it looked like Guanyin so much. Another interlocutor even asked me whether it was carved by someone but not naturally formed on the cliff.

[12] A typical image of Guanyin has the headdress in white, as shown below in Figure 4. The male visitor described it as a "pointed hat" (*jianjiande maozi* 尖尖的帽子).

Figure 4 The Cracks like Guanyin[13]

Back to the male visitor, more and more people wanted him to confirm their vision of Guanyin following his dialogue with the lady: a white one, the part of the cliff with flowing water, and the gesture of the kneeling man that he mentioned before. Maybe feeling impatient, he asked them to look at the cave themselves, as everyone sees different Guanyin, on the left or right, a whole Guanyin or Guanyin's face. He gradually retreated from the platform, now talking with his companions in the dialect just like most visitors before he came, but the discussions of other visitors went on. More visitors now spoke Mandarin than their dialects as moments before, as if a sense of equality had formed among them after the male visitor broke their bubbles of dialects to look for Guanyin together. Such a sense of equality had not reached the level of

[13] Source of the Guanyin image for comparison: https://guanyinworld.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/guanyin-world-gallery-07-wolianguanyin.jpg. Accessed: January 26, 2024.

communitas, but it showed how visitors' pursuit of Guanyin's efficacious manifestations led them to talk to each other equally. Those who believed they saw Guanyin actively told their companions or other strangers about the position of Guanyin on the cliff and her appearance, and those who saw nothing either confirmed such information again and again from different people or left the cave with disappointment because they failed to interact with Guanyin. A middle-aged female visitor alleged she saw at least three manifestations of Guanyin and actively taught a young woman and her five-year-old son to find them: a face below the water flowing down the cliff, one within the deep cave, and the hatted, sideways Guanyin mentioned above. The mother had difficulty finding the face, but her son said he could see it. He held his mother's hand and walked to the right side of the platform, and his mother seriously bent down to level her sight with her son and located the face.

Overall, the popularity, or the metaphorical *xianghuo*, of the Cave of Brahmā's Voice is marked by the noisy and fervent atmosphere of visitors' search for Guanyin's manifestations. One's sight of Guanyin is both socially confirmed and shared by other visitors co-present on the platform, which not only breaks the dialectal bubble with a sense of equality emerging in speaking Mandarin but also reproduces the efficacy of Guanyin to manifest for other visitors immediately in situ. The discussions among visitors seem to imply Guanyin's images as passive to be found, but seeing Guanyin in the cave actually means Guanyin is actively looking back and has perceived the visitors' requests or wishes.

This is why viewing Guanyin shows visitors' *yuan* with Guanyin and the good luck brought

by Guanyin: it is Guanyin who actively manifests herself to be viewed, as Guanyin is compassionate and can respond to every sentient being. The discussions among visitors are not only the confirmation and creation of each other's *yuan* with Guanyin but also constantly show Guanyin's compassion and efficacy are not for only one visitor, especially when a visitor turns from seeing no Guanyin to finding her manifestation. Thus, such sensory experiences of the metaphorical *xianghuo* entangle the visual experiences produced by the efficacious Guanyin and the soundscapes co-produced by visitors. In short, the entanglement of human and nonhuman agency goes beyond the "sensory-production model" only consisting of human actors.

Puji Temple's *Shuilu Fahui*

On August 1, I visited Puji Temple around noon and was surprised to find some workers in yellow vests with the words "Puji Temple's Water and Land Dharma Ceremony" (*Puji chansi shuilu fahui* 普济禅寺水陆法会). I asked one worker who held a wooden stool and stood in the courtyard of the temple's main hall, and he said it was the final day of a seven-day *shuilu fahui* 水陆法会[14] commissioned by a group of donors. Now they were preparing for "sending off"

[14] *Shuilu fahui* is one of the most spectacular Dharma services in Chinese Buddhism with a long history since Song and high popularity. It is for the deliverance of all sentient beings, which are metaphorically referred to as covering the range of "water and land". The ceremony lasts many days and therefore costs a lot, but the donors also generate significant merit by benefiting all sentient beings. My thesis focus on visitors attracted by *shuilu fahui* and their sensory experiences but not the ceremony itself. See Chan (2008) for the analysis of *shuilu fahui* in contemporary times.

(*songchuqu* 送出去, which I believe is the worker's colloquial expression for the final segment of the ritual, *songsheng* 送圣, "sending off the holy"), which would last 40 minutes and end up with walking from Puji Temple to Baibu Beach 百步沙 (*Baibu sha*) to conduct the ritual. In the following hour, the monks and workers gradually gathered in the courtyard, holding streamers with names of Buddhas or *bodhisattva*s, wooden stools, and paper-made emissaries, who are routinely "invited from the divine ministries of the heavens, atmosphere, earth, and underworld" for *shuilu fahui*s (Stevenson 2001). The lead monk called the roll with a loudspeaker and rebuked the visitors who attempted to enter the courtyard from the stairs, as it was temporarily blocked off by isolation belts for the ritual.

Within the main hall, the space in front of the main Guanyin statue had also been blocked off by isolation belts. Several tables with incense, flowers, and offerings were set there with some cushions in the front, connected to another table in front of the main hall facing the courtyard. When this table was well set, a group of monks entered and walked around the main hall, who were playing the Dharma instruments and chanting the name of Buddha Amitābha. About twenty lay people wearing ritual robes followed these monks. They were obviously the sponsors of this *shuilu fahui*. They each took an incense holder with one stick of burning incense and ended up standing before the cushions in front of the Guanyin statue. While a normal Dharma service is usually held by a monk, three monks appeared with robes and elaborate

embroidered hats for important rituals[15] to host this *shuilu fahui*. When they arrived at their cushions which were larger and more decorated, chanting of a series of *sūtra*s and *dhāraṇī*s started. The Dharma instruments were played loudly, and three officiant monks all held a microphone connected to the audio system in the main hall.

I stood on the left side of the main hall since the ritual started. The cushions placed before the isolation belts had all been occupied by visitors when monks entered the main hall (Figure 5). They kneeled on the cushions with hands together on the chest, and most of them kept kneeling throughout the rituals. More visitors stood behind them and watched the rituals with serious looks, some also with hands clasped. The main hall was crowded at that time, as nearly no one left the hall once attracted by the ritual. When the chanting began, those visitors who kneeled on the cushions also prostrated when the sponsors were guided by monks around them to prostrate. Some visitors standing behind would bow as well, but I nearly heard no one chanting along, even when it came to *Heart Sūtra* (*Xin jing* 心经) and *the Great Compassion Dhāraṇī* (*Dabei zhou* 大悲咒), two important and popular Buddhist texts about Guanyin. Rather, some talked with each other to ask what the ritual was in a low voice, although most bystanders joined the ritual as seriously as the sponsors who indeed paid a lot – the schedule was just before the second festival of the incense offering, and I heard from locals that the donors possibly paid millions of *yuan* for this grand *shuilu fahui*.

[15] The hat is named *Pilu mao* 毗卢帽, which is in red and yellow and with Buddha Vairocana's image.

Figure 5 The Main Hall of Puji Temple when the Ritual Started

When the chanting stopped, most monks sat on their cushions except the officiant monks. They turned around to the table in the courtyard, and donors also changed the direction of their cushions to the courtyard and kneeled on them again. Visitors began to move out of the main hall to see what happened in the courtyard. To get a better view, some even stood on the thresholds of the main hall, which are usually considered the shoulders of Buddha and thus cannot be stepped on. An officiant monk began to spray the water for purification (*sajing* 洒净), followed by the reading of writs and petitions. While the donors would all prostrate when their names were read, visitors now had nearly no reactions. Some left maybe because of the long and boring reading, but some just walked around and talked with the workers to find out what was going on.

It was not until the workers of the temple followed the instructions of a monk to put paper effigies into the incense burner that many visitors were reattracted. The factual *xianghuo*, the vigorous flames in the burner with these paper effigies, did not attract visitors this time. Rather,

they followed the officiant monks back to the main hall. The officiant monks resumed chanting and prostrated to Guanyin three times, and most visitors followed to prostrate and bow again. Then, all the monks took the offerings from the table in the main hall and walked out. Drums began to beat loudly, and monks and workers holding streamers and wooden stools in the courtyard also started moving toward the exit of the temple in a line. Many visitors seemed eager to follow the monks and workers, but they were treated differently from donors. With his loudspeaker, the monk mentioned above began to rebuke non-participant visitors again. He stopped the visitors who attempted to join the line of monks, workers, and donors in haste. Only after all the monks, workers, and donors had gone, did he follow up the line in the end, and he also stopped preventing non-participant visitors from following. This showed that visitors were not formally treated as participants of the *shuilu fahui*, although they shared the sensory experiences with the monks, workers, and donors.

Walking from the temple to Baibu Beach took about 15 minutes and passed a busy parking lot for buses. Such a long line with monks and workers wearing conspicuous clothes, loud drumbeats, and various offerings surely caught many passers-by's attention. They watched in silence or asked companions what was happening, and some took out their smartphones to take photos or videos. A small number of curious passers-by joined the visitors who followed the line from Puji Temple, but some visitors had already left after walking out of the temple. When the long line of ritual crossed the street from the parking lot to the entrance of Baibu Beach, at least six buses had to wait for the line to pass. However, all visitors who were "irrelevant" to, or in

other words, not donors of the *shuilu fahui* were not allowed to enter the beach.

I walked to the right side of the beach's entrance, as I knew the restricted ritual space was on the right of the beach. I was surprised to find that a bare patch on the lawn (Figure 6), as a gap between trees is there for looking down at the ritual space. In other words, so many people have watched the ritual in this place that the grass has died out from their standing there. I was among some other onlookers, and more and more visitors stood here to watch. Those coming for the beach were also not allowed to enter but could only wait until the ritual was over. They were also curious about what was happening and took out their smartphones to take videos or photos. By contrast, visitors who came to see the ritual then gradually left in disappointment, as the ritual was too far to be viewed, heard, and even filmed well (Figure 7). When the ritual was over, workers left the beach first. The donors then came out slowly and chatted with each other and the monks. All of them seemed to feel a sense of relief after finishing a very important task.

Figure 6 Visitors Looking Down upon the Ritual Space

Figure 7 The Limited View of the Ritual

Throughout the entire ritual, it is obvious that donors and non-donors were separated by the accessibility of certain ritual spaces and ritual activities, but the grand scene of the *shuilu fahui* naturally caught the attention of non-participant visitors and passers-by to join as well. Even if they knew little about the ritual itself, the loud and solemn chanting and playing of Dharma instruments, the special dressing of the monks and workers, and the unusual lining up and walking from Puji Temple to Baibu Beach showed the unique significance of the ritual. While I was cautioned by my mother that I should stay away from others' *shuilu fahui* because of the spirits and the donors' ancestors summoned to the rituals, most visitors would tend to consider rituals as efficaciously positive for everyone witnessing them. For example, one visitor posted on *Xiaohongshu* that the encounter with *shuilu fahui* was lucky for them, but the poster even did not know it was a *shuilu fahui* and only saw the gathering of monks on Baibu Beach for *songsheng*:

"It is Saturday, the seventh of the ninth lunar month. Today I came across the Dharma

service held by a Master and the ritual in the picture [the picture was the gathering of monks and workers on the beach]. I asked the locals about the ritual, but I did not understand their accents. Today is lucky. I worshipped at all the temples. The *xianghuo* of Puji Temple and Zizhulin Guanyin [Nanhai Guanyin] are the most vigorous! It is recommended to search for the correct way to worship the Buddha and the precautions before coming!"

Similar to the logic in which Guanyin's efficacy reaches the peak on her three festivals, the occasion of a grand ritual also marks the higher efficacy of Guanyin than on normal days. This was why visitors in the main hall kneeled, prostrated, and bowed following the donors. The efficacy of Guanyin was shared by everyone present through the sensory experiences that were almost unavoidably shared and sympathetic: by contrast to the real incense burnt by each visitor as mentioned above, the loud sounds and conspicuous dress and decorations of rituals are open to the perception of both donors and non-donors. In the case above, such sensory experiences were even more attractive than the flames in the burner, showing a metaphorical dimension of *xianghuo* in the most vigorous temple at Mount Putuo.

Concluding Thoughts

All three cases above highlight the importance of efficacy in the popularity, or the metaphorical *xianghuo*, of a site at Mount Putuo. Just like the factual *xianghuo*, Guanyin's efficacy again entangles with the dialectics between the individual and the social in the metaphorical *xianghuo*. The difference is that the factual *xianghuo* shows more of the logic from the individual to the

social, but the metaphorical *xianghuo* shows more of the reverse. The factual *xianghuo* is the aggregation of every visitor's burning of incense to communicate with Guanyin, but the metaphorical *xianghuo* distributes the efficacy of Guanyin to visitors: the sensory stimuli created by Guanyin are open to everyone and thus allow visitors copresent to confirm their sensory experiences about Guanyin's efficacy with each other.

Moreover, it is the efficacy of Guanyin that is fundamental to both the factual and metaphorical *xianghuo* and enacts the dialectics between the individual and the social. At Mount Putuo, Guanyin is indeed a "dividual" (Palmer, Tse, and Colwell 2019) with efficacy that is omnipotent in general but can differentiate for each visitor's specific wishes. *Xianghuo* represents the general efficacy of Guanyin that is open to every visitor, and visitors individualize the efficacy for their wishes through their sensory experiences, which are personal but perceive the sensory stimuli shared by others. It does not matter why other visitors burn incense, make eye contact with Nanhai Guanyin, look for Guanyin's image in the Cave of Brahmā's Voice, hold *shuilu fahui*, or "hitchhike" *shuilu fahui* paid by others. Rather important is that no visitor would miss the opportunity to receive Guanyin's efficacy in the *xianghuo* in all these cases. Because of this, visitors to the Cave of Brahmā's Voice, for example, would use Mandarin rather than their dialects to discuss where Guanyin was, and even a child's testimony could be taken seriously.

As Feuchtwang (1992, 134) would say, visitors "are only equal before a god", and a sense of equality among visitors indeed emerges in *xianghuo*. For one thing, sharing some sensory experiences is unavoidable and thus equal to all visitors, such as the smell of burning incense

through breath. Also, the efficacy of Guanyin and the sensory stimuli produced by Guanyin are out of visitors' control, so their "coaction" (Ishii 2012) with the sensory stimuli actualizes the power of Guanyin beyond them. Compared to Turner and Turner's (1996) original model of communitas in pilgrimage, I consider such a sense of equality in *xianghuo* as what Wheeler (1999) calls "confluence". While Wheeler (1999) raises this concept to discuss the overlap of pilgrimage centers between different and even conflicting traditions, my emphasis is that visitors with their own purpose can share the same sacred space through their "bodily copresence", which is enough to dissolve their boundaries and create a sense of equality.

Interestingly, Wheeler highlights the importance of sensory experiences in such "bodily copresence" and "confluence", for "touch is surprisingly essential, but visual and even olfactory proximity is also valued at the sacred site" (Wheeler 1999, 31). At Mount Putuo, it was indeed through the sympathetic multisensory experiences in *xianghuo* that the tension between Louche and her mother, between different visitors at the Cave of Brahmā's Voice, and between the donors and non-donors of *shuilu fahui* dissolved. After all, given Guanyin's compassion, when she manifests or responds, there must be more than one person who can perceive.

Therefore, *xianghuo* as the sensory stimuli based on Guanyin's efficacy invites visitors to coact with them. Because of the division of Guanyin's general efficacy for specific personal wishes, *xianghuo* activates the social interactions of visitors in the dialectics between the individual and the social. In the next chapter, *qingjing* also corresponds to the logic that Guanyin's general efficacy can have different representations: it can create the intense sensory

stimuli of *xianghuo*, but the ability to make *qingjing* is also part of Guanyin's efficacy.

Chapter 2: Sensing *Qingjing*

On the day I traveled with two interlocutors to the Cave of Brahmā's Voice, we also visited Nanhai Guanyin in the afternoon. When we arrived at the square, a temple worker just started to clean up incense ashes from the almost full burner. The flames at that time were no less vigorous than what I saw on the second of Guanyin's festivals. When the worker stirred the ashes to weaken the flames while taking some ashes out with a shovel, seven security guards set the isolation belts about three meters from the burner and stood by to prevent visitors from putting incense in the burner and getting burnt by the flames. The temperature was almost 35 ℃ (95 ℉) that day. Feeling the hot wave from the burner, my interlocutors suggested we go to the halls of Nanhai Guanyin first and burn incense after we came back. Even when we walked back after half an hour, the worker was still taking ashes out from the burner, in which the flames kept jumping but indeed less vigorously. After we burned the incense and bowed to Guanyin, the security guards began to take the isolation belts off. The worker who finished his work walked to a large bucket near the burner, scooped water from it, and poured it over his head without taking off his clothes and pants. The water fell into a puddle on the ground without ponding, as the hot sun soon vaporized it. Seeing this, one of my interlocutors said how he also wanted to have a shower like this. The heat from both the weather and factual *xianghuo* also struck a security guard, who said to his colleagues that he could not hold on and seemed unable to stand and walk well. Two of his colleagues then carried him to their duty booth, and another who seemed like the supervisor told him to take a good rest.

This can be a good example for the unpleasant and even dangerous *xianghuo*, which may be exactly what Louche dislikes about the vigorous *xianghuo* at Nanhai Guanyin as mentioned earlier. Facing such undesirably vigorous *xianghuo*, visitors may turn to pursue an opposite sensory status, *qingjing*. As mentioned at the beginning of Chapter 1, Mount Putuo is both *xianghuo wang* and *qingjing* for visitors, and it is the coexistence of vigorous *xianghuo* and *qingjing* that makes Mount Putuo a "contradictory" place. How can such a "contradiction" and coexistence be possible at Mount Putuo? What are the relationships between *qingjing* and *xianghuo* in the sensory experiences of visitors? In this chapter, I will first provide a brief review of the usage of *qingjing* in Chinese and then show three logics of *qingjing* at Mount Putuo that can be compatible with the vigorous *xianghuo*. I call them "absence", "complementarity", and "distraction". First, Mount Putuo has places that are *qingjing* where visitors can stay away from the undesirable, potentially dangerous *xianghuo*. In these places, *qingjing* can refer to the quiet, peaceful, and solemn environment in which *xianghuo* is absent, but it usually does not mean absolute quietness. Rather, the absence of *xianghuo* allows visitors to feel relieved from the excessive *xianghuo* and pay attention to the sensory stimuli that they can hardly notice in the vigorous *xianghuo*. Thus, *qingjing* also means internal mental relief or inner peace, which is connected to the external environment but not necessarily on the condition of absolute external quietness.

When looking at Mount Putuo as a whole, temples with vigorous *xianghuo* and temples that are *qingjing* are mutually complementary to present the holistic picture of Guanyin's abode: it is

not only efficacious to attract numerous wishes of visitors but also an idealized pure land of Buddhism. As a *bodhisattva*, Guanyin should have the strong power to create her own land of *qingjing*, which can provide an environment conducive to Buddhist cultivation and practices. This power does not weaken Guanyin's efficacy but specifies it through *qingjing*, an ideal different from *xianghuo*, and thus adds to the general degree of efficacy. In other words, Guanyin's efficacy can create both *xianghuo* and *qingjing*, which are not contradictory but compatible to show the different dimensions of the efficacy of Mount Putuo as a whole.

Furthermore, *xianghuo* can directly lead to *qingjing* as a mental relief or luminosity. Within *xianghuo*, one might get diverted and distracted by the intensive sensory stimulation and thus turn to reflect and introspect on the lost, confused status of the self. In such contemplations, a sense of *qingjing* and inner peace can be possible exactly due to the distraction of *xianghuo*. The three logics overlap and emphasize the internal feelings of peace and purity more than the external environment. More importantly, vigorous *xianghuo* is not only compatible with but also the basis for *qingjing*, for both can present Guanyin's and Mount Putuo's efficacy for visitors.

The Usage of *Qingjing* in Chinese

Pronounced the same way, *qingjing* can be written in two different ways: 清静 and 清净. Due to the same pronunciation, people pay little attention to whether their spoken *qingjing* is 清净 or 清静 and do not differentiate the two words in daily communication, but their general meanings can still be distinguished. In *Da ci hai* 大辞海 (a comprehensive Chinese dictionary),

the meaning of "not bothering/bothered" (*bu fanrao* 不烦扰) is shared by the two *qingjing*s (Xia and Chen, n.d.-a; n.d.-b). While 清净 only has one other meaning, "away from sins and annoyances in Buddhism"[16], 清静 can refer to "a pure and clear mind"[17], "quietness" (*ningjing* 宁静), "calm" (*anding* 安定), and "clear and peaceful weather"[18] (Xia and Chen, n.d.-a; n.d.-b).

Before exploring their contemporary usages in everyday dialogues at Mount Putuo, the second meaning of 清净 shows that tracing the two *qingjing*s' appearance in Buddhist texts can still be valuable. The two words can be found in various Chinese religious texts, usually 清静 in Daoist texts such as *Qingjing jing* 清静经[19] (*Scripture of Clarity and Tranquility*) and 清净 in Buddhist texts. In the *Dictionary of Buddhist Terms* (*Foxue da cidian* 佛学大辞典) of Ding Fubao 丁福保 (1991, 1973) in the early twentieth century, *qingjing* 清净 refers to "staying away from the faults of misbehaviors and from the stains of annoyances"[20]. In the *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*, the basic meaning of *qingjing* 清净 is "pure; purified; purity" (Muller and Hodge, n.d.-b), which is also the common translation for this word in most English studies of Chinese Buddhism or English translations of Chinese Buddhist texts. However, it can be a

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[16] "*Fojiao cheng yuanli zui'e yu fannao*. 佛教称远离罪恶与烦恼。"

[17] "*Xinxing chunzheng tianjing*. 心境纯正恬静。"

[18] "*Tianqi qinglang ningjing*. 天气晴朗宁静。"

[19] The full Chinese title: *Taishang laojun shuo chang qingjing jing* 太上老君说常清静经.

[20] "*Li exing zhi guoshi, li fannao zhi gouran, yun qingjing*. 离恶行之过失，离烦恼之垢染，云清净。"

surprising fact that the *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism* lists about 90 corresponding Sanskrit terms that are translated as *qingjing* 清净 in Buddhist texts. Why is *qingjing* 清净 such a popular word for the translation of different Sanskrit terms in Buddhist texts? Is there any connection between 清静 in Daoist texts and 清净 in Buddhist texts?

Xiao's (2009) analysis of the early Chinese translation of Buddha Amitābha's name as *wuliang qingjing* 无量清净 (measureless purity) in *Fo shuo wuliang qingjing pingdengjue jing* 佛说无量清净平等觉经[21] seems to explain this. Xiao argues that Buddha Amitābha's name does not include a Sanskrit word that can be translated as *qingjing* directly. Rather, the choice of early translators of Buddhist texts in the Han to use 清净 in Buddha Amitābha's name was likely an influence of 清静 from Daoist texts, reflecting the attempt of translators at that time to make "foreign" Buddhist texts more meaningful and comprehensible for people already familiar with Daoist concepts (Xiao 2009).

Regarding the meanings of 清净 in Buddhist contexts, Xiao (2009, 65; 72) argues that it

[21] *Fo shuo wuliang qingjing pingdenjue jing* is one version of the Chinese translations of the *Longer Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra* among others such as *Fo shuo wuliangshou jing* 佛说无量寿经. Xiao's (2009) study provides a short discussion of the chronological order and translators of different versions and suggests that Buddha Amitābha's name was first translated as *amituo* 阿弥陀 in the earliest version of the *Longer Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra*, *Fo shuo amituo sanyesanfo saloufotan guodu rendao jing* 佛说阿弥陀三耶三佛萨楼佛檀过度人道经 or *Da amituo jing* 大阿弥陀经 translated by Lokakṣema, and then changed to *wuliang qingjing* in *Fo shuo wuliang qingjing pingdengjue jing*. Xiao (2009, 70) suggests such a change could be the later translator's attempt to make Lokakṣema's translation style more comprehensible to Chinese people, as Lokakṣema relies on transliterations of Buddhist terms without clear meanings in Chinese, such as Amitābha to *amituo*.

reflects the Daoist ideals of purity, spontaneity (*ziran* 自然), and non-action (*wuwei* 无为), which are grounded in the views of human nature in pre-Han and Han times, but can also be connected with Buddhist concepts like *samādhi* (*ding* 定), a mindful and luminous state of mental concentration in meditation. Also, given 清静 as one of the highest ideals in Daoism, 清净 can refer to *nirvāṇa* or the enlightenment as the highest stage in Buddhist practices and thus become proper for translating Buddha Amitābha's name as *wuliang qingjing* (Xiao 2009, 72). Furthermore, Xiao (2009, 72–73) argues that the translation of Buddha Amitābha's name as *wuliang qingjing* is the origin of the Chinese word *jingtu* 净土 (pure land), which is an abbreviation of *wuliang qingjing fo tu* 无量清净佛土 (the land of Buddha *wuliang qingjing*/Buddha Amitābha) in *Fo shuo wuliang qingjing pingdengjue jing*. This explains how later Pure Land Buddhism that seeks rebirth into Buddha Amitābha's land is named as such and further extends the meaning of *qingjing* 清净 into the power of a Buddha or *bodhisattva* to create their pure lands.

These findings from Xiao correspond to the fact that *qingjing* can be a broad word to translate a lot of Sanskrit terms. Also, it seems exactly the case that 清静 helps people to understand the 清净 aspect of a Buddhist place like Mount Putuo, the abode or Pure Land of Guanyin. Commonly, my interlocutors simply use this word to describe their sensory experiences at Mount Putuo as antonymous to *re'nao*, *honghuo*, or *xianghuo* as presented above. Sensorily speaking, visitors also tend to paraphrase *qingjing* as *qingliang* 清凉 (cool and refreshing) or *anjing* 安静 (quiet), which seems to evoke a literal understanding of 清静 but not 清净.

Although my interlocutors might self-doubt whether their *qingjing* was 净 or 静 after I asked about their reason for using *anjing*, they simply consider *qingjing* as an ideal sensory experience at Mount Putuo because it is Guanyin's abode and thus should embody highest Buddhist ideals. Also, some visitors indeed know that Guanyin is the principal attendant of Buddha Amitābha who is *wuliang qingjing* in the Pure Land, so connecting Guanyin with *qingjing* becomes more reasonable for them. These observations exactly echo Xiao's argument about the usage of *qingjing* to show the supreme status of Buddhas and *bodhisattva*s in Buddhism and thus their power to create *qingjing* in their pure lands.

In addition to the power of Guanyin and Mount Putuo to produce *xianghuo* and respond to visitors' wishes, their power to bring *qingjing* to visitors can be considered as another dimension of their efficacy, which is theoretically polysemic as mentioned in the Introduction. Interestingly, *xianghuo* and *qingjing* have an intersection: the character of *qing* 清 alone can sometimes be an adjective to describe burning incense. For example, the slogans of the local government usually try to persuade visitors to burn less incense, just three "pure" sticks (*sanzhi qingxiang* 三支清香), to return *qingjing* for Mount Putuo. Here, *qing* shows a similar logic to what the incense maker told me: the smoldering of a few sticks of incense can bring fragrance and even more purity to Mount Putuo. However, such usage implies the possibility for *xianghuo* and *qingjing* to be related and even unified on the same basis of Guanyin's power and efficacy, which can communicate with people who burn incense. Based on the usage of *qingjing* in Chinese, this preliminary argument of the connection between *xianghuo* and *qingjing* through efficacy is

exactly furthered in the following discussions of the three logics of *qingjing*.

Absence

While visitors believe that the more vigorous the *xianghuo* is, the more possible their wishes can come true, too much *xianghuo* can also mean inconvenience, discomfort, and even danger. Like the case of Louche mentioned above, almost all my interlocutors told me that they were afraid of being burnt by other visitors' incense or the flames in the incense burner. Sometimes, visitors would console themselves that being burnt by flames means having more *honghuo* in their lives, but it is also a natural reaction to stay away from too much *xianghuo* and turn to look for *qingjing*, a quiet environment without too much sensory stimulation. For example, one visitor I met at Baotuo Temple 宝陀讲寺 (*Baotuo jiangsi*) told me that as this temple was *qingjing* compared to other temples, he could spend a longer time worshipping Guanyin, talking to her, and making wishes in a quiet environment.

Here, *qingjing* means a quiet and peaceful environment without distractions, which can also be a desirable condition for wish-making and Guanyin's efficacy just like *xianghuo*. With *xianghuo* absent, *qingjing* provides the opportunities to better interact with Guanyin personally without other wish-makers' disturbance. As analyzed in the next chapter, Shuangquan Temple 双泉庵 (*Shuangquan an*) also became popular for visitors because of its *qingjing* – visitors can take good photos that show their contact with Buddhism and Mount Putuo for its efficacy (further discussed in Chapter 3). In addition to the places, the early morning and late night are

considered quiet and peaceful periods suitable for going out and appreciating a dimension of Mount Putuo different from the daytime.

Counterintuitively, *qingjing* is not absolutely quiet without any sensory stimuli. In some cases, the feeling of a place as *qingjing* comes from the perception of the sensory stimuli that can hardly draw one's attention in the vigorous *xianghuo*. I asked several interlocutors what moment at Mount Putuo would pop into their minds when talking about *qingjing*. One interlocutor told me the sounds of wind bells on incense burners at Baotuo Temple impressed her a lot. There were very few visitors but strong wind. When she closed her eyes facing Guanyin, the sounds of wind bells gave her a very special sense that she never felt in other temples and on previous visits to Mount Putuo. It was also because of her words that I went to Baotuo Temple particularly to see and listen to the wind bells, which are in the shape of traditional Chinese chimes, one on each of the four angles at the top of incense burners (Figure 8). Later I noticed that many incense burners at Mount Putuo also have such chimes, but it was indeed only at Baotuo Temple, a *qingjing* temple, that I could hear the sounds.

Figure 8 Chimes of an Incense Burner at Baotuo Temple

Similarly, the interlocutor who believed that Mount Putuo was a “contradictory” place told me that it was in the Meifu Temple 梅福庵 (*Meifu an*) at the Xitian Scenic Area 西天景区 (*Xitian jingqu*), a hill with several temples but not many visitors in recent years. She described the trees, stray cats, and especially a beautiful patch of green moss that grows full of a wall of the temple as *qingjing*, *qingyou* 清幽 (quiet and secluded), and *qingliang* 清凉 (cool and refreshing). She thought maybe no others would pay attention to moss, but it marked her memory of the day at Mount Putuo so much that she would always see a patch of green when she closed her eyes.

An “extreme” interlocutor is Junpeng, who strongly identifies himself as a frequent visitor to Mount Putuo exactly for *qingjing*. He and his family took refuge as lay Buddhists in a temple now mainly housing old monastics in their retirement. It has nearly no visitors and *xianghuo*, so he periodically goes there for Dharma service or a short stay for *qingjing*. In my interview with him, Junpeng said he believes that Buddhism educates an individual on how to look for “deliverance” (*jietuo* 解脱), let go of obsessions, and see through life and death, but most visitors to Mount Putuo, even most people claiming their belief in Buddhism nowadays, actually go in the opposite direction. This made him feel “fortunate” (*qingxing* 庆幸) as the minority to look for *qingjing* at Mount Putuo. He expressed the discomfort of being bumped in the crowds in popular temples, the potential risk of being burnt by incense, and many visitors’ obsession with a particular wish to make and the photogenic spots for social media (*wanghong daka dian* 网红打卡点) to visit at Mount Putuo. By contrast, he feels fortunate that compared to the majority of

visitors to Mount Putuo, he usually comes for nothing but relaxation and *qingjing*.

When I asked him which *qingjing* he was talking about, Junpeng said: "Before you asked, I was thinking '*jing*' (静) as in '*anjing*' (安静), but '*jing*' (净) as in '*ganjing*' (干净) seems to cover more, such as *liugen qingjing* 六根清净 (purity of the six sense faculties)." He enjoys a *qingjing* temple, but what is crucial to *qingjing* is the life there: an "original" (*yuanshi* 原始) status with basic needs met, in which he can turn off his smartphones, do whatever he wants, and reach an ideal mental state without any obsessions and stimuli of obsessions.

Such a mental state is exactly another meaning of *qingjing* as the description of inner peace but not external quietness, which for Junpeng is "free" (*ziyou* 自由) and "happiest" (*zui xingfu* 最幸福). However, even for Junpeng, *qingjing* is not completely cutting off all contact with others but only the "cumbersome social procedures". In a small, *qingjing* temple, the opportunities to communicate with monastics and workers can be a good process of interpersonal interactions for Junpeng. For example, he can join in the morning services conducted by monastics and workers in the temple every day, which is a change to his own habits of everyday life. Such a change can not only be novel to arouse his curiosity but also a chance to feel whether their monastic life can really help to "relieve" (*shuhuan* 舒缓) his heart-mind.

Junpeng's wording reminds me of what Stenslund (2015) attempts to bring into studies of the senses: "presence of absence", something absent can be experienced as a presence because the absence is marked and highlighted. In this logic, the sensory experience of *qingjing* shows the absence of *xianghuo*, but such absence is exactly perceived through the sensory stimuli that

seem to break the absolute quiet but highlight the absence of *xianghuo*. While Stenslund's (2015) focus on the smells of hospitals is totally different from mine, her analysis of nurses' removal and avoidance of bad smells as the absence that "manifests itself as a kind of relief" can be valuable. I suggest that the meanings of *qingjing* as external quietness and internal calmness are similarly connected through "absence as relief". *Qingjing* can be the quiet environment free of the high-intensity sensory stimuli of *xianghuo*, but what visitors pay attention to in *qingjing* is not the quiet environment itself but the low-intensity sensory stimuli only prominent in such an environment. These stimuli allow *qingjing* to be felt and remembered as the absence of *xianghuo* in the external environment. More importantly, these sensory stimuli further mark *qingjing* as internal mental feelings: calmness, relief, and happiness – they are desirable without the bothering and disturbance of *xianghuo*. It is through the internal mental calmness implied by *qingjing* that the following logics of "complementarity" and "distraction" can be possible.

Complementarity

For the visitor I encountered at Baotuo Temple, *xianghuo* and *qingjing* could be the two sides of the same coin: both were good for getting more efficacy of Guanyin to achieve the wishes that he made. Even for Junpeng, Mount Putuo has a special efficacy in creating *qingjing* as a mental state for him. In the interview, he used the example of going to a beach at any time to show the "freedom" that is not shared by visitors who prefer the recently developed photogenic spots at Mount Putuo. For Junpeng, beaches are "more original" (*geng yuanben* 更原本) to Mount

Putuo, and the "religious meanings" (*zongjiao hanyi* 宗教含义) of Mount Putuo make the beaches there different from "normal" (*putongde* 普通的) natural scenes in other places. Here, the double meanings of Mount Putuo's efficacy as natural and religious converge in *qingjing*, corresponding to the discussion of the polysemy of efficacy in the Introduction.

Like Junpeng, lay Buddhists in 1920s Shanghai also distinguished themselves from the visitors to "hot and noisy" (*re'nao*) temples and constructed their Buddhist Householder Grove differently (Jessup 2016). In Jessup's (2016) analysis, the lay Buddhists' differentiation at that time contributed to their identity as urban elites, by contrast to the "superstitious" masses. Junpeng, however, shows a more moderate attitude of feeling "lucky" but not scorn toward other visitors to Mount Putuo, which reminds me more of the analysis of "watching *re'nao*/*honghuo*" (*kan re'nao*/*honghuo* 看热闹/红火).

Chau (2008a) notices that when people say they are just "watching *honghuo*", they mean they are merely spectators but not producers of "*honghuo*". However, based on his interpretation of sociality, Chau argues that these *re'nao* watchers actually produce social heat through their convergence, so they are producers of red-hot experiences but are just unaware of this fact. This analysis can simplify the distinction within *honghuo*, such as Richaud's (2021) observations of the mental distances between "*re'nao* watchers" and amateur performers in parks of contemporary Beijing. At Mount Putuo, *qingjing* suggests mental distance as well. Through his ideal of *qingjing*, I argue that Junpeng is indeed a "*re'nao*/*honghuo*/*xianghuo* watcher" who deliberately keeps a distance, whether mentally or physically, from the visitors pursuing vigorous

xianghuo at Mount Putuo. While Junpeng's presence at Mount Putuo can be viewed as a contribution to Mount Putuo's *xianghuo* as a whole, he also contributes to the *qingjing* in places with *xianghuo* absent.

It is necessary to distinguish between two different levels of analysis: different locations within Mount Putuo and Mount Putuo as a whole. Through *xianghuo* and *qingjing* of different places within Mount Putuo, Mount Putuo can be *qingjing* while possessing vigorous *xianghuo* at the same time due to the coexistence of and the distance between them. At the level of Mount Putuo as a whole, it is identified as Potalaka in the scriptures: the abode or the Pure Land of Guanyin. In Yü's (2001, 376) discussion of Sheng Ximing's doubt of Mount Putuo as Potalaka, the reason for Sheng's doubt is exactly that Mount Putuo is a remote, desolate, and prosaic island, obviously different from the description of Potalaka in scriptures as mythical, pure, and grand to benefit the cultivation and practices of Buddhism there. However, Sheng's qualification of Mount Putuo as Potalaka through the emphasis on Guanyin's manifestations paved the way for all later considerations of Mount Putuo as Guanyin's Pure Land. Even a contemporary ten-year-old tourism promotional video with little participation of monastics also describes Mount Putuo as "a pure land standing in this world but not contaminated by the profane dirt"[22] (Figure 9).

[22] "*Zhe shi yifang lizu renjian que you buran chensu de jingtu*. 这是一方立足人间却又不染尘俗的净土。"

Figure 9 Tourism Promotional Video Referring to Mount Putuo as Pure Land[23]

In other words, Potalaka should be a pure environment beneficial for Buddhist practitioners to reach enlightenment. As mentioned in Chapter 1, for most visitors, Guanyin's abode should rather be the most efficacious for their wishes to come true and thus attract the *xianghuo* contributed by numerous visitors. The two ideals of Mount Putuo both make sense. Also, even if visitors might not contribute to the construction of Mount Putuo as Potalaka directly, I suggest that today's Sangha of Mount Putuo still conceives Mount Putuo as Guanyin's Pure Land by emphasizing the *qingjing* of their monastic practices and cultivations. Moreover, *qingjing* and *xianghuo* are not mutually exclusive but complementary in their conceptions of Mount Putuo as a whole, which can implicitly influence the appearance of different temples and thus visitors' choices of temples to go to.

[23] Source: https://www.toutiao.com/video/7237732730744767033/. Accessed: January 26, 2024.

When zooming between the levels of analysis from the whole Mount Putuo and the different temples there, I would like to emphasize how the monastic community institutionally organizes the functions of the temples. The Buddhist Association of Putuoshan (*Putuoshan fojiao xiehui* 普陀山佛教协会) administers all Buddhist temples at Mount Putuo in an institutional structure that unifies human resources, construction projects, and financial management of all temples, but each temple maintains relative autonomy and characteristics. Vidal (2020) has noticed such unique "three unifiers" (*san tongyi* 三统一) of the Buddhist Association of Putuoshan to administer individual temples in a centralized way, but she seems to over-emphasize the economic unifier and pay little attention to the negotiation between the "three unifiers" and the diversity of temples at Mount Putuo. In the name of "functional positioning" (*gongnenghua dingwei* 功能化定位), each temple at Mount Putuo is attached to a function, which includes "Dharma lectures" (*jiangjing shuofa* 讲经说法), "seclusion and classics reading" (*biguan yueazang* 闭关阅藏), "meditation and recitation of Buddha's names" (*chanxiu nianfo* 禅修念佛), "scripture chanting and repentance" (*songjing lichan* 诵经礼忏), "Buddhology research" (*foxue yanjiu* 佛学研究), and "Buddhist education" (*fojiao jiaoyu* 佛教教育). As the mobilization of human resources within Mount Putuo is unified, the institution of "three thirds" (*san-san zhi* 三三制) further divides all monastics into one-third of "learning and self-cultivation" (*chijie xuexiu* 持戒学修), one-third of "performing and promoting Dharma" (*yanyang fofa* 演扬佛法), and one-third of "organization and administration" (*zuzhi guanli* 组织管理).

The divisions of temple functions and monastics constitute each other, as temples with different functions have different needs for the proportion of monastics. For example, in temples with vigorous *xianghuo*, more monastics of "organization and administration" are needed for the everyday affairs related to the reception of visitors, which allows more monastics of "learning and self-cultivation" to concentrate on cultivation in other temples with *qingjing*. Thus, because the three main temples and Nanhai Guanyin have the vigorous *xianghuo*, they are primarily devoted to receiving visitors, which liberate monastics in other temples like Baotuo from facing too many visitors. Monks also usually cite the verse "First enticing them with desire, And later causing them to enter the wisdom of the Buddha"[24] (McRae 2004), from *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* (*Weimojie jing* 维摩诘经) to show the possibility to complement their reception of wish-makers (and their *xianghuo*) and promotion of Buddhism (in a *qingjing* way).

For monastics, *qingjing* also shows the logic of mental calmness without bothering, which is achieved through their concentration on Buddhist practices and cultivations. Such practices and cultivations not only promote *qingjing* but can also benefit from the *qingjing* of Guanyin's Pure Land. The words of Abbot Daoci 道慈 connecting *qingjing* and cultivation are quoted in a news report: "The *qingjing* and solemn collective cultivations and specialized cultivations are the most practical guarantee and embodiment of the concentrating practices and *qingjing* atmosphere

[24] "*Xian yiyu gouqian, hou lingru fozhi*. 先以欲勾牵，后令入佛智。"

of monastic Buddhism"[25] (Dharma Promoting Office 2019). To some degree, this responds to the controversies of the Initial Public Offering of the state-owned tourism company at Mount Putuo, in which critics frequently use *qingjing* as an ideal of a Buddhist site and oppose the tendency of the commodification of religion (Cheung 2021; Bruntz 2014). Here, the tendency of the commodification of religion is exactly a potential disturbance of *qingjing*. Even for visitors, some of my interlocutors tend to believe the vigorous *xianghuo* unavoidably brings a sense of "restlessness" (*fuzao* 浮躁) caused by commodification and thus push them to look for *qingjing* in the temples dedicated to monastics for their concentrated practices, although these visitors are not totally against *xianghuo*.

To sum up, the complementarity between *qingjing* and *xianghuo* in different temples at Mount Putuo is not only perceived by visitors but also conceived by monastics who are stakeholders. Moreover, both *qingjing* and *xianghuo* as the sensory states of Mount Putuo are based on the belief that Mount Putuo is the abode of Guanyin. Thus, Mount Putuo should be *qingjing* according to scriptural Potalaka as a pure land nurtured by Guanyin's power but can also hardly avoid *xianghuo* due to Guanyin's own efficacy to attract visitors to make wishes. The compatibility and complementarity between *qingjing* and *xianghuo* are thus possible when viewing Mount Putuo at different levels (temples within Mount Putuo and Mount Putuo as a

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[25] "*Daochang qingjing zhuangyan de gongxiu, zhuanxiu, jiushi jingjin xiuxing, qingjing daofeng zui qieshi de baozhang yu tixian*. 道场清净庄严的共修、专修，就是精进修行、清净道风最切实的保障与体现。"

whole) and considering monks' conception and construction of Mount Putuo given the differences between scriptures and realities.

Distraction

While Junpeng believes morning services in his temple can be relieving and *qingjing*, nearly all the temples at Mount Putuo hold daily morning services, including those with vigorous *xianghuo*. In contrast to Junpeng's temple which holds small-scale morning services and is not open to all visitors, some temples' morning services are public and welcome visitors' participation. For example, Puji Temple's morning services are very popular among visitors, although they charge high (at least 500 *yuan*, about 95 Canadian dollars), start early (at 4 am), and have a limited number of cushions (so participants need to occupy their positions earlier than the start of services at 4 a.m.). While Junpeng's temple can be so small that even workers need to participate in the morning services, the morning services at Puji Temple, the temple with the most vigorous *xianghuo*, can always be crowded with visitors.

More importantly, the morning services at all temples can hardly be sensorily *qingjing*: monastics play the Dharma instruments, chant the *sūtra*s and *dhāraṇī*s, and recite Buddhas' names, not to mention the usage of loudspeakers and audio system at Puji Temple just like the Guanyin's festival and *shuilu fahui* described in Chapter 1. Nevertheless, when I searched the posts of Puji Temple's morning services on *Xiaohongshu*, many of them emphasized quietness and *qingjing*. Here are two quotes:

"When visiting Mount Putuo, you must go to Puji Temple for morning services to experience the calm and sacred feelings brought by the sounds of monastics' chanting… Meanings: listening to the morning services can help me settle my heart, eliminate negative emotions, and make my heart more *qingjing*."

"The morning service started at 4 am, during which I constantly kneeled down, intently listened to the chanting of monastics, and felt full of energy. When the morning service ended at 5:30 am, my whole body felt refreshed and not sleepy at all. The atmosphere of the temple was really quiet (*jingmi* 静谧, which is a very literal word referring to quietness but wrongly typed in the post) with pious prayers. Very sacred."

In his analysis of the morning services at Kaiyuan Temple through his own participation, Nichols (2022, 82) provides a similar description in which the multisensory, restless experiences and "purifying" feelings seem contradictory to me. Also, when analyzing the "Twelve Views of Putuo" in the earlier gazetteer depicting Mount Putuo around 1700, Bingenheimer (2016, 74) mentions that the scenes of the area around Puji Temple could bring visitors a "silent and introspective mood", although this area was probably "one of the most lively and busiest spots on the island". Both scholars, however, do not provide further explanations on why sounds and crowds can make one feel calm and peaceful. In other words, how can *qingjing* be possible within the vigorous *xianghuo*?

A potential explanation from Nichols (2022, 82) is that morning services can be purifying because the three sources of *karma*, i.e., mind, body, and speech, are fully immersed in a

"Buddhicized environment" before "beginning to engage with others and with the torrent of distracting thoughts and interactions that may come throughout the day". For example, Nichols (2022, 80) suggests that *dhāraṇī*s, which are sounds of Chinese transcriptions of Sanskrit with no specific meanings, are more powerful to "clear the minds of those reciting them" than other chanting materials that are recognizable and "inevitably trigger additional associations and thoughts". However, just like the moment I found that no one followed the monastics in chanting the *Heart Sūtra* and *the Great Compassion dhāraṇī* in the *shuilu fahui* mentioned in Chapter 1, most visitors to Mount Putuo cannot chant and even do not know what is being chanted. Even the participants of Puji Temple's morning services usually just kneel and listen, so both *dhāraṇī*s and *sūtra*s are equally not recognizable to most visitors. More importantly, if they cannot understand what is going on in morning services, why would they not feel bored and have their own "distracting thoughts" in the meaningless chanting? Also, when it comes to monastics or pious Buddhists who do morning services every day, the meaningless *dhāraṇī*s can be so familiar to them that they can chant and understand them effortlessly just like the recognizable materials. Such effortlessness can also provide space for "distracting thoughts". Thus, for either visitors or monastics, postulating that chanting can clear the mind and that *dhāraṇī*s are more powerful to clear the mind than recognizable materials is merely an idealistic proposition.

In the analysis of "absence", I show how some sensory stimuli can be noticed without the distraction of vigorous *xianghuo* and lead to a feeling of *qingjing* as mental relief. Here, the morning services also seem to be a distraction that is part of the vigorous *xianghuo* in general,

but I argue that now it is exactly within the distraction of *xianghuo* that *qingjing* as a mental relief can emerge. In his book critiquing the religious-secular divide in Buddhist Studies, McDaniel (2017, 22) refers to Taussig's ideas on "distraction" to emphasize how Buddhist leisure is marked by the distracting effects of numerous "statues, murals, flowers, and burning incense sticks" to encourage visitors to "get lost in a maze among a menagerie of distractions and diversions". For McDaniel (2017, 24), the Buddhist leisure spaces allow the senses of visitors to "accumulate images, feelings, scents, and sounds constantly" through their immediate contact with countless Buddhist elements in "repetitious affective encounters". This is exactly the case of vigorous *xianghuo* at Mount Putuo.

McDaniel follows Taussig's (1991, 148) turn from visuality-based contemplation to tactility-based distractions, a result of the optical unconsciousness that reinstalls the faculty of mimesis as a tactility through the camera, the "new optical copying technology". For Taussig (1991, 148), contemplation is "eyeful" and is thus absorbed in the "'aura' of the always aloof, always distant object" according to Benjamin ([1936] 1986). Thus, when turning to the "modern life at the crossroads of the city, the capitalist market, and modern technology" marked by numerous dazzling movies and advertisements, analysis of distraction becomes the corresponding solution to transcend the paradigm of contemplation (Taussig 1991, 148). However, while McDaniel focuses on distractions, Taussig's complete theory of mimesis seeks to break down all binary oppositions built upon the dualism between civilization and savagery. For Taussig ([1993] 2018, 195), the distractions are what he calls the "mimetic excess", which is "a

possibility – an excess creating reflexive awareness as to the mimetic faculty". As mimetic faculty for Taussig ([1993] 2018) was originally reserved for premodern life and only revived after the invention of mimetic machines like cameras, the latter's excessive distractions do not rupture from the premodern contemplation but provide a space to resurrect contemplation in modern times in a different form.

Therefore, before I further follow Taussig to analyze the tactility of visitors' photography in the next chapter, I would like to complicate the relationships between contemplation and distractions in the context of contemporary Buddhism based on McDaniel's assertation. I argue that, at Mount Putuo, distraction can become the condition of contemplation but not necessarily cancel it. At Mount Putuo, visitors can indeed feel lost, diverted, and distracted by the intense, various sensory stimuli of the vigorous *xianghuo*, but it is exactly in such distraction that one can calm down for contemplation and introspection, asking where oneself is and why one gets lost. Such mental calmness is a sense of *qingjing*, which emerges exactly in the vigorous *xianghuo*. The following subsections will present this logic for monastics and visitors respectively.

Monastics

Let me start with the monastics, as their conception of Mount Putuo between *xianghuo* and *qingjing* can influence the visitors' perception of Mount Putuo just like the logic of "complementarity". Once I asked a monk whether he would feel Mount Putuo so noisy that he would consider leaving for a quieter place for better cultivation. He replied with a classical

Chinese saying, “Lower-level hermits live in the wild, middle-level hermits live in the market, and higher-level hermits live in the court”[26]. This saying expresses an ideal for a hermit, or a Buddhist practitioner in this context, who should be able to resist all the bothering even in the most restless environment, such as the market, the court, and the vigorous *xianghuo* at Mount Putuo. In other words, it is in a noisy, unsettling environment that one finds the best place to cultivate the ability to not be distracted and reach *qingjing*, or in a connected Buddhist word mentioned above, *samādhi*.

Although Junpeng, lay Buddhists in Jessup’s study, and even Nichols as a Buddhist Studies scholar would consider mental purity possible or more accessible without the distractions of noise, heat, and vigorous *xianghuo*, monastics might reversely consider distractions as the tests for them to reach higher levels of *qingjing* such as *samādhi*. I indeed encountered one post on *Xiaohongshu* in which the poster witnessed a young monk meditating in the crowded and noisy main hall of Fayu Temple. The monk was in rags but seemed clean, sitting in meditation and chanting in the corner of the main hall. When the poster walked around the temple and returned, the monk was still there in meditation. This was the poster’s most impressive encounter at Mount Putuo, and they believed the monk had reached full *samādhi*. The poster said they had only experienced *samādhi* as ephemeral moments, which were warm, tranquil (*jijing* 寂静), and

[26] “*Xiaoyin yinyu ye, zhongyin yinyu shi, dayin yinyu chao*. 小隐隐于野，中隐隐于市，大隐隐于朝。”

between emptiness and non-emptiness, so they respected the monastic who could reach *samādhi* for long. This post reflects that monastics tend to pursue higher levels of *qingjing* by practicing within *xianghuo* and that witnessing such practices can also lead to visitors' feeling of *qingjing*.

Visitors

Visitors can also feel *qingjing* when they are distracted. During the interview, Junpeng shared with me his experience of climbing Foding Hill 佛顶山 (*Foding shan*) with one bow every three steps. Foding Hill is 291.3 meters tall and has a gravel road connecting Huiji Temple 慧济寺 (*Huiji si*) on the top and Fayu Temple 法雨寺 on the foot, both of which are temples with vigorous *xianghuo*. The road is one kilometer long with 1087 steps and is a little steep, but Junpeng said three-step-one-bow climbing is not as tiring as imagined and is actually easier than climbing without bows. For Junpeng, bowing can divert his attention from tiredness, so he can take a rest when bowing.

In contrast to the perspective of a lay Buddhist who usually takes one bow every three steps, I see a post on *Xiaohongshu* from a visitor who seemed to come to Mount Putuo and climb Foding Hill for the first time. At first, the poster felt confused about why half of the visitors sitting on the stone benches by the roadside but soon understood why. After passing one-third of the road, the poster realized that this road "needs to be felt" (*xuyao ganshou* 需要感受): communicating with the stray cats, listening to the sounds of birds and water in the trees, and feeling the Buddhist atmosphere. The poster then concluded that when eyes start to feel dizzy

and legs naturally slow down, one would unconsciously sit down on the stone bench. The poster also noticed the visitors who took one bow every three steps and showed sympathy for their exchange of physical pains for Buddhas' blessings. Then, the poster said Huiji Temple has the strongest "Buddhist atmosphere" (*fo qi* 佛气), and the closer to the temple, the stronger the dizzy feelings. In the end, the poster remembered nothing about the second half of the journey to Huiji Temple, but when arriving at the temple, they instead felt the temple normal, rather than with the strongest "Buddhist atmosphere". In other words, the poster felt more *qingjing* about the Huiji Temple within the distraction on the road than in the temple.

Similarly, at Puji Temple, I encountered a group of volunteers from Lingyin Temple 灵隐寺 (*Lingyin si*) in Hangzhou who came to Mount Putuo for pilgrimage. They were organized by the monastics of Lingyin Temple and walked from the dock to Puji Temple with one bow every three steps via Miaozhuangyan Road 妙庄严路 (*Miaozhuangyan lu*), an "ancient incense road" (*gu xiangdao* 古香道) for earlier pilgrims. Like the road to Foding Hill, Miaozhuangyan Road is also about one kilometer long and has an uphill part. When arriving at Puji Temple, nearly all volunteers were sweating heavily, but they were energetic to burn incense, prostrate in each hall, take photos, and recite *huixiang* 回向 (the practice of transferring the practitioners' merit to all sentient beings) loudly in groups before leaving the temple. One photographer in their group interviewed a volunteer and videotaped this interview. I heard the volunteer describe his feelings throughout the three-step-one-bow pilgrimage: it was very easy at first, but then he would think of many things when bowing; however, he slowly felt relieved in the following time until the end

of the pilgrimage, and a sense of "letting go" (*fangxia le* 放下了) was his main feeling.

These cases above show the physical exhaustion during the walk, whether on pilgrimage or for sightseeing, as a distraction that may lead to confusion in mind at first but finally transforms confusion into a sense of "letting go", relief, and *qingjing*. In addition, it is possible that without a process of ritual-like cultivation such as walking and bowing once every three steps, visitors can also be distracted by the vigorous *xianghuo* and feel *qingjing*. For example, Guanyin Fajie 观音法界 (literally "Guanyin's Dharma Realm") is a newly built Guanyin cultural park that attracts a large number of visitors but provides a sense of *qingjing*. It is common to hear visitors use "awe" (*zhenhan* 震撼) to describe the main hall at Guanyin Fajie, in which the dome has more than three hundred Guanyin statues looking down at visitors (Figure 10). As one of my interlocutors said, it is a feeling of "being fixed there" (*ding zai nali* 定在那里), which again corresponds to *samādhi* translated as *ding* in Chinese.

Figure 10 Guanyin Fajie's Dome

Tianqing is one of my interlocutors who shared with me much about her experiences at Guanyin Fajie. She visits Mount Putuo every year with her baby, who was born in 2021 after her first visit to Mount Putuo in 2020. In last year's visit to Guanyin Fajie, Tianqing carried her son with a strap on her back, who was still unable to talk at that time. Tianqing said he was sleeping before she entered the main hall, but once she walked in, she heard the laughter of her baby. Tianqing then realized he woke up and looked at all these *bodhisattva*s with very happy laughter. He then fell asleep again when Tianqing carried him upstairs, but when they went downstairs to the main hall again, Tianqing heard her baby's laughter again. Tianqing believed that her son had a special bond with Guanyin. After all, Mount Putuo is famous for seeking a child from Guanyin, which motivates visitors like Baicong. Coincidentally, Tianqing's son was born after her visit to Mount Putuo, though she did not deliberately make a wish to have a child.

Tianqing's overall perception of Guanyin Fajie is that it is a "scenic spot" (*jingdian* 景点) but not a temple. In recent years, while there have been more and more visitors, she would feel her heart calm down once walking into the main hall. Nevertheless, she also shared an unhappy experience of her baby walking into the hall of Guanyin Fajie which is themed to provide the early images of Guanyin in the style of ancient India: he cried and wanted to leave the space soon. Tianqing believed it was because the India-style Guanyin statues, the scents, and the lights in that hall were so different from what her baby had been familiar with in Chinese contexts. While I told her maybe the design comes from the Chinese imagination of sculptures in ancient India, I understand her reasons for sharing this experience for my research: children are very

innocent, who directly perceive all sensory stimuli and react. In other words, they can be easily distracted. Though her son might feel uncomfortable in one corner, the numerous, various Guanyin statues at Guanyin Fajie (especially those on the dome of the main hall) promise that the space as a whole can still make her baby happily greet each Guanyin statue and thus calm her heart. As a result, Tianqing felt an inner peace and *qingjing* from the moment she boarded the plane and knew that "I am going to Mount Putuo", even if I noticed that she usually went to places with the most vigorous *xianghuo* such as Nanhai Guanyin and the three major temples.

I also found one post on *Xiaohongshu* that best presents the role of distraction in providing the poster with inner peace. It was the poster's second day at Mount Putuo, and she felt tired, sleepy, and dizzy when walking into Fayu Temple in the afternoon. She got lost from her friends, so she burnt incense alone. When holding three sticks of incense and kneeling before the main hall of the temple, she began to recall her wishes made before and repeated them. At that time, she found her wishes were so general that she worried the Buddhas and *bodhisattva*s would have no idea how to grant them. Thus, she started to think of specific wishes but failed, as there were too many specific wishes: from having good sleep to succeeding in the GRE[27], from the student society issues to whether she could calm down to learn something or stay alone. This led her to reflect on herself as greedy, just like numerous visitors who made great efforts to burn a lot of

[27] GRE is the Graduate Record Examination held by the Educational Testing Service. The score of the GRE test is sometimes required for applications to graduate schools. It is not easy for non-native English speakers, so mentioning this implies that the poster is struggling with it to apply for graduate schools and thus seeks Guanyin's help.

incense and listed countless wishes. Moreover, in front of Guanyin, she felt embarrassed to choose the most important wish, either between wishes for herself and those with moral pressure from family and friends, or between the abstract and the specific.

With these introspections, she doubted how many visitors indeed came to Mount Putuo to make firm, sincere wishes because of drastic changes in their lives, and how many only had uncountable greedy desires just like herself: they do not live badly but are never satisfied, but they do not know why they are never satisfied as well. She believed there were more greedy visitors, but this led her to further questions: if theoretically, Buddhas and *bodhisattva*s only accept people who get into "emptiness", then how do they select which wishes of these greedy visitors to achieve? What on earth do visitors make wishes about? Can cycles of making wishes and fulfilling vows stop until these people rest in peace after death, or will the endless desires constantly haunt people even at the moment of death? Finally, she discussed with friends and concluded that whether pious or not, whether with many desires or not, one should calm down and feel the gaze of the *bodhisattva* (Guanyin), even if much noise is around.

In this post, it is exactly what is key for understanding the vigorous *xianghuo* at Mount Putuo that led the poster to turn to *qingjing*: wish-making, the sociality of individual visitors' copresence, and the efficacy of Guanyin and other Buddhas or *bodhisattva*s. The vigorous *xianghuo* that metaphorically refers to the variety of wishes, wish-makers, and temples at Mount Putuo diverted the poster and led her to introspect and contemplate. Guanyin's efficacy played an important role in the poster's introspection because she was also making wishes as part of the

vigorous *xianghuo*. In the cases of Tianqing and the poster sharing the journey to Huiji Temple, Guanyin's efficacy is also present, not to mention that the *xianghuo* that distracts the visitors in all the above-mentioned cases shares a basis of Guanyin's efficacy.

Concluding Thoughts

All these cases for distraction may correspond to Turner and Turner's (1996) classical model of pilgrimage in which the structure of society at home is suspended in the pilgrimage center, as the worries and wishes brought by visitors from home are relieved in *qingjing*. These worries and wishes, however, do not disappear but are personally contemplated and reflected on, so *qingjing* does not reach the level of communitas among different visitors. Instead, *qingjing* can be what Chau calls the "absence of structure" (2006, 164) in the multisensory immersion of a temple festival, but what I suggest through the term is not Chau's red-hot sociality. Rather, through the analysis of the three logics of absence, complementarity, and distraction, I argue that *qingjing* can mean the sensory experiences of both the external quiet environment and the internal calm mental state, especially the latter. They have complicated relationships but do not fall into the mind-body dualism. Similarly, Weller (2021) has analyzed silence in Chinese contexts not only as the condition to make the rhythm of ritual and everyday life possible but also as the expression of loss and longing. While my analysis of Mount Putuo tends to reversely base *qingjing* on vigorous *xianghuo*, my argument is also to consider the two sensory impressions as mutually constitutive: not only are they possible in the absence of the other or as complementary

to each other, but one can also find *qingjing* in the vigorous *xianghuo* vise versa.

I suggest such unity of opposites comes from the common root of both vigorous *xianghuo* and *qingjing* on Guanyin's and Mount Putuo's efficacy that welcomes and invites wishes from the visitors. As mentioned earlier, *qingjing* is always an ideal attached to the Guanyin's abode as a pure land, but at the same time, the wishes made to Guanyin at Mount Putuo can converge as vigorous *xianghuo*. Again, both *qingjing* and *xianghuo* as sensory experiences are the contingent coactions between visitors and the sensory stimuli made by the efficacious Guanyin and Mount Putuo. They not only come from visitors' projection of wishes at Mount Putuo waiting for the response from Guanyin and Mount Putuo but also actualize and reproduce their efficacy.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, *xianghuo* shows a dialectic between Guanyin's efficacy in general and visitors' specific wishes that can "divide" Guanyin's general efficacy. It is exactly the diversity of visitors' wishes maintained in *xianghuo* that can lead to a visitor's confusion, introspections, and ultimately *qingjing* under the logic of distraction. Through the discussions of the temporary relief, liberation, freedom, calm, inner peace, and a feeling of "letting go" enjoyed by visitors who get lost in the multisensory immersion of the *xianghuo* at Mount Putuo, I complicate McDaniel's (2017) discussion of Buddhist leisure based on Taussig's ideas on distraction with a possibility of contemplation in distraction. The next chapter focusing on visitors' touch with objects at Mount Putuo will further follow Taussig's theories about tactility, which is exactly the basis for him to develop the ideas of distraction.

Chapter 3: Sensing Tactility

Shancai Cave 善财洞 (*Shancai dong*) is one of the sites with the most vigorous *xianghuo* in today's Mount Putuo. Like the Cave of Brahmā's Voice, Shancai Cave was naturally formed, and later a temple was built around it. While the two Caves are close to each other in the northeastern corner of the island, Shancai Cave is not famous for its natural landscapes and soundscapes. For visitors, it is now a popular place for making wishes to become rich, because the name "Shancai" 善财 can literally be understood as "beneficial for wealth". By contrast, monastics told me it is a cave memorizing the story of Shancai Tongzi 善财童子 or Sudhanakumāra, a *bodhisattva* who actually has no interest in money and wealth. According to the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra* (*Huayan jing* 华严经), because treasures miraculously emerged at Sudhanakumāra's home when he was born, his family named him Sudhana, which indeed means "very rich" in Sanskrit. Nonetheless, Sudhanakumāra is rather determined to pursue wisdom and enlightenment, so he takes a pilgrimage to visit 53 *kalyāṇamitra*s (*shanzhishi* 善知识, which means "good friends" or "spiritual friends") and learn from them. Avalokiteśvara is the 28th *kalyāṇamitra* that Sudhanakumāra visits at Potalaka, so Shancai Cave at Mount Putuo commemorates this visit and thus encourages people to learn from Shancai's pursuit of the Dharma.

Ironically, although Shancai is commemorated by so many visitors to this Cave, their pursuit of wealth is the opposite of Shancai's spirit. Some monastics sometimes show regret or dissatisfaction with such a sign of the "end of the Dharma", but many visitors indeed consider Shancai Cave very efficacious because they received money after their visits to the Cave. Their

way of making wishes at Shancai Cave also seems unique: although incense is also heavily burnt with flames and smoke just like other temples with vigorous *xianghuo*, visitors are more enthusiastic about touching the inscription of the cave's name to make wealth-related wishes.

On a typical morning at Shancai Cave, visitors can line up outside the temple for hours just to enter the cave one by one to rub a wall with an inscription of "Shancai Gudong" 善财古洞 (*Shancai gudong*, Ancient Shancai Cave) inside the cave with their hands, cash, wallets, ID, smartphones[28], or talismans, especially golden and silver ones with Shancai's image sold by vendors outside the temple. On *Xiaohongshu*, many posts share instructions to pray for wealth in Shancai Cave through this kind of physical contact with the inscription. Most posts would agree that one needs to prepare two hundred-*yuan* bills with auspicious tail numbers such as eight and nine, rub them on the wall, and keep them in the wallet or at home instead of spending them. There are often complaints about the long line outside, which usually takes hours. When I posted a picture of Shancai Cave with nearly no line in the afternoon, a commenter replied to me, surprised that there was no line.

This chapter explores the complex relationships between efficacy and tactility at Mount Putuo, especially how the wishes and tactility of visitors seem not supported by local Buddhist tradition but can still be efficacious. In the anthropological studies about magic, the themes of effectiveness and tactility have long attracted academic attention due to Frazer's ([1922] 1990)

[28] It is usually the case when visitors have no cash at hand. Mobile payment is so popular in China that smartphones can also be connected with money and wealth.

fundamental work *The Golden Bough*. Frazer ([1922] 1990, 11–12) considers magic as practical and artful for people who resort to it but never explore the logic behind it. More importantly, magic is sympathetic because under its effects, "things act on each other at a distance through a secret sympathy" (Frazer [1922] 1990, 12). There are two principles of sympathetic magic: the Law of Similarity and the Law of Contact. According to the Law of Similarity, magic working on a copy would work on the original, and from the Law of Contact, if two things were once in contact, magic working on one would work on the other (Frazer [1922] 1990, 12). Based on these arguments, it is not unfair to call rubbing the inscriptions to get the efficacy of becoming wealthy a kind of magic. Visitors do not care about the "true" spirits embodied by Shancai but still hold very specific motivations: becoming wealthy. Also, rubbing the bills on the inscription follows the Law of Similarity and Law of Contact: bills would bring more bills, and bills touch the inscription to get the efficacy from Shancai to themselves.

An important problem can emerge if the analysis is so simple: no visitor at Mount Putuo would consider touching as magic. Either during the interviews or by my observations, I feel touching or not touching something is just a "natural" response of visitors to what they encounter at Mount Putuo. In other words, visitors do not seem unwilling to explore the logic behind touching for efficacy, but it is just because there seems no need for them to do so – the logic is taken for granted. Then, how do visitors "naturally" think tactility can be a medium for the transfer of efficacy? Why does tactility stand out from other senses in cases like Shancai Cave?

In this chapter, I will first specify what underlies visitors' judgment of what to touch or not.

The basic principle is that the Buddha and *bodhisattva* statues in monasteries cannot be touched because touching means disrespect. Alternatively, sacred images not inside monasteries and objects other than statues in monasteries can be touched, such as inscriptions in Shancai Cave. To interpret visitors' rationales of physical contact with objects, I follow Taussig's development of Frazer's theory of sympathetic magic, in which tactility serves as the basis for both the Law of Similarity and Law of Contact because of the "habit under the guidance of tactility" (Taussig [1993] 2018, 26) deployed in the whole sensorium and including speaking. Combining this with an indigenous concept of Chinese religious life, I argue that "sympathetic resonance" (Sharf [2002] 2017, 77–133), *ganying* 感应, and the "contact" between Shancai and the presumed efficacy of wealth is reflected and created in the word "Shancai", which activates and makes sense of rubbing the inscription as "contact".

Finally, I will show how visitors' practices of photography at Mount Putuo reflect a logic of "optical tactility" empowered by the camera, the machine of "mechanical reproduction" (Benjamin [1936] 1986). The principles of what can be touched or not are well reflected in the judgment of what can be photographed or not. Moreover, while photographs seem to provide easy access to "touching" Mount Putuo's efficacious elements, they do not overshadow the necessity of visiting Mount Putuo to touch or photograph the originals. On social media, photo-viewers can be potential visitors who take more photos as potential attractions for other photo-viewers, which may constantly reproduce Mount Putuo's efficacy from online to offline and vice versa.

What to Touch for Efficacy?

In the afternoon when there were only a few visitors at Shancai Cave, I was more interested in visitors who rubbed the stone stele outside the cave instead of the inscription on the wall inside the cave. The stele is titled "Introduction to Ancient Shancai Cave" (*Shancai gudong jianjie* 善财古洞简介), erected after the latest reconstruction of the temple in the late 1990s (Figure 11). It is in the courtyard of the temple's main hall, just beside the gate to the cave's entrance.

Figure 11 The Stele at Shancai Cave[29]

At the time I was there, several visitors stood around the stele to rub the title of the stele (Figure 12), regardless of how privileged they were to rub the inscription inside the cave without waiting. These visitors held red pockets and/or hundred-*yuan* bills, putting them on the top of the

[29] A Screenshot from video: https://www.douyin.com/zhuanti/7187640480329566223. Accessed: January 26, 2024.

title and sliding down to at least cover the full name of Shancai Cave. They each rubbed many times, and before them, there must be many visitors doing so as well, for the titles have become red – the color of both red pockets and hundred-*yuan* bills. A worker was sitting beside the gate to the cave at that time. When he left to guide a visitor to burn the incense and returned, he said to these visitors rubbing the stele in a harsh tone: "You are asked to rub (the name of Shancai Cave) inside the cave. What is worth rubbing outside the cave?" Nevertheless, the visitors ignored him and continued their action.

Figure 12 Visitors Rubbing the Stele

Passing the gate to the cave, I still had to wait after several visitors, maybe because they spent more time rubbing the inscription than during peak hours. The inscription is on a stone platform under the statues of the "Three Saints of the West" (*Xifang sansheng* 西方三圣):

Buddha Amitābha (*Amituo fo* 阿弥陀佛), Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara (*Guanshiyin pusa* 观世音菩萨), and Bodhisattva Mahāsthāmaprāpta (*Dashizhi pusa* 大势至菩萨)[30]. The inscription consists of two lines: "South Sea" (*nanhai* 南海) and "Ancient Shancai Cave" (*shancai gudong* 善财古洞). Above the inscription is a banner in the wooden frame of the statues encouraging donation, and below is another banner asking visitors to put money inside the donation box rather than elsewhere. The inscription has also become to some extent red, although the polished black stone could be less tainted by the dye of papers than the unpolished gray stone stele.

Seemingly most visitors only come to rub the inscription and pay little attention to the fact that the main statue enshrined inside the cave is Amitābha but not Shancai. Some online posts suggest that the Cave enshrines the statue of Shancai and thus recommend visitors to pray for money there, but the fact is more complicated. There are six statues in the Cave: the "Three Saints of the West" in the middle, another Guanyin statue on the right, Shancai on the left, and then the monk who established the temple of Shancai Cave (Figure 13). The day I was here, I noticed that most visitors rubbed the inscription, worshipped the "Three Saints of the West" in the middle, and then left. They paid less attention to the "deity of wealth", Shancai, on the left

[30] "The Three Saints of the West" are worshipped in Pure Land Buddhism, which is a strong tradition at Mount Putuo in addition to its mainstream Chan Buddhism, partly because Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara/Guanyin is the attendant of Buddha Amitābha according to scriptures (Yü 2001, 32) and is believed to be highly respectful to Buddha Amitābha as his/her teacher. At Mount Putuo, most temples enshrine Guanyin in the main hall and might or might not have a separate hall for "The Three Saints of the West" (temples of Pure Land Buddhism would enshrine them in the main hall). The temple of Shancai Cave has only one hall in terms of its architecture, which is the main hall for Guanyin. The cave can be considered as another "hall" mainly for "The Three Saints of the West", outside but connected to the temple building.

than to the “Three Saints of the West”.

Figure 13 The Statues within Shancai Cave[31]

If visitors indeed hope to be blessed by Shancai to be wealthy, why do they pay little attention to his statue? After all, many visitors believe the statues of Buddhas and *bodhisattva*s are not only their images but are also their “real bodies”. Then, why do visitors at Shancai Cave pay more attention to the inscriptions than the statues of Shancai? In his research on temple reconstruction in Chinese Buddhism, Scott (2020, 21) attaches importance to inscriptions to “hold layers of history” of a temple. The history of a temple building and monastic residency can surely be a source of efficacy (Naquin and Yü 1992, 22), but visitors of Shancai Cave care little about either the history of the temple or the spirits of Shancai. Even for the stele of Shancai Cave recording its history, the most touched part is still its name.

[31] Source: https://t11.baidu.com/it/app=25&f=JPEG&fm=173&fmt=auto&u=2646725020%2C510759687?w=639&h=479&s=3AAE65840C532CDC18C870130300E0C1. Accessed: January 26, 2024.

While Scott (2020, 21) also believes that temples provide "a highly symbolic physical matrix and ritual space" for sacred images to be enshrined, it can be more surprising that some visitors would worship an outdoor Shancai statue, which is not in Shancai Cave and popularly posted online. It is an outdoor bronze statue close to the dock of Mount Putuo, in the image of Red Boy (*honghaier* 红孩儿) in the *Journey to the West*. In the fiction, Guanyin takes Red Boy as her disciple, Shancai, so this statue represents a popular version of Shancai in China. Due to the height of the statue and the fence around it, visitors can only touch his left shin and foot on his right knee. Visitors tend to not only touch this part with their hands but also put their forehead on it. Similar to the red on the stele and inscription due to the rubbing of the red pocket, the verdigris on this part has peeled off, exposing the brass inside (Figure 14).

Figure 14 The Outdoor Statue of Shancai near the Dock[32]

[32] Source: https://upload-images.jianshu.io/upload_images/12883433-6cd1a9cbf6a7a66f.jpg. Accessed January 26, 2024.

Why does this statue now become important to touch? Several interlocutors told me that it is because the sacred images in the temples cannot be touched: while statues are images or representations of Buddhas and *bodhisattva*s, they are at the same time exactly Buddhas and *bodhisattva*s themselves who are efficacious or "agentive"– this is a widely shared conception for worshippers (Palmer, Tse, and Colwell 2019). Thus, touching the statues of Buddhas and *bodhisattva*s in temples means direct disrespect and offense to these Buddhas and *bodhisattva*s, rather than physical contact with symbols simply. The taboo here has two conditions: one is the sacred images, and the other is the temple environment for these images. If visitors still want to touch something sacred, they usually circumvent one of the two conditions. Thus, visitors either touch the sacred images not in a temple or other objects than the sacred images inside a temple. Touching the inscriptions of Shancai Cave's name in the temple and the outdoor statue of Shancai perfectly presents this logic of circumvention.

I have additional observations that can showcase these principles. First are the tripods in the temples with vigorous *xianghuo*. Some courtyards in front of the temple halls have one *ding* 鼎 (tripod), a kind of incense burner that is either ornamental or only used as a burner on important occasions. Some fenced off but most not, tripods at Mount Putuo are usually meters high, made of bronze, and inscribed with exquisitely carved patterns, the date of production, the temple's name, the abbot's name, and the donors' names. Visitors would circumambulate around the tripods while using their hands to touch the part within reach (Figure 15), and these reachable parts are also visibly different from the untouched parts with more brass color due to frequent

touches. Especially in Puji Temple and Fayu Temple, the tripods are often surrounded by visitors. In Fayu Temple, the tripod in the courtyard is so large that visitors can only touch the patterns at the bottom (Figure 15), but for other smaller tripods in front of each hall, the reachable parts are usually the tripod body with the temple name inscribed.

Figure 15 Visitors Touching the Tripod at Fayu Temple

Once passing the largest tripod, I heard two visitors say, “Wealth will come from the four directions” (*cai cong sifang lai* 财从四方来) while holding burning incense in one hand and circumambulating the tripod to touch it with another hand. In other words, circling, saying “four directions”, and touching the tripod symbolize visitors’ wishes to receive wealth from all directions thanks to the efficacy of the temple. It is also interesting to note that for the tripod in

the courtyard of the main hall at Puji Temple, the most touched part is inscribed with donors' names (Figure 16). Here, it seems that the content of the texts is not important just like the content of the stele at Shancai Cave. Rather, the behavior of touching the tripod can help visitors to get the efficacy from Puji Temple, the most important temple on Mount Putuo.

Figure 16 Donors' Names on the Tripod

For sacred images not inside a temple, a noteworthy case can be the stone ox in the Dharma reaching platform (*shuofa tai* 说法台) outside the Lingshi Temple 灵石庵 (*Lingshi an*) at the Xitian Scenic Area (Figure 17). The platform is believed where Guanyin had Dharma talking before temples were established at Mount Putuo, and the "ox" has its back to the platform. Various legends are associated with the stone. One is about a real ox attracted by Guanyin's Dharma talks, but it turned into stone and had its back to Guanyin because it was ashamed to be late (Ctrip, n.d.). Another legend depicts the stone as the incarnation of a junior monk, who was

punished to become an ox for breaking the percept of not stealing (Mount Putuo Cultural Tourism 2021).

Figure 17 The Ox Outside Lingshi Temple[33]

For visitors, the efficacy of the ox is more important than the content of the legends. The day I was there, I encountered a couple watching a short video about the ox on their smartphone, in which the tour guide several sayings about touching the different parts of the ox[34]: "Touch the ox's head and you will not have to worry about food and clothing" (*momo niutou, chichuan buchou* 摸摸牛头，吃穿不愁), "Lean against the ox's back and you will become rich and powerful" (*kaokao niubei, dafu dagui* 靠靠牛背，大富大贵), and "Touch the ox tail and you

[33] Source: https://mmbiz.qpic.cn/mmbiz_jpg/Rwk0XFSW6sb5jzTFNTrhdUJGEWwAhADJ3OkrBBviakB9cCXYr4Hn1pnLf3dj1nib5LUUibibqqmWicwDjiaGvnvvIgkA/. Accessed January 26, 2024.

[34] The video link of these sayings: https://www.douyin.com/video/711113726303093072.

will live a long life" (*momo niuwei, changming baisui* 摸摸牛尾，长命百岁). Later, another group of visitors came. Their tour guide said another line: "Touch from the head to the tail and your life will be like smooth wind and water" (*cong tou modao wei, shunfeng you shunshui* 从头摸到尾，顺风又顺水). All These sayings are rhymed, although their sources are unclear.

Why Does Touch Bring Efficacy?

While the specific reasons for physical touch can vary, it is important to highlight two shared elements. First, visitors' touching usually aims at getting the efficacy for their specific wishes, such as wealth. Second, such touching for efficacy is justified by discourses, either in the form of inscriptions or common sayings, but how visitors justify the power of these discourses to bring efficacy is usually not clear. Similarly, for a photo of visitors touching stones with historical engravings on Wulao Peak, Ashiwa and Wank (2023, 107) states that: "Some people stop to read the engravings, touch them, and throw coins for good luck." "Good luck" also seems like a groundless discourse, just like the wealth by touching Shancai's name. How can such touching still be effective if nothing justifies it? Also, what justifies the taboo of not touching Buddha and *bodhisattva* images and the alternatives extending from this taboo? More importantly, why it is touching, instead of other sensory experiences or practices, that can bring efficacy to visitors in the cases mentioned above? For example, touching images can be less direct than burning incense as a ritual to interact with deities, as shown in Chapter 1. The key issue here is how the logic of tactility performs in visitors' actions "naturally". In this section, my analysis starts with a

discussion of sympathetic magic and connects it with *ganying*, an indigenous Chinese concept explaining the resonance between different things at a distance.

Sympathetic Magic and Contact

In Taussig's ([1993] 2018) discussions of sympathetic magic, a copy or mimesis that is effective for magic should combine similarity and contact, and the Law of Contact is more fundamental to the Law of Similarity, as many effective magical copies are not visually similar to the original. For example, the stone ox mentioned above can hardly be a "perfect" copy of a real ox. It indeed has "horns" in the "head", but it has few other details that can be found in a real ox. Similarly, the meaning of Shancai as "beneficial to wealth" can hardly be like the image of Shancai presented in scriptural sources. Also, the Red Boy image of Shancai is better understood as an invocation of the character and plots in *Journey to the West* in the cultural repertoire of Chinese people, rather than Sudhanakumāra who goes on a pilgrimage to visit *kalyāṇamitra*s.

For Taussig ([1993] 2018, 42–43), "the magic of Similarity become but an instance of the magic of Contact", as the perceived similarity is not the strict, one-to-one visual correspondence but "the bodily impact of imaging" or the conversion of "the eye into an optical means of contact". Here, Taussig ([1993] 2018, 19–20) displaces the idea of "contact" from Frazer to Benjamin, who "wants to acknowledge a barely conscious mode of apperception and a type of 'physiological knowledge' built from habit" – the habit is "a profound example of tactile knowing". As Benjamin's example of such tactile knowing, Taussig ([1993] 2018, 20) discusses

architecture as “where touch and three-dimensioned space make the eyeball an extension of the moving, sensate body”. While McDaniel’s (2017) discussions of “distraction” in contemporary leisure Buddhist architecture directly refer to Taussig here, the key point for my analysis is the extended conception of contact, touch, and tactility: it is beyond a single sensation and can be the source of similarity of a copy and effectiveness magic. Contact in such a broadened sense is “the medley of the senses bleeding into each other’s zone of operations” (Taussig [1993] 2018, 42), and through the case of Cuna medical chants, the mimetic magic in Frazer’s meaning can be “created with words” (Taussig [1993] 2018, 79):

> For now we see that chanting or whispering or simply just thinking a thing’s origin gives the ritualist power over it. But let us not forget that here too it is necessary to make a simulacrum, a verbal, toneful, simulacrum, by means of chanting over or under one’s breath the birth-history of the thing in question. (Taussig [1993] 2018, 85)

In this logic, the contact in speaking or thinking between “Shancai” and “beneficial to wealth” is also “verbal” and “toneful” in Chinese, and it is exactly such discursive and linguistic contact that qualifies visitors’ physical contact with the inscription of Shancai Cave. The overlap between the Chinese translation of Sudhanakumāra and the meaning of “beneficial for wealth” in the same word “Shancai” is such a habitual “contact” that Chinese speakers can easily understand literally. Similarly, the sayings about the ox’s parts and corresponding efficacy are also such “verbal” contacts, which are “toneful” because of the rhyme of the lines.

In his book discussing the sensory experiences of the temple festivals in Shaanbei, Chau (2006, 95) proposes the concept of “text acts” to discuss the power of written texts beyond their

content for reading, such as steles and inscriptions: their mere presence is enough to "audience" feel certain power and act accordingly without making them "readers" of the content (Chau 2023; 2014). I suggest that this concept be expanded to include the senses. First, while Chau (2008b) emphasizes the "strong visual impacts" of text acts, people's feeling of their power should be what Taussig means by "tactile knowing" through sight, just like how Shancai Cave visitors feel the power of the inscriptions through touching. More importantly, people might not act according to the desired purpose of who wrote the texts but their own interpretations of the texts which are usually oral rather than written. Here, understanding the polysemy of the same word "Shancai" and the rhyme of lines about the ox as the verbal contacts again complicates the role of discourses in the sensory experiences of Mount Putuo visitors, which can go beyond assumed binaries between the oral and written texts and between language and the senses (Porcello et al. 2010).

Then, why is the efficacy implied in the verbal contact the "true" efficacy of the physical contact with the sacred elements? In discussions of Cunas, Taussig ([1993] 2018, 90–92) refers to different sources to argue that for Cunas, there is an invisible world of spirit in which everything in the material world has a spiritual counterpart. Images of the objects in the world of substance are not representations of them but their souls, so magical manipulations of the images directly work in the spiritual world and thus influence the material world. For Taussig ([1993] 2018, 53–54), the key principle for this dual nature of the world is an inference from Frazer: everything seems to be linked in a limitless chain of sympathetic associations, so the magic on

one thing always influences another; however, the key task for magician is “to know how to intervene in this chain of sympathy” by manipulating the image of the thing to be intervened.

Contact and *Ganying*

While these theoretical discussions seem insightful, ancient Chinese thinkers have long theorized them in a concise term: *ganying* 感应. The translation of *ganying* in English academic works varies, but a commonly used word is “resonance”. A notable translation from Sharf ([2002] 2017, 86) is “sympathetic resonance”, which seems to be inspired by an argument of Needham cited by him about the analytical possibilities to apply Frazer’s theory of sympathetic magic to the correlative thinking in Chinese cosmology. It is also Sharf who highlights *ganying* as a fundamental cosmological principle in China and analyzes some key features of *ganying*. For Sharf ([2002] 2017, 83), “the notion of sympathetic resonance is deceptively simple: objects belonging to the same category or class spontaneously resonate with each other”. He reviews the earlier English academic works and suggests that *ganying* is a mechanism “natural in a universe conceived holistically in terms of pattern and interdependent order” (Sharf [2002] 2017, 83). Such an order implies that everything, from the weather to human beings, is all connected and shows the same pattern analyzable through basic categories such as *yin* 阴 and *yang* 阳. Thus, in the universe, “localized phenomena affect the state of the whole, and the state of the whole is reflected in local phenomena” (Sharf [2002] 2017, 79). Such notion of *ganying* is “one of the hallmarks of Chinese cosmological thought” (Sharf [2002] 2017, 81) traceable in classical texts,

not so different from but far before Western anthropologists' ideas of a "chain of sympathy".

Based on this order, *ganying* further implies the possibilities for people to observe, learn, and manipulate the universe or some elements of the universe through rituals, or in Frazer's words, sympathetic magic. According to Sharf ([2002] 2017, 94), the concept of *ganying* in popular notions "refers to the principle of tit-for-tat moral retribution – the belief that one's good and evil deeds will result in corresponding rewards and punishments". He further suggests that this belief draws on "Buddhist notions of karma and rebirth", but "in medieval times it emerged as a fundamental principle of Chinese popular religious belief and practice, irrespective of one's religious affiliation", which was propagated through the numerous tales of efficacy[35] (Sharf [2002] 2017, 93–94). In other words, *ganying* has long been a taken-for-granted principle of Chinese religious life. Furthermore, it has been so taken for granted in practice that people seem to have no mental process to "justify" their tactility with the ideas *ganying* but "naturally" accept physical touch as an effective way to get the efficacy of sacred objects.

Under the logic of *ganying*, the discursive contact is not only a wordplay but also a representation of the *ganying* crystallized in the linguistic form, reflecting something conventional and thus "true" just like proverbs, especially when many others follow them in

[35] When Bingenheimer (2016, 78–79) discusses the founding myths of Mount Putuo, he equates the efficacy (*ling*) with *ganying* in Buddhist contexts. However, following Sharf here, I suggest it is better to understand the efficacy of a deity (whether Buddhist or not) to respond to a person as the specific cases of *ganying*. In other words, efficacy is an attribute that can be explained by *ganying* as a mechanism.

action and repeat them orally. After all, language for Benjamin ([1933] 1986, 336) is "the highest level of mimetic behavior and the most complete archive of nonsensuous similarity", but it can also mean that language in turn has the potential to resurge the sensuous mimesis – in my case, touching the inscription and statues. Back to the case of the Shancai inscription, the whole chain of *ganying* can be as such: the discursive contact reflects the presumed *ganying* between Shancai and his efficacy of bringing wealth – the *ganying* between Shancai and his efficacy in the unseen world is embodied by the inscription of his name as an efficacious object in this world – rubbing money on the inscription creates the *ganying* between the money and Shancai's efficacy – the reservation of the money extends the *ganying* between money and efficacy to the *ganying* between the owner and the efficacy, so the efficacious money should now bring more money to the owner as the result of touching. In short, discourses enact the whole action of touching, although visitors might just "naturally" follow the proverb-like sayings without thinking too much about their logic – exactly a "habit" based on tactile knowing, as Taussig would argue.

A final note is about the taboo of touching sacred images in temples. Sharf ([2002] 2017, 116) clearly shows the importance of the physical icons in Chinese Buddhism, especially "the manifest body of a buddha, bodhisattva, or other divine being" as "a major source of the [Buddha invocation] rite's efficacy". If the sacred images have such high efficacy, why is it taboo to stimulate *ganying* with them through touching? I suggest that the images are treated directly as the deities that they represent and are thus too powerful to touch. Between Taussig's ([1993] 2018, XIV) interpretation of sympathetic magic through mimesis and Sharf's ([2002] 2017, 100–

131) interpretation of "buddha-bodies" and invocation rites through *ganying*, an interesting but unexpected intersection is that they both understand the intervention in the sympathetic chain is for practitioners to obtain the other's power through its images, be it a Buddha or a spirit. Thus, there is an ontological ambiguity between the practitioner, the divine being, and its image: the image is the deity at least partially, and the practitioner with the divine power of the deity's efficacy after the contact ritual is also the deity at least partially. This is perfectly presented by Li's (2020) cases of "becoming Guanyin": the laywomen in the late Ming and Qing worshipped Guanyin through bodily and material practices to emulate, restage, and reproduce Guanyin's image, such as dancing, painting, embroidering, and hairpin-making. These gendered modes of practices allowed laywomen to develop intimate relationships with Guanyin, in which they should eventually "become" Guanyin but always failed (Li 2020). This provided a "liminal space between transcendence and immanence" (Li 2020, 20), which shows the ontological ambiguities between the female practitioners, Guanyin, and the image of Guanyin embodied by them.

While the Buddhist texts to which Sharf refers mainly provide guidelines on how to better achieve *ganying* with Buddhas, Taussig ([1993] 2018, 94) pays attention to "an aesthetics of transgression contained by ritual": for a person to become a deity means breaking the taboo with danger, but the danger is exactly the source of the power for the person to get the deity's power. From this perspective, the taboo of touching the sacred images in a temple emphasizes the danger of "becoming" Buddhas through touching but not through doctrinally "authorized" ways like rituals, practices, and self-cultivations: breaking the boundary between humans and Buddhas

in an “unorthodox” way like touching the statue of Buddhas may bring unpredictable risks. By contrast, the inscriptions in a temple or sacred images not in a temple can be weaker “images” that are less dangerous to touch, and so are the images produced and used by Li’s cases of female practitioners. They are the buffer zone for visitors to break the taboo “slightly” and thus get efficacy at a safe level. Returning to Ishii (2012), it is also the case that the efficacy of deities is actualized by the contingent coaction between people and sensory stimuli, which is indirect rather than direct human-deity contact. After all, the wishes are just wealth and health and only need the superficial power of deities, so it is not so necessary to take many risks and make great efforts to “become” a real Buddha or *bodhisattva*. Although some monastics believe the desire for wealth can lead people to “enter the wisdom of the Buddha” as *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* mentions, learning Shancai’s story and imitating him in giving up wealth and taking a pilgrimage for Dharma and enlightenment might still seem too costly for visitors. Thus, behind the fear of the passive results from the disrespect to Buddhas and *bodhisattva*s can also be an active rejection of the danger of their efficacy as a kind of “cost”.

From Touch to Photography

The day I went to the Xitian Scenic Area also presented an interesting correspondence between touch and photography. When I walked to the entrance of Meifu Temple, a group of visitors were there to touch an inscription of a calligraphic work (Figure 18). The calligraphy is by a former abbot of Mount Putuo, Miaoshan 妙善. The written word is *foxin* 佛心, the heart of Buddha,

with an artistic design of a joined-up stroke to connect the two characters. The inscription is on the wall of the entrance hall, about one and a half meters to the ground.

Figure 18 Visitors at The Entrance of Meifu Temple

The group of visitors was led by a local tour guide, who talked about how to touch the inscription: one should stand on a floor tile that has round patterns and is about two meters away from the inscription, close eyes, take three round turns on the tile, and then walk to touch the character “heart” with eyes closed and without others’ help. A middle-aged male visitor followed the tour guide’s words but with one more action: he clasped hands. About six visitors of the same group stood behind to see whether he would be able to touch the inscription without help, but he only touched the frame of the inscription, not the word. The tour guide and his peers still cheered for this because he at least touched part of the inscription, and then another visitor from the group started the follow suit.

As the inscription is in the entrance hall, another group of visitors came but had to wait. They had no tour guide with them, but when they saw the previous tour guide lead his visitors to

touch the inscription, they also waited to touch it. The tour guide then said to them: "You'd better worship Buddha first and then return to touch (the inscription), for one can only touch ('the heart of Buddha') with Buddha in the heart." This showed that touching the inscription with eyes closed and no help is more like a test of one's sincerity to the Buddha, for it means Buddha would allow and guide one to touch the inscription if one indeed has Buddha in the heart – a similar logic of Guanyin's active gaze of and manifestations to worshippers as analyzed in Chapter 1. Compared to the upper part out of reach, the bottom of the *foxin* inscription and the surrounding parts have been in a darker color exactly due to visitors' test-like touch.

Hearing this tour guide's words, some of the visitors in this group entered the temple to worship first, but some still waited around. After the man failed to touch the inscription, the tour guide talked to his clients as a comfort: "Touching this is mainly for fun. Don't take it too seriously. Let's go to the next stop." When they gradually left, the visitors entering the temple returned to the inscription, but they just walked to touch the inscription without turning around and closing their eyes, for no one could guide them again. These visitors did not need to prove their sincerity, and they seemed to get the efficacy conveniently through tactility just like the visitors to Shancai Cave.

The same calligraphic work is also made into an inscription in another temple, Shuangquan Temple 双泉庵 (*Shuangquan an*) (Figure 19). It is on the outer wall of a three-storied temple building and much larger than the one in the entrance hall of Meifu Temple. One can hardly touch the inscription there because of the scale and a small pond tightly against this wall. The

pond also has an inscription on its front, *xixin* 洗心 ("washing heart"), by a famous contemporary writer, Yu Qiuyu 余秋雨. Most visitors to Shuangquan Temple, nonetheless, pay no attention to the pond but only want to take pictures with the *foxin* inscription. The popularity of this inscription also derives a business chain of "photo-shooting tours" (*lvpai* 旅拍): visitors can rent traditional Chinese clothing and pay professional photographers to take good pictures of them in front of the wall and other beautiful sites.

Figure 19 The *Foxin* Wall at Shuangquan Temple

While I have long noticed the popularity of the *foxin* wall at Shuangquan Temple for taking photos on *Xiaohongshu*, I only got a chance to drop by Shuangquan Temple at the end of my fieldwork. I arrived at the temple in the afternoon, the hottest time of the day, and no visitors were taking photos at that time, except for a group of people sitting around a table near the wall. As a camera was on their table, I guessed they were service providers of "photo-shooting tours" who were waiting for clients. Then, two young male visitors came, and they took photos of each

other in front of the wall using their mobile phones. One held an incense container up on his head and faced the wall with eyes closed as his photo pose. The other had his back to the wall, jumped, and asked his friend to capture the moment of jumping up.

After they took the photos, they entered the temple to burn incense, and then another group of five male visitors came. At first, one younger visitor took a photo of another who stood in front of the wall with no pose, but then one older visitor said he should clasp his hands and face the wall. Another older visitor directly walked to the younger visitor, pulled him to another position, and turned him around, saying "Face the characters (*foxin*)". The visitor then clasped his hands in front of his forehead, closed his eyes, and was photographed by another young visitor. The older visitor, however, only took a photo with no pose, just like what the young visitor did at first.

While they all used smartphones to take photos, I later saw a professional photographer take photos of a young female visitor in a robe with traditional Chinese elements. He held a camera and guided the visitor in various poses in different parts of the temple, from the *foxin* wall to the tripod and gate of the temple. He would talk about where to put the hands or where to look, and he praised his client's poses after each photo, such as "very beautiful". On *Xiaohongshu*, such photographers usually have their own accounts to share the photos of clients to attract other potential visitors, and the price can vary according to visitors' demands for the number of photos and clothing to rent. According to a recent post by a photographer, the basic price is 399 *yuan* (about 80 Canadian dollars) for more than 80 original photos and 9 selected photos for

retouching. Interestingly, I noticed that another group of visitors at that time soon imitated this photographer to take photos in certain positions, but the photographer of course had no right to charge them fees.

In short, the same inscriptions of the *foxin* calligraphic work in two different places lead to different actions: at Meifu Temple, visitors touch, while at Shuangquan Temple, visitors take photos. The correspondence between touching and photography is also proved by some of the interlocutors who tend to apply the aforementioned principles of touching to photography. Baicong's *Xiaohongshu* account has some photos of the temple, mostly inscriptions but no Buddha statues. When I asked about this, he told me in a very serious tone that "because one is not allowed to randomly take photos in Buddhist places"[36]. He said he only took photos of the exterior of the temple, and in his hometown, a thought has been "instilled in them" since childhood: Buddha statues or other deity statues that are enshrined cannot be taken photos of.

Similarly, he does not explain but simply obeys the taboo of not taking photos of sacred images in a temple, just like the taboo of not touching them. Moreover, in my interview with Tianqing, she shared that she saw some visitors hire photographers for "photo-shooting tours" at Guanyin Fajie, but such services were not so common at Mount Putuo. She believed it was because Guanyin Fajie is not a temple but a "scenic spot" (*jingdian* 景点), so visitors would not have concerns and would just take photos of the numerous Guanyin statues on the dome of the

[36] "*Yinwei fojia zhi di bukeyi luan paizhao de*. 因为佛家之地不可以乱拍照的。"

main hall as well. In sum, the taboo of not photographing the statues in a temple and the alternatives to photographing inscriptions in a temple or statues not in a temple are perfectly matched with the principles of physical touching.

Taussig has well captured the tactile nature of photography based on Benjamin's theories of the camera, which is the modern machinery of reproduction or mimesis. Through Benjamin's concept of "the optical unconscious", Taussig ([1993] 2018, 18; 1991, 149) suggests that mimetic machines "play with and even restore this erased sense of contact-sensuous particularity animating the fetish", or render "the optical dissolving… into touch and a certain thickness and density". For Benjamin ([1931] 2005, 510), by "slow motion and enlargement", the camera opens a new way to explore an aspect of the world, of which people are unconscious through eyes, such as the way people walk and the structure of cells. It is in such "physiognomic aspects of visual world" that Taussig ([1993] 2018, 19) highlights the combination of copying and touching anchored in the camera to "create a new sensorium involving a new subject-object relation and therefore a new person". Here, the tactile knowing through the eyes is enhanced by the camera, and the camera is like a new sensory organ for humans to touch through seeing.

The different modes of contact between visitors and the two *foxin* inscriptions indeed reflect the contrast between the scale of the camera and the scale of the human sensory organ. As mentioned above, the inscription of Meifu Temple is partially within reach of most visitors. By contrast, the inscription at Shuangquan Temple is larger, higher, and with a small pond in the front, so visitors cannot physically touch it, rather than they do not want. Thus, the camera is

used as an alternative way of touch – this logic of looking for alternatives is just like that of what to touch, both under the habits of tactile knowing. Moreover, at Meifu Temple, one needs to have Buddha in heart to touch the touchable character *xin* at the bottom of the inscription, which corresponds to the proper poses needed for visitors to take a photo with the inscription at Shuangquan Temple. Behind such ritual-like preparations before "touch" is exactly the logic of sympathetic magic based on contact and *ganying*. At Meifu Temple, the game-like test of one's sincerity to Buddha makes the physical touch not always possible, which reflects that the potential of physical touch is the representation of the *ganying* between one and the Buddha in the unseen world or the chain of sympathy. By contrast, photos always provide an unobstructed view of the inscription at Shuangquan Temple and the person in the camera, so it is the factual contact between the inscription and the person in the camera that now requires a presentation of the *ganying*: the person needs to make a sincere pose, such as clasping the hands and with the eyes closed, just like the visitors who attempted to touch the inscription at Meifu Temple.

Of course, visitors can touch the inscription at Meifu Temple without the test and take a photo with the inscription at Shuangquan Temple without proper poses. The visitors without tour guides at Meifu Temple and the older visitor at Shuangquan Temple were such cases, but if the pursuit of efficacy is the visitors' motivation for touching, they would possibly just "naturally" follow the conventions. The younger visitor at Shuangquan Temple followed the instructions of his companions, and if there were a tour guide, the latter group of visitors at Meifu Temple would probably follow the introduction of the tour guide just like the visitors before them.

Camera as an Organ of Tactility

The contact in the case of Shuangquan Temple is between the inscription and the person in the same photo, rather than between the inscription and the one who takes the photo, but the camera can indeed work as the sensory organ of the person who holds it. Let me return to the case of the Cave of Brahmā's Voice in which people look for Guanyin. When at the platform, it is common for visitors to take a photo of the cave and ask others to point out where Guanyin is. My interlocutors indeed asked me to do so during our visit. Also, if one sees Guanyin in the Cave, taking a photo means maintaining a moment of efficacy through visual proof.

After my first visit to the Cave of Brahmā's Voice during the fieldwork, I uploaded a post with a picture of the cave on *Xiaohongshu* as the cover. Out of my expectations, this post has attracted some comments and likes, among which two commenters uploaded their photos of the cave. One commenter shared a photo of seeing a rainbow in the cave, and the other shared two photos with very special light spots, saying they were miraculous and not captured by other visitors at that time. In one photo, the spot looks like Guanyin's manifestation. Other commenters also said it was the shadow of Guanyin, and the poster replied to them that many other visitors at that time expressed their envy and believed it meant a lot of Buddhist *yuan* 缘 (pre-fated bonds, as analyzed in Chapter 1). The other photo has a spot like a gate, which is also an important metaphor in Buddhism. Another commenter then replied to this photo and asked whether the poster indeed saw the spot.

According to my knowledge, such spots can be a typical optical phenomenon of the

smartphone camera when a strong light enters the multilayered glass of the lens and causes multiple reflections of the light in the camera. Thus, human eyes cannot have such visual effects, and whether other cameras can capture them also depends on the lens. It was likely that the commenter who wondered whether the poster saw the spot was also suspicious of the spot as merely a technical issue with the camera. However, this visitor, maybe as well as other visitors present at that time, attaches strong efficacious meanings to such optical phenomena and thus values the visual world in the camera more than in their eyes. Here, the camera indeed "create(s) a new sensorium involving a new subject-object relation and therefore a new person" (Taussig [1993] 2018, 18): The photos are not only the proof of Guanyin's efficacy but also the only witness of the efficacy, with the camera just like a sensory organ of tactility to enact *ganying*.

Moreover, today's social media further the logic of the optical unconscious as a contact. In my post, a comment read: "Bless me (*baoyou* 保佑, with an emoji of clasping hands)." Such comments seem to be a contact between the image of the Cave of Brahmā's Voice and the commenter through being in the same post: in the logic of the chain of *ganying*, if the photos are both proof and witness of Guanyin's efficacy, the contact with the photos should mediate the blessings of Guanyin as well. Also, as the AI algorithms of *Xiaohongshu* can recommend posts featuring photos of Guanyin and Mount Putuo to users beyond their expectations, such contingency can be attributable to Guanyin's efficacy as well – just like seeing Guanyin as Guanyin's gaze in Chapter 1. Thus, comments in the same post can reflect the attempt of the post-viewers to receive, create, and further the *ganying* from Guanyin through contact. For

example, most *Xiaohongshu* posts with a photo of Nanhai Guanyin attract a lot of comments making specific wishes for health, wealth, and even a child. Sometimes, such comments are obviously copied and pasted from others, even with errors and other commenters' wishes. For example, a post with a photo of Nanhai Guanyin celebrating Guanyin's second "birthday" attracts some comments that are exactly the same. Regardless of the photo of Guanyin and the date, all of them mistakenly celebrate the birthday of the God of Wealth (*Caishen* 财神) instead of Guanyin. Also, they all seek blessings to study in Spain, which is not a popular destination for overseas education in China and might be very personal to the original commenter.

This phenomenon can echo Benjamin-style criticisms of how the camera and other mechanical reproduction erase the aura of the original (Benjamin [1936] 1986), i.e., the efficacy of Guanyin that should be transmitted through the physical touch and *ganying* in the in-person visits to Mount Putuo is now distorted by the spreading of photos online and the "contact" with photos through copying comments randomly. However, I suggest that the contact through photos also demonstrates Taussig's ([1993] 2018, 18) further reflections that photos can "play with and even restore this erased sense of contact-sensuous particularity animating the fetish". First, the online contact through comments to a post of the image of Guanyin at Mount Putuo still relies on those visiting Mount Putuo in person to take photos. As mentioned above, the camera can work as a sensory organ for these visitors, and taking photos is exactly a way to "touch" the original that is out of reach. Just like the case of *foxin* wall at the Shuangquan Temple, taking photos with the inscription is not ruptured from but connected with the tradition of physical touch at the

Meifu Temple. Similarly, Nanhai Guanyin is a huge outdoor statue not in a temple, and photography also becomes how visitors can make contact with it. While some visitors would lean forward to touch the base of the statue with the whole body (Figure 20), contact with the whole body of the large statue is still only available in the camera, which manipulates the scale of "touch" to capture a full image of the statue.

Figure 20 Visitors Touching the Base of Nanhai Guanyin with the Whole Body

Thus, with the camera as a sensory organ, visitors to Mount Putuo do not entirely cancel but alter the aura of Mount Putuo by taking photos, which are still the proof and witness of Guanyin's efficacy. In other words, photos both erase and maintain the aura of the original, at least partially if not all of the aura. As a result, online photos have a liminal status regarding whether they can mediate the efficacy of Mount Putuo to viewers on social media. While comments can be the viewers' attempt to contact with photos for efficacy, these photos can also motivate certain if not all viewers to go to Mount Putuo in person to get what they believe as

"more", "better", and "more authentic" efficacy. The power of the recommendation algorithms of today's social media can spread posts broadly, so the photos of Mount Putuo are likely to reach potential visitors – this is exactly how *Xiaohongshu*'s special economy of "grass planting" (Sun and Ly 2022) works, as mentioned in the Introduction. These photo-motivated visitors might take the same photos as they have seen online at Nanhai Guanyin to get the same efficacy, and uploading them on social media can recharge previous photos with the offline aura, open a new round of online contacts through photos, and attract more potential offline visits. To some degree, the business of "photo-shooting tours" as discussed above directly relies on such online-offline loops to attract new customers online with photos of earlier customers to take similar photos for them. Ultimately, given the fundamental logic of photography as the contact for efficacy, such a possible cycle of photographic contacts across the online and offline can contribute to the constant reproduction of the efficacy of Guanyin and Mount Putuo.

Concluding Thoughts

One might find an interesting connection between Taussig and Buddhist doctrines as shown by Howes. Howes (2022, 448) parallels Taussig and Buddhist doctrines about the senses because he believes that Taussig conceives of mimetic faculty as paralleled to but not dominating other senses. This conception seems similar to how Buddhism considers the mind faculty (*yi gen* 意根, *manendriya* in Sanskrit) as the sixth sense faculty in addition to eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body faculties (Howes 2022, 448). This chapter does not follow this analysis for several reasons.

For one thing, there are different views of the senses in Buddhism. For example, some Buddhist schools have more complicated ideas about the "mind" (*yi* 意, S. *manas*) that can complicate its relationships with other senses, such as the seventh and the eighth consciousness in Yogâcāra Buddhism. Also, Taussig seems to expand on the boundary of tactility rather than set the mimetic faculty as a sense. Then, a more interesting attempt to bridge Taussig and Buddhist doctrines can be the similarities between tactility and the Buddhist idea of *sparśa* (*chu* 触, "touching" or "contact"). *Sparśa* has two overlapping meanings: first, the tactile object as one of the six sense objects (*liu chen* 六尘, S. *ṣaḍ viṣaya)*; and second, as the sixth link in the twelve links of dependent origination (*shi'er yinyuan* 十二因缘, S. *dvādaśa-astanga pratītyasamutpāda*), i.e., the coming together of the sense object, the sense organ, and the sense consciousness as the perception of the external environment (Muller and Hodge, n.d.-a). As the second meaning can cover all the senses not limited to the physical touch in the first meaning, the concept of *sparśa* can correspond to Taussig's idea of the habitual guidance of tactility underlying all the senses.

This chapter, however, does not aim at creating a connection between the thoughts but analyzes the visits to Mount Putuo. A thorough review of Buddhist doctrines on the senses is also beyond the scope of this thesis. More importantly, most visitors to Mount Putuo have little doctrinal knowledge of Buddhism. Based on my ethnographic materials about visitors, I suggest the logic of *ganying* which underlies Chinese cosmologies be a better framework for understanding the touching and photographing of visitors to Mount Putuo. On the bridge between *ganying* and Taussig's theories, I interpret visitors' physical touch as the presentation

and creation of the sympathetic relationships between themselves and the deities in the unseen world, which should bring the efficacy from the deities to their specific wishes. In other words, the touchable objects work as the sensory stimuli made by the efficacious deities at Mount Putuo that can coact with visitors.

Such a habit of tactile knowing is unconscious and further extends to the practice of photography, in which the camera not only provides proof of efficacy but also directly works as a sensory organ of contact to receive efficacy. Thus, I present the spread of photos on social media, which creates more contacts and can be the contemporary version of Yü's (2001, 353–406) analysis, which considers pilgrims' testimonies of efficacy crucial for the establishment of Mount Putuo's fame as Guanyin's abode in premodern times. The difference is that today's internet users and visitors do not rely on literati's textual records and common people's oral storytelling but on their own reading, watching, and especially "touching" of the online content on their screens of electronic devices. Although social media seem to provide more opportunities for efficacy-seeking contacts and thus can potentially replace the physical touch and visits to Mount Putuo in person, I suggest the photos' double function as the proofs and organs of efficacy can still attract certain visitors to Mount Putuo to take similar photos, which recharge previous photos with aura and attract new potential Mount Putuo visitors. In the cycle of making contact with photos online for efficacy, visiting Mount Putuo in person, and taking more photos to upload online, the porous boundary and the interface between online and offline provide rich space for Mount Putuo's efficacy to be constantly reproduced and circulated.

Concluding Reflections

During my ethnographic fieldwork, I took ferries to and from Mount Putuo frequently. Many times, the staff of the dock stopped me from checking in through the entrance reserved for Mount Putuo locals. They would impatiently yield at me through a loudspeaker even when I was meters away: “Tourists, please walk inside (to the entrance for tourists).” Once I had replied to them that I am a Mount Putuo native in the local dialect, their tone soon became mild, usually with a little bit of awkwardness. Maybe a local should look like an office worker in a suit who commutes early with colleagues, a middle-aged home inn operator with a straw hat and sunglasses to work outdoors to attract customers, or residents with fresh food just bought from the main island of Zhoushan. As for a young man in casual clothing with a canvas bag and a baseball cap like me? He must be a tourist.

As mentioned in the Introduction, my identity as a local contributes to better interactions with my interlocutors, but my positionality in the research can be a complicated issue. I might not seem like a local, and I am a temple-goer but not a worker or a monk, who is the “true” host of the temples. With my interlocutors, sometimes I acted as their tour guide to introduce Mount Putuo, rather than an ethnographer of tourists who should be “a tourist among tourists” (Graburn 2002, 25). Between and betwixt a local and a temple-goer, I am also a researcher, a student required to write a thesis. As a result, I cannot follow existing studies of contemporary visitors to Mount Putuo to build my thesis upon the category of “tourists” (You 2018; Bruntz 2014; Wong, Ryan, and McIntosh 2013; Lin 2015) – a problematic category that is implicitly given a vulgar,

hedonistic image and can be the opposite of "pilgrims", "locals", and even "ethnographers". Although my interlocutors are mostly non-locals, the findings about *xianghuo*, *qingjing*, and tactility can also well apply to locals who are also temple visitors and share these sensory experiences with nonlocal temple visitors – if we look at the case of Baicong in Chapter 1 again, he learned the word *xianghuo* from a local.

While a thorough reflection on the dualisms between the category of tourists and various opposites in the anthropology of tourism can be far beyond the scope of my MA thesis, breaking conceptual dualisms is indeed a key theme throughout my thesis. I highlight the sensory dimensions of Guanyin's and Mount Putuo's efficacy that are understated in earlier studies and interpret their efficacy as the power to produce uncontrollable sensory stimuli as their response to visitors. This connection leads to a main point in this study: the dynamics of efficacy at the micro or individual level can be understood through sensory experiences, which can produce further understandings of efficacy and the senses in Chinese religious life. Then, I argue that visitors' sensory experiences of these stimuli as "contingent coactions" (Ishii 2012) can actualize and reproduce the efficacy of Guanyin and Mount Putuo, allowing broader spreading and attracting more visitors to Mount Putuo. One effect of such dynamics of the sensory (re-)production of efficacy is that visitors can equally perceive and discuss the sensory stimuli produced by the efficacious Guanyin and Mount Putuo, coact with them for personal wishes, and in turn contribute to the efficacy of Guanyin and Mount Putuo in general. Such sharing of sensory experiences breaks down the boundaries between different groups of visitors, which are

usually based on the dualism of self and others.

This is well presented in the analysis of *xianghuo*, which represents the strong intensity of visitors' communication with Guanyin for her efficacy. Either in the material form of burning incense or the metaphorical form of visitors' gathering, *xianghuo* shows the entanglement between Guanyin's efficacy to respond to visitors through sensory stimuli and the dialectics between the social and the individual, in which visitors interact with each other to confirm their sensory experiences of Guanyin's efficacy for personal wishes. Then, I analyze *qingjing*, a seeming opposite of *xianghuo* but actually another dimension of the efficacy of Guanyin and Mount Putuo. *Qingjing* emphasizes the inner peace that visitors can feel at Mount Putuo more than the external quietness. It can emerge without *xianghuo*, coexist with *xianghuo,* and even arise within *xianghuo*, as visitors might feel lost in the intensive sensory experiences of *xianghuo* and thus reflect on their motivations to pursue Guanyin's and Mount Putuo's efficacy in *xianghuo*. In other words, *xianghuo* and *qingjing* are not as dualistic as implied in earlier studies of red-hot sociality.

As for tactility in the final chapter, I interpret visitors' touch with objects at Mount Putuo as a habitual behavioral pattern to get efficacy for their wishes. Behind the pattern is the principle of *ganying*, a Chinese cosmological idea that understands everything in the universe is connected and can resonate with each other with or without manipulation. At Mount Putuo, this principle functions orally in language, physically in touch, and even digitally through the camera and social media, allowing broader and deeper reproduction of the efficacy of Mount Putuo. It is in

this chapter that I follow Puett's (2013) suggestion to treat theoretical frameworks indigenous to Chinese religious life seriously and dialogue them with Western theories in critical studies of religions, rather than oppose them. I bridge the conception of *ganying* in China and Taussig's theories about sympathetic magic, tactility, and mimesis to achieve a thorough analysis of visitors' touch with objects and extend from physical contact to photography. I also see an opportunity to connect Taussig's theories with Buddhist ideas on *sparśa* thanks to Howes (2022, 448).

When I look back, I also notice that the three chapters of my thesis happen to correspond to the "eighteen elements" (*shiba jie* 十八界, *aṣṭādaśa-dhātavaḥ* in Sanskrit) model of the senses that divides each sense into faculty (*gen* 根; S. *indriya*), object (*chen* 尘; S. *viṣaya*), and consciousness (*shi* 识; S. *vijñāna*) in Buddhist teachings (Muller, n.d.). *Xianghuo* discusses a sense object external to the self. *Qingjing* can be an internal consciousness when the external objects get into cognition. Tactility is a sensory faculty, and for Taussig ([1993] 2018, 18), the camera is just like a sense organ. As emphasized multiple times in my thesis, most visitors to Mount Putuo know little about the Buddhist doctrines and do not understand their own sensory experiences based on Buddhist doctrines. Therefore, it is always I who build "partial connections" (Strathern 2004) between different theoretical systems and between theories and realities based on my own positionality to reveal what can underlie visitors' sensory experiences at Mount Putuo.

My thesis can be a radical attempt to circumvent dualistic frameworks that are frequently

applied to Chinese religious life without contextualization, such as the religious versus the secular and suppression versus resistance. Rather, I build my thesis upon the issues of the senses, which can be fundamental in our lives and prior to the conceptual dualisms, and the analytical perspectives combining indigenous frameworks of Chinese religious life and anthropological theories. With these efforts, I hope my thesis can better contextualize the religious life of contemporary China and contribute to the post-colonial studies of religions in general. Hopefully, my research will continue in the next stage of my scholarly pursuit and lead me to other related issues, such as how the efficacy sensorily perceived at Mount Putuo relates to the specific wishes of visitors and other dimensions of their everyday social life.

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