

CHAPTER 5

GUANYIN, GODDESS OF THE SEA

While some early forms of Songzi Guanyin appear to have originated with a white-robed female sitting on an island and surrounded by water, the form now known as Nanhai (South seas) Guanyin is generally considered to have become popular between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries with the association of Putuo Island as the island home of Guanyin. Paintings of Nanhai Guanyin frequently depict her as a sea goddess, riding on waves or on a fish. This form is believed to bring protection to anyone who travels on the South China Sea. Yet, as seen in the previous chapter Nanhai Guanyin appears to have developed from a water-moon form which did not symbolize protection from the sea. So where did the notion of a goddess of the sea originate? Is there any iconographical evidence to indicate that Guanyin was worshipped in this form before Nanhai Guanyin came into existence?

Belief in Guanyin's efficacy as a saviour from the sea goes back to the beginning of the cult and the protection from the Perils as described in the *Lotus Sūtra*. There was not, however, in the early stages of the cult, any particular image associated with this function. Various forms with a maritime theme have appeared over time, Aoyu (Big fish) Guanyin, depicts Guanyin standing, or riding, on a large fish, Yulan (Fishbasket) Guanyin, holds a basket of fish in her hand and a form known as Guanyin Crossing the Sea, rides on a small boat amongst the ocean waves. Nanhai Guanyin appears to have absorbed elements from each of these forms. This is, no doubt, because of the mutual association with the sea but it is also likely that as these forms developed, they influenced each other and eventually merged. This chapter will, therefore, look at three points.

First it will look, in turn, at each of the forms with apparent connections to the sea, in order to establish their original function and how this has been interpreted in modern day East Asia. It will then investigate the reasons for Guanyin's associations with Putuo Island and finally it will examine the legends and images associated with this island to determine how features of the earlier 'sea' images came to be incorporated into Nanhai Guanyin's iconography.

FORMS OF GUANYIN WITH EARLY SEA CONNECTIONS

It is difficult to determine exactly what the earliest form of Guanyin with sea connections might have been. As discussed in the preceding chapters, emblems are used to symbolize the particular function of a deity and in many cases the significance of the emblem is not clear. The intended role of an image is not always made clearer when legends are examined, for in many cases the legends have been written to explain how the particular image received its attributes rather than explaining what they are believed to represent. For this reason the following examination of Yulan and Aoyu Guanyin and Guanyin Crossing the Sea, while relating some known legends, will also take into account local interpretations of the efficacy of the images.

Yulan Guanyin

One image with a sea association (in the form of a fish) is Yulan Guanyin. This form is usually depicted with a basket in her right hand containing one or several fish. Sometimes a large basket is shown over Guanyin's right arm. Guanyin's dress and remaining attributes vary from image to image. A statue of this form has come to my notice dated 718CE (Van Oort 1986: 27). This statue (seen in Plate 84) is made of marble and inscribed "The master priest (abbot) of the Jing guang [Ching-kuang] temple of the Yangge [Yang-ko] mountain has respectfully made this statue for the sovereign of the country, the 28th day of the 3rd month of the 6th year (of the reign



PLATE 84
Yulan Guanyin.
Hebei 718CE.
(Van Oort 1986: Pl XXXV)

period) Kaiyuan (718CE)". This temple is apparently still in existence and located in Hebei, an area known for its marble statuary. This statue could be feminine as there is a suggestion of a bustline, but it could equally be regarded as male. It could also be an early white-robed form of Guanyin. If this form of Guanyin can accurately be identified as Yulan Guanyin, this could be the earliest surviving example of this form and possibly the earliest extant feminine form.¹¹² The form of Yulan Guanyin has been interpreted differently by scholars. Yü states that Yulan Guanyin is related to the story¹¹³ of a beautiful young woman, known as 'Mr Ma's wife', who one day arrived in Golden Sand Beach in Shaanxi, carrying a fishbasket. The woman then offered marriage to any man who could memorise certain Buddhist texts. However, although a wedding was arranged to successful Mr Ma, the woman died before her marriage could be consummated.¹¹⁴ A monk later established that this woman was in fact a bodhisattva.¹¹⁵ Although early versions of this story did not identify the bodhisattva with Guanyin and some versions did not mention a fishbasket, these details were later added and the legend became associated with Guanyin. Yü states that poems and paintings testify to this story being related to this form.¹¹⁶ Yü also suggests that the theme of sexual favours being offered and then denied serves as a teaching device to help people overcome sexual desire.

Yet even if we grant that there is a relationship between this legend and Yulan Guanyin, what is the symbolism of the fish and the fishbasket? Yü suggests that one reason for the fish and fish basket emblems could be that a fish, in particular a carp, represents good luck to the Chinese,

¹¹²I have attempted to locate the present whereabouts of this statue. The previous owner of the statue Mr Dumolin died in July 1995 and Madame Dumolin was unable to advise its present whereabouts. It had not been in their collection for some time. Madame Dumolin did, however, verify the details of the statue as given here.

¹¹³As described by Yü: 1990a, 1990b, 1994

¹¹⁴This story has been connected to a similar tale, set in eastern Shaanxi during the period 766-779, describing a woman from Yanzhou (Yü: 1990a, 1990b, 1994, 1996).

¹¹⁵The woman's bones were chained together which is believed to be a sign of bodhisattvahood.

¹¹⁶Matsunaga (1969: 131-134) describes the attributes relating to 'Ma Lang Guanyin' as a lotus in the right hand and a female skull in the left hand. Matsunaga also states that Guanyin of the fishbasket, is based upon the legend of a Chan devotee whose daughter Lingzhao was believed to be a manifestation of Guanyin. However, Yü's research on this subject is more extensive and therefore more convincing.

for by swimming upstream in the Yangtze River it becomes a dragon.¹¹⁷ Stein (1986: 59), on the other hand, in keeping with the stories described above, considers that the fish is symbolic of suppressing sexual desire. For this he quotes several plays which have the suppression of sexual desire as their theme. In one, a fish (carp) seduces a man and is transformed into a beautiful woman, then abuses the privilege. After being pursued by the king's army it is Guanyin who captures it and places it in the basket. However, in another play, the basket appears to symbolize the calming of the elements, for the fish, although kept in a basket, is alive. If it is released into the water it brings on lightning, thunder and winds.

It is this keeping control over the fish that appears to be one of the key issues here. When I was in China I noticed several images of Yulan Guanyin where the fish was being held on the basket by Guanyin's finger. It could be, therefore, that the true symbolism of the basket is as a means to entrap and subdue evil, whether it be sexual behaviour as we saw in the above stories, or bad weather which could ruin trade. In this way Yulan Guanyin would be a perfect icon for those who wished to earn their living by, or from, the sea.

When I visited China in the autumn of 1995 I attempted to ascertain how popular this form is in China today. Most of the images that I came across in different parts of East China were being sold to locals and overseas Chinese tourists and pilgrims. The image shown in Plate 85 is from Beijing (Hebei) and shows two almost identical images of Guanyin with a fish lying on top of a basket. In one, Guanyin's finger appears to be holding the fish on the basket but in the other it does not. But in images from Zhengzhou, Luoyang, Shanghai and Fuzhou it is clear that Guanyin is holding the fish. This would indicate that the fish is alive and Guanyin is entrapping it in the basket (see Plates 86 - 88). Wherever I asked the meaning of this form of Guanyin, I was told that worshipping this form would ensure that the devotee had luck, happiness or abundance. In

¹¹⁷Yü also suggests that as Guanyin had become associated with the *ullambana* (Ghost Festival) the shortened sound *yulan* represents either fish basket or nectar and a basket of Doughnuts (1990b: 252).



PLATE 85
Yulan Guanyin.
Beijing.



PLATE 86
Yulan Guanyin.
Luoyang.



PLATE 87
Yulan Guanyin.
Fuzhou,
China.



PLATE 88
Detail of plate 87.

Fuzhou I was told that if you earn, for example, one hundred dollars per year in salary and at the end of the year still have fifty dollars left, that means you have abundance, plenty for your needs. This explanation is not inconsistent with the subduing or entrapping of evil for it ensures that a person's fortune or living will not be ruined.

Although this form of Guanyin is not commonly worshipped in the rest of East Asia, I did come across Yulan Guanyin in Hong Kong and Taiwan. One image was tucked away in a back corner of the Guanyin temple at Stanley in Hong Kong (Plate 89) and the other was found in a small temple at Baishan Wan Beach near Taipei in Taiwan (Plate 90). These discoveries were particularly interesting for while Yulan Guanyin's connection to the sea is disputable, each of these images is located in a temple that looks out to sea. The temple at Baishan Wan, in particular, has a large Baiyi Guanyin standing on the roof of the temple looking out towards the sea¹¹⁸ as well as a beautiful Nanhai Guanyin which will be discussed below. This indicates that it is considered fitting for Yulan Guanyin to be placed in a temple that needs protection from the harmful elements of the sea.

While protection from the sea has little in common with the legend of Mr Ma's wife, the forms of Guanyin carrying a fish basket were likely, as both Stein (1986) and Yü suggest, to have existed before the legends were known. Thus the legends were created to explain the forms. The original form would most likely have been created to symbolize an activity or to protect from a particular disaster as we have seen in previous chapters. Johnston (1976: 291) suggests that certain artists of the Song dynasty showed Guanyin clothed in the clothes of a fisherman's daughter holding a fish or basket of fish in her right hand. This is significant, for it suggests that paintings

¹¹⁸The temple in Stanley, Hong Kong has such a statue in the courtyard. This is not an unusual sight as huge statues of Guanyin are often seen in coastal areas of East Asia. Most statues of this form are white-robed and are situated facing the sea to guard all who sail on her waters. In fact, whenever there is an image of this form on a hillside or in a temple courtyard, Guanyin always faces the sea. Being one of the most popular images and one considered to protect from any danger, Baiyi Guanyin is an obvious choice as a guardian to protect the temple.



PLATE 89
Yulan Guanyin.
Stanley,
Hong Kong.



PLATE 90
Yulan Guanyin.
Bai Shan Wan Temple,
Taiwan.

of Guanyin in a fisherman's daughter's garment¹¹⁹ holding a fish or basket of fish in the right hand are representative of Guanyin as a goddess of the sea.

In order to determine whether this form did originally represent a sea deity, it is necessary to look at the trades and occupations within the areas associated with the earliest known image of Yulan Guanyin. I refer back to the image from Hebei. Hebei, although situated inland, was at this time served by waterways and a canal system linking the Yangtze with the Yellow River and the Beijing region. These waterways were ideal for fish breeding and mulberry raising, which went hand in hand with silkworm production. Silk had been produced in the Hebei region since the third century CE.¹²⁰ Men usually tended to the fish ponds in such areas while the women tended to the mulberry groves and to the silk worms.¹²¹ No doubt protection from harmful elements, as they went about their daily tasks, would have been important to these men and women.¹²² It is possible, therefore, that the Hebei image of Yulan Guanyin was associated with fish, water and trade, although not the sea.

Guanyin Crossing the Sea

Yet, while Yulan's Guanyin connection to the sea is ambivalent. 'Guanyin Crossing the Sea' does have a clear iconographical connection to the sea, which is much stronger than that of Yulan Guanyin. The Chinese image seen in Plate 91 was made in the Song (960-1279) or Yuan (1279-1368) dynasty and is to be found amongst the painted clay figurines and statues at the Shuanglin Monastery at Taiyuan. Although this statue has Indian features in the long ear lobes and the *ūrṇā*

¹¹⁹This would be in keeping with the Pumen Chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra* which describes Guanyin taking on the station of those she wished to help.

¹²⁰See for example Barraclough 1981: 81

¹²¹Married women were not considered suitable for the rearing of the worms or care of the cocoons, due mainly to notions of uncleanness during pregnancy and childbirth when it was believed they would harm the silkworms (Topley 1978: 71). It was usually the men, therefore, who looked after the worms and the fish, while the women tended the mulberry groves.

¹²²Stein (1986: 62-63) relates a story about the goddess of the silk worms who took the form of Ma-ming (Voice of horse). Stein considers this is connected to the story of Mr Ma's wife.



PLATE 91
Guanyin crossing the sea.
Shuanglin Monastery.
Taiyuan, China.

in the middle of the forehead, it does not appear to have an Indian antecedent. It is possibly connected to the Amidist cult where it can be compared to the “Ship of Salvation” in which Guanyin carried devotees to the Pure Land (Johnston 1976: 103). Zhang Hua, my local guide, told me that worshipping this image will change one's fortune. Zhang also told me that fishermen pray to this Goddess of the Sea for protection.

Aoyu Guanyin

Yet while ‘Guanyin Crossing the Sea’ has a strong iconographical connection to the sea, Aoyu Guanyin is where the notion of Guanyin as goddess of the sea is quite distinct. Paintings of Aoyu Guanyin are a popular theme in China and the rest of East Asia, and depict Guanyin standing on, or riding on, a large fish or sea dragon. Plate 92 shows a poster sold widely in Singapore. I saw exactly the same painting on the front cover of a tape of Guanyin songs being sold to pilgrims on Putuo island. But this Aoyu Guanyin is not just a product of ‘pop art’. Huge images of this form of Guanyin, standing on large fish can be seen in monasteries in Luoyang, Kaifeng, Shanghai and Hangzhou to name just four (see Plates 93 and 94 for two of these images). In all these representations the image stands against a large frieze which usually backs images of Śakyamuni, Wenshu and Puxian. All the fish on which Guanyin stands have the appearance of a sea monster which has either large teeth or tentacles.

The significance of these images varies slightly. At the Jade Buddha Temple in Shanghai I was told the creature was a crocodile and when Guanyin stands on a crocodile it means that she can subdue the creature and therefore release suffering. It also means that she can help poor people. I was also told that the fish and crocodile symbolize the same thing for they both travel quickly. To subdue these creatures means to have control and to help the poor. In Shanghai, I was told, most people own an image of this form of Guanyin plus an image of Guanyin standing with a vase in her hand. In the shop attached to Jade Buddha Temple I saw many images of Aoyu

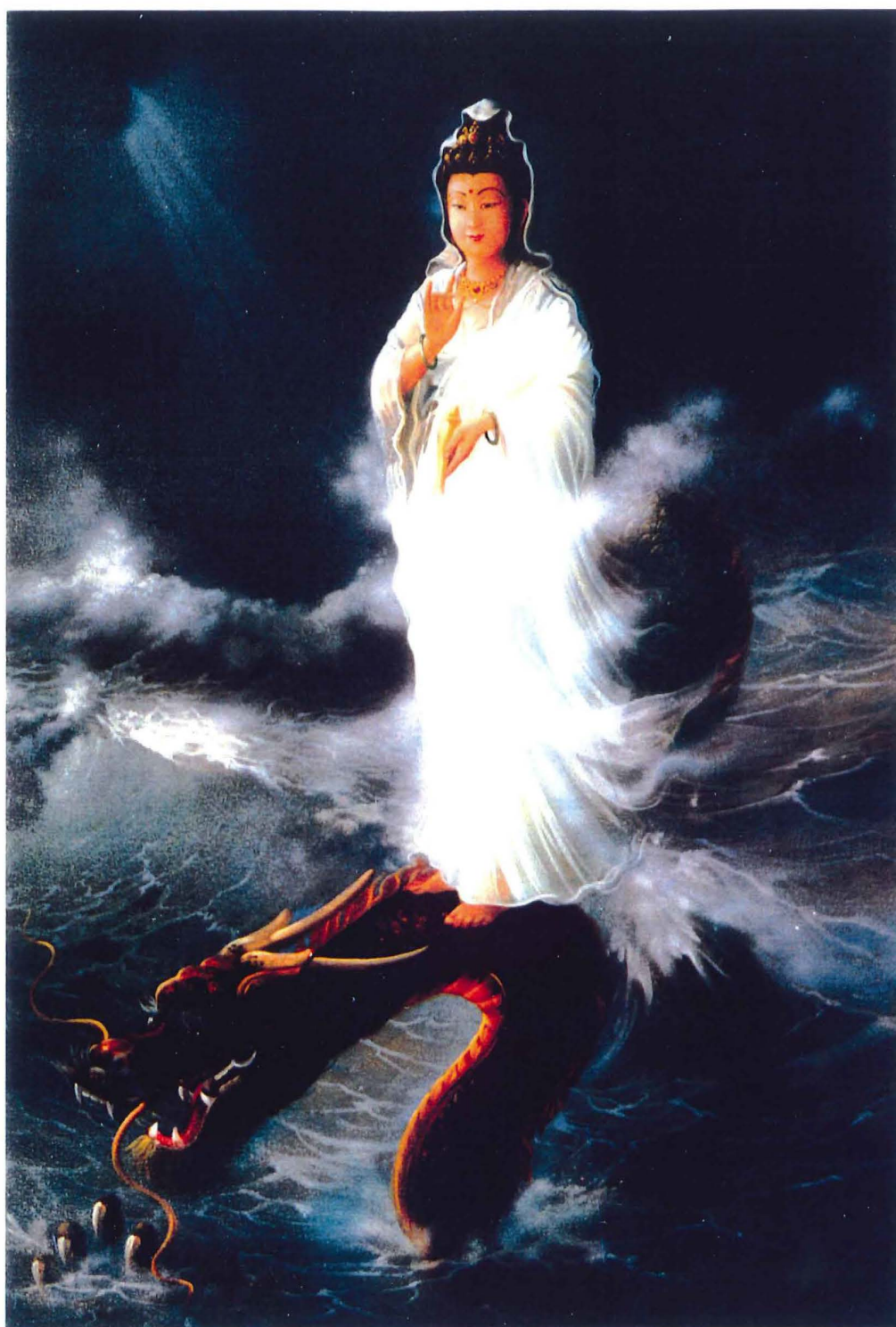


PLATE 92

Aoyu Guanyin.

Poster sold widely in East Asia.



PLATE 93
Aoyu Guanyin.
Xiangguo Monastery,
Kaifeng.



PLATE 94
Aoyu Guanyin.
Jade Buddha Temple,
Shanghai.

Guanyin as well as many images of Yulan Guanyin. There were also some images of Guanyin standing on a crocodile with a fish basket in her hand. This confirms that these forms have combined into one composite image.

In the Lingyinsi (Monastery of the Hidden Souls) in Hangzhou, I was told by one young woman that her grandmother believes that Guanyin standing on the fish represents the calming of the earth under the sea. Worshipping this image will, therefore, prevent earthquakes. It would certainly appear from these observations that Yulan and Aoyu Guanyin are closely connected and represent the suppression of evil and bad fortune especially in connection with the sea.

Johnston (1976: 292) considers that the reason why Guanyin is regarded as a fish goddess is because the waters around Putuo Island are considered as an inviolable sanctuary for fishes. Disaster is supposed to be in store for all fishermen who defy the commands of Aoyu Guanyin by letting down their nets in those holy waters. This rule, however, apparently received no official support.

Putuo Island is certainly where the influence of Guanyin as a goddess of the sea is at its peak. This is where Nanhai (Southseas) Guanyin is to be found. This form appears to be a development from the Aoyu Guanyin and Yulan Guanyin for it is associated with the sea, fish, and particularly with Putuo Island which became an important pilgrimage centre during the Tang dynasty. But before looking in more detail at this island and the role that Guanyin plays, it is important to establish how and at what stage in her development Guanyin became associated with this island.

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE UPPER TIANZHU MONASTERY, PUTUO ISLAND AND THE STORY OF MIAOSHAN

Before Putuo Island became the focus of Guanyin devotion, there were other mainland

pilgrimage centres, such as Wutaishan in Shanxi, the home of Wenshu, Mount Emei in Sichuan, the home of Puxian, and three other pilgrimage centres devoted to Guanyin - the Upper Tianzhu Monastery in Hangzhou, Nan Wutaishan situated to the south of Mount Zhongnan to the south of Xian and Xiangshan Monastery, south of Mount Song in Ruzhou, Honan. These had already become well known before Putuo emerged as an important centre in the tenth century (Yu 1992: 191).

The Upper Tianzhu Monastery was, in particular, an important Guanyin pilgrimage centre and it appears that it was from here that Guanyin made her leap to Putuo Island. This Hangzhou monastery was known for Guanyin's efficacy in averting natural disasters: granting rain in 998 and 1000, saving the people of Hangzhou from flood in 1065 and from locusts in 1016. The image of Guanyin which was credited with these miracles appears to have been the White-robed Guanyin. Yü describes several founding myths associated with monasteries in the Hangzhou area, all of which refer to the White-robed form. One related to the Upper Tianzhu Monastery describes how a white-robed woman appeared to Qian Liu [Ch'ien Liu] (851-932) and told him that she would protect him if he was compassionate. She also told him that he would find her on Mount Tianzhu twenty years later (Yü 1990b: 259-260).

At Tianzhu monastery then, Guanyin does not appear to have been associated with the sea. Yet the popularity of Putuo Island is closely connected to both Tianzhu and to the other mainland pilgrim centre of Xiangshan. Both these centres are connected to the story of Miaoshan which later became associated with Putuo Island. The cult at Xiangshan appears to have begun with the meeting between a local official and the abbot of the temple in 1100 (Yü 1992: 193). Jiang Zhiqi (1031-1104) served as the prefect at Ruzhou briefly and met Huai zhou [Huai-chou] the abbot of the Xiangshan monastery early in 1100. The abbot reportedly gave Jiang a book called *Life of Dabei Bodhisattva of Xiangshan*. The book, it was claimed, had been brought to the abbot by

a mysterious monk who went to Xiangshan as a pilgrim.

Glen Dudbridge (1978,1982), who has done much research on the origin of the cult of Miaoshan, concludes that Jiang Zhiqi was the bearer of his own text to Hangzhou. The original composition date, according to Dudbridge, was 5/10/1100. Less than three years after leaving the prefecture of Ruzhou, Jiang served as prefect of Hangzhou from 23/11/1102 until sometime between 3/9/1103 - 31/10/1103 (Dudbridge 1982: 591-592). It seems likely that after visiting a Guanyin monastery in Ruzhou in 1100 he visited Hangzhou in 1102-1103 and passed on his Miaoshan composition to the community at the Upper Tianzhu Monastery.

There are many versions of the story of Miaoshan, all of which describe her as a pious young woman who, preferring to live a religious life, defied the orders of her father, the king, to marry. In spite of being punished by imprisonment in a nunnery and made to perform arduous tasks, Miaoshan would not relent. Instead she began to perform miracles, the news of which angered her father so much that he ordered the nuns to be killed and Miaoshan to be executed. She was, however, spirited away to Xiangshan where she lived the life of a hermit until hearing of her father's illness. When a monk told the king that he needed the eyes and arms of one "free of anger" Miaoshan gladly gave up her arms and eyes for a cure. Miaoshan and her father were then reunited whereupon Miaoshan appeared with one thousand eyes and one thousand arms (*sahasrabhuja*), before she finally reverted to her former self and died. Popular versions of this story explain the Sahasrabhuja form as being the result of a confused order to restore her arms and eyes whereby, instead of being given two arms and two eyes, she was given one thousand of each.

One later (sixteenth century) version of the story is, according to Werner (1934: 256-279), a reference to the sex change of Guanyin. The three sisters born to the Queen were formerly male brothers, Buddhists who caused death to some looters by refusing them food.¹²³ This version is

¹²³ It would appear that their punishment was to be born into women's bodies as women have traditionally been considered to be less worthy than men.

more fanciful with episodes of kidnapping, of usurping the throne and a grand battle, after which everyone lived happily ever after. One feature of this sixteenth century version is that Miaoshan is described as giving her sisters a lion and an elephant as mounts. This explains the images of Guanyin sitting on these animals (as described in Chapter 3) for the transfer of these traditional mounts of Wenshu and Puxian to the sisters caused their association with Guanyin.

The Miaoshan story has regional variation as attested to by a story¹²⁴ connected with a seventeenth century image in Kaifeng. The four-sided thousand-armed Guanyin shown in Plates 95 and 96 was, it is claimed, made out of a single Gingko tree which took from 1736-1794 to carve. The story told to me by a local man is as follows: There was once a king who had three daughters, Baihua, Baiyu and Baigu. When the king became ill a doctor prescribed the arms and eyes of a relative. The older daughters refused to give their limbs but the youngest daughter Baigu gave her eyes and arms but died because of her injuries. News of this reached the Emperor who was so moved by the story that he decided to give Baigu a state funeral and built a magnificent tomb for her. By the side of the tomb a Gingko tree was planted, because this was Baigu's favourite tree. The tree grew very big and after two thousand years it was cut down. The people believed that Baigu went to heaven and became Guanyin. They also believed that Guanyin's spirit was in the tree so they made an image of her from the tree and gave it one thousand arms and eyes to symbolize the sacrifice that she had made. It is four-sided so that Guanyin can see in all corners of the earth.

What is particularly interesting about this story is that it kept alive the association with the thousand arms and eyes. Most scholars consider that the story of Miaoshan was written to explain the existence of the thousand-armed image of Guanyin,¹²⁵ but the association was dropped from

¹²⁴ Told to me in Kaifeng.

¹²⁵ In the next chapter another argument is put forward to explain the basis for this story.



PLATE 95
Thousand-armed four-sided Guanyin.
Xiangguo Monastery, Kaifeng.

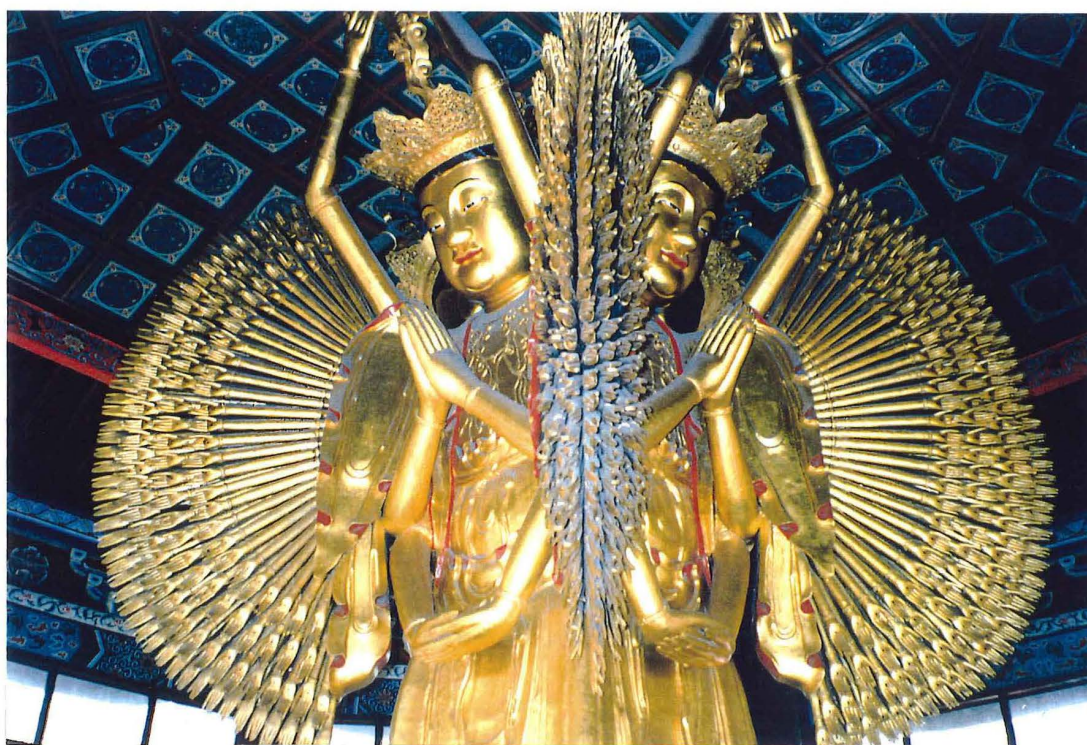


PLATE 96
Thousand-armed four-sided Guanyin. Xiangguo Monastery, Kaifeng.

later accounts. Different versions of the story of Miaoshan have remained popular until the present day, the reason being that it combined religious ideals with filial piety which have always been of the utmost importance to the Chinese people. But what happened to the monastery which exploited the story?

The Upper Tianzhu Monastery appears to have gained government recognition after Hangzhou became the capital of the Southern Song (1127-1279), with the temple receiving frequent visits and favours from the emperor. It is not clear how much influence the Miaoshan story had on this attention but certainly Guanyin's reputation widened. Xiaozong (r.1163-88) praised Guanyin as *Tianzhu Guangda Linggan Dashi* (Tianzhu's Great Being of Broad and Extensive Efficacious Responses) and patronage by emperors in the following dynasties continued (Yü 1992: 198). Guanyin's reputation of protecting from natural disasters also increased. She was credited with granting rain in 1135, 1374, 1455, 1477, 1503, 1539, 1542, 1545, and 1626. In 1588 she was believed to have saved people from the plague (Yü *ibid.*). Yet, while in 1580 and 1608 we see Guanyin saving the people of Hangzhou from drowning in a flood,¹²⁶ there is nothing to suggest that Guanyin was particularly known in this role. So when and how did Miaoshan become associated with White-robed Guanyin and Putuo Island and how did the notion of a sea goddess materialise?

One catalyst in the association of Miaoshan with Baiyi Guanyin was that some versions played down the association of the thousand arms and eyes. Miaoshan was described as a normal woman holding a green willow branch in one hand and a bottle containing water or ambrosia in the other, typical attributes of White-robed Guanyin from the eighth century. As the importance of Tianzhu as a pilgrimage centre increased and as the story of Miaoshan gained in popularity, it is likely that Miaoshan was perceived as a white-robed female. This would be natural as a white-

¹²⁶Which is no more than one would expect from Bodhisattva Guanyin who delivers from the Eight Great Perils.

robed figure had been worshipped at Tianzhu for some time.

One further factor in the association of Miaoshan with Putuo Island was the textual descriptions of Guanyin which placed her next to water in a natural setting. As described in the previous chapter, when Mount Radiant, described in the *Dafang guangfo huayanjing*, is later associated with Mount Potalaka, Putuo Island becomes Guanyin's island home. There was also the association of a young boy named Shancai and a girl named Longnü. Shancai became associated with the young pilgrim Sudhana who was mentioned in the *Dafang guangfo huayanjing*. The *Nanhai Guanyin quan zhuan* (Complete Biography of Guanyin of the Southern Seas), describes how Miaoshan was given two attendants, Shancai and Longnü. This was, no doubt, to explain Guanyin's iconography which had been established since at least the Song dynasty¹²⁷ but it also firmly tied Miaoshan to Guanyin's two acolytes.

Yü considers these attendants are the Buddhist counterparts of the Taoist Golden Boy and the Jade Girl who were depicted as the attendants of the Jade Emperor since the Tang dynasty. Yet while these Guanyin's acolytes have been associated with these Taoist attendants, this is because one later version of the Miaoshan story conferred the titles of Golden Youth and Jade Maiden on them (Werner 191934: 287). This is, no doubt, to legitimise the position of Guanyin and her acolytes in Taoist and syncretic temples. It is more likely that Shancai and Longnü have developed from the Sage of the Air and the Nymph of Good Virtue seen in many tenth century paintings from Dunhuang as described in Chapter 4. Also as described in Chapter 4, the origin of the two acolytes appears to be textual. One local tale¹²⁸ relates how Shancai was the youngest of five hundred sons. After he was born, a fortune teller told his parents that it would be good for him to be a disciple of a Buddha. When he was twelve years old he set out on his search. Guanyin

¹²⁷ At Dazu there are three dated triads - 1141, 1142 and 1148. (Yü 1990a: 64).

¹²⁸ This story was told to me on Putuo Island.

was the twenty-eighth Buddha¹²⁹ he visited but she did not accept him. Instead she changed herself into an evil person to test the boy's strength. Shancai was not afraid and on his fifty-third visit, Guanyin, moved by the child's persistence, accepted him as her attendant. The moral of this story, I was told, is not to give up. In another story (Yü 1990b: 231) Guanyin tested the boy's sincerity by throwing herself from a cliff. Shancai, without hesitation, also jumped from the cliff and when asked to look down at his corpse below he was immediately freed from his mortal body. Longnü appears to have her origin in the *Lotus Sūtra* where, as the eight year old dragon girl, she offers a precious gem to the Buddha, is then changed into a man, and immediately achieves Buddhahood. In popular legends, Longnü is the Dragon king's granddaughter who presents Guanyin with a night-illuminating pearl so that Guanyin can read sūtras at night. This was in gratitude to Guanyin for saving the Dragon King's life.

The association of Miaoshan from the Upper Tianzhu Monastery at Hangzhou¹³⁰ with Putuo Island was reinforced in a seventeenth century version of the Miaoshan story which claimed that Guanyin herself wrote the story of Miaoshan and placed it in the cave of Chaoyuan dong (Cave of Tidal Sound) on Putuoshan in 1416 (Dudbridge 1978: 69). However, in a preface of the Miaoshan story dated January 1667, Guangye Shanren describes how the author made a pilgrimage to Putuo, was saved from shipwreck and in the cave named above, was given the text of Guanyin's story and finding it written in a "difficult Indian script", he reproduced it in an intelligible form so that it would be available to others. Dudbridge states that Guangye Shanren himself is the author of the text, the content of which points to a mid-seventeenth century rendering especially as some of the proper names found in the text appear to have been copied from the sixteenth century *Nanhai guanyin quan zhuan*.

¹²⁹Many devotees, especially on Putuo Island, consider that Guanyin has the status of a Buddha.

¹³⁰ Hangzhou became linked to Putuo through waterways which linked Hangzhou with Ningbo. Ningbo in turn was on the southern route which had contact with ships calling in at Putuo on their voyages. This activity increased during the Ming dynasty.

PUTUO ISLAND AND NANHAI GUANYIN

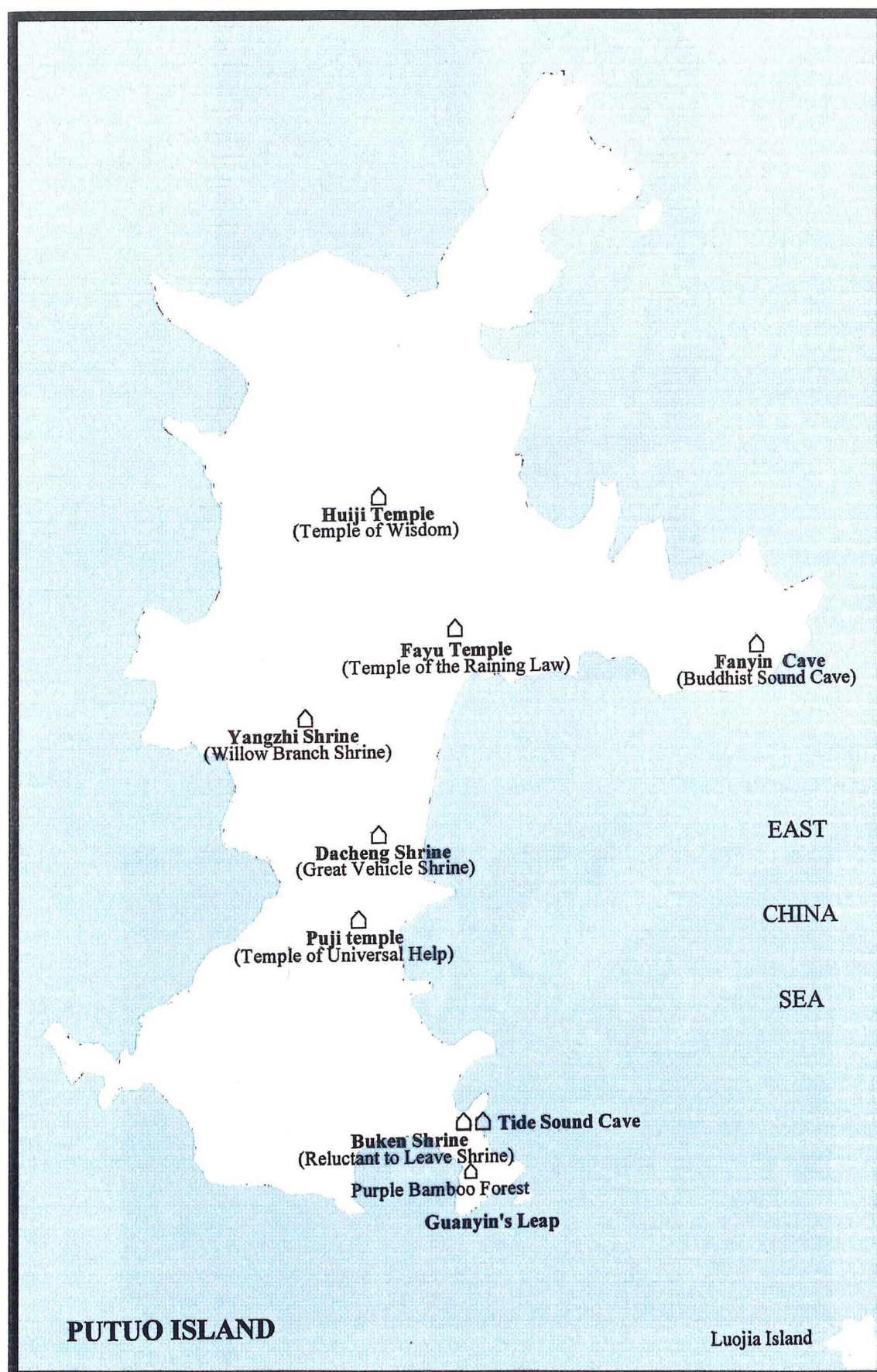
The formation of Nanhai Guanyin, as a goddess of the seas, took effect once Guanyin became associated with Putuo Island. Tales of visions increased the popularity not only of Guanyin but also of her acolytes. One particular story describes how, during the Ming dynasty, General Halaye came to worship at the Buddha's Sound Cave.¹³¹ While he was there he saw a vision of Guanyin but when it disappeared he became angry and shot an arrow into the cave (Plates 97 and 98). A little boy,¹³² appeared and caught the arrow but he also disappeared. When General Halaye went to search for the arrow he could not find it, but later, when he went into the temple above the cave to pray, he saw the arrow under the arm of Guanyin¹³³ (see Map 1 for the position of this cave and the other main sites).

Although the Buddha's Sound Cave attracted many pilgrims hoping for a vision of Guanyin, this was not the only site with a reputation for being able to see Guanyin. Another story dated to 1080, describes how Wang Shunfeng was caught in a storm on his way to Korea. When a large turtle appeared under the boat and it was unable to move, Wang, being very frightened, prayed to Guanyin. Suddenly in a brilliant light Guanyin emerged from the Cave of Tidal Sound (Yü 1994: 159). Because Guanyin was believed to appear at this cave pilgrims congregated there. Every spring, monks from all over the country went to the island with images cast in gold and silver. They would throw these images into the water as offerings to Guanyin in front of the cave. Some pilgrims would commit suicide by jumping into the water or they would burn their fingers to induce Guanyin to appear to them. The problem became so acute that the government had to forbid the practice. A stele was engraved forbidding people to sacrifice their lives by burning their fingers

¹³¹ So called because only Buddha can make such a loud sound. The situation of this cave and other sites has been detailed in Map 1 at the end of this chapter.

¹³² It is thought that this boy was Shancai.

¹³³ See Yü 1992: 220-221 for another version of this story which is set at the Cave of Tidal Sound.



MAP 1



PLATE 97
Buddha Sound Cave.
Putuo Island.



PLATE 98
Shrine at Buddha Sound Cave,
Putuo Island.

in order to pray for the presence of Guanyin. A pavillion was also erected near the place where devotees sacrificed themselves (see Plate 99).¹³⁴

Not only did the two caves compete for supremacy but the two main monasteries also competed for patronage. The Puji (Southern) Monastery had, as its claim to fame, the “First Hall in the World” to Guanyin. The legend describes the Japanese monk Hui E¹³⁵ who wanted to take an image of Guanyin from Wutai Mountain in Shanxi Province to Japan, in order to introduce Guanyin to his disciples. As the boat reached Putuo there was a storm, the surf riding high on the waves turned into many lotus flowers. The day was cloudy and the sea was black and the boat became stuck in the lotus flowers. The monk prayed “if you don't want to see my Japanese people then show me the way out”. Suddenly an ox appeared and ate out a line to the Cave of Tidal Sound. When the storm had subsided, the monk sent the image to the nearby fisherman's hut, which became the first Guanyin temple. Later the Puji Temple was built to house this image which became known as the true body image of Guanyin. This image supposedly did not stay on the Island but was taken to the Kaiyuan Monastery in Ningbo (Yü 1992: 216). However, local people believe that the present image is the one and only true body image (Plate 100).

Although the Puji Monastery claims to have the true body image of Guanyin, the Fayu Monastery, built in 1580, also has a magnificent image of a ‘Sea Island’ Guanyin standing on a fish¹³⁶ (Plate 101). On the right is the Heaven Palace, and on the left the Dragon Palace. Above Guanyin, who has Shancai and Longnü in attendance (see Plates 102 and 103), is Śākyamuni and the whole frieze is a series of stories. I was told that the fish represents the evil which turns over ships and causes death. By standing on the fish Guanyin keeps it peaceful. Thus finally we see how Guanyin has become a sea goddess through the association of suppression of evil, control and

¹³⁴The images have been carved into these rocks by the local people.

¹³⁵Yü names this monk Egaku which is the Japanese name of Hui E.

¹³⁶This statue is situated in the Great Hall which used to be the Imperial Palace in Nanjing City in Jiangsu Province in the Ming Dynasty. It was shipped to Putuo Island and reconstructed.

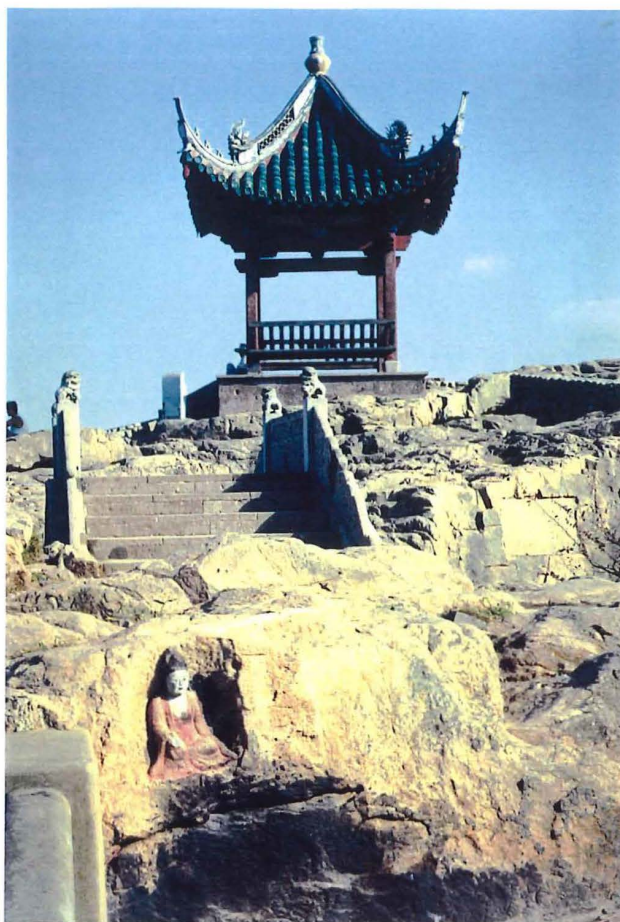


PLATE 99
Sacrifice Pavilion.
Putuo Island



PLATE 100
"True body image" Guanyin.
Puji Temple,
Putuo Island.



PLATE 101
Sea Island Guanyin.
Fayu Temple,
Putuo Island.

PLATE 102
 Shancai.
 Fayu Temple,
 Putuo Island



PLATE 103
 Longnü.
 Fayu Temple,
 Putuo Island

the island setting of Putuoshan. There is, however, one further important feature of the worship at Putuoshan that firmly entrenches Guanyin as a sea **goddess**. While it is clear that in various legends and visions associated with Putuoshan Guanyin is perceived as a feminine figure, this is one place that **officially** accepts that Guanyin is a feminine deity. Miaoshan was said to have been born on the nineteenth day of the second lunar month. This has become officially recognised and celebrated in the monastic calendar. But on Putuoshan additional days are celebrated. The nineteenth day of the sixth lunar month is celebrated as the day that Guanyin learned the Buddhist doctrine. Also the nineteenth day of the ninth lunar month is celebrated as the day on which Guanyin became a goddess. While the official literature records this day as the day that Guanyin became a nun, it nonetheless shows that Guanyin is accepted as a feminine figure on Putuo Island. I was told that on this day special celebrations are held in the temples and many people go to worship there.

Two legends portray the arrival of Guanyin, in feminine form, on the island. One of these describes how Guanyin first went as a bodhisattva to Luojia Island but became a goddess and with one step arrived on Putuo Island. The place where Guanyin first set foot on Putuo has become a favourite spot for tourist and overseas pilgrims. It is called Guanyin's leap and is a rock formation in the shape of a foot. The other legend describes how Guanyin first came to Putuo Island as a young girl and loved to swim in the sea. One day when she was swimming she was seen by the general. The general told the heaven's king who was angry. However, Guanyin threw some sand onto the sea which became Luojia Island. This was to make the king think that the general had made a mistake. This legend is intended to explain the existence of Luojia Island for local people believe that the shape of the island resembles Guanyin swimming or lying in the water (see Plate 104).

One other image made to appear as if it is sitting in water is in the Purple Bamboo Temple

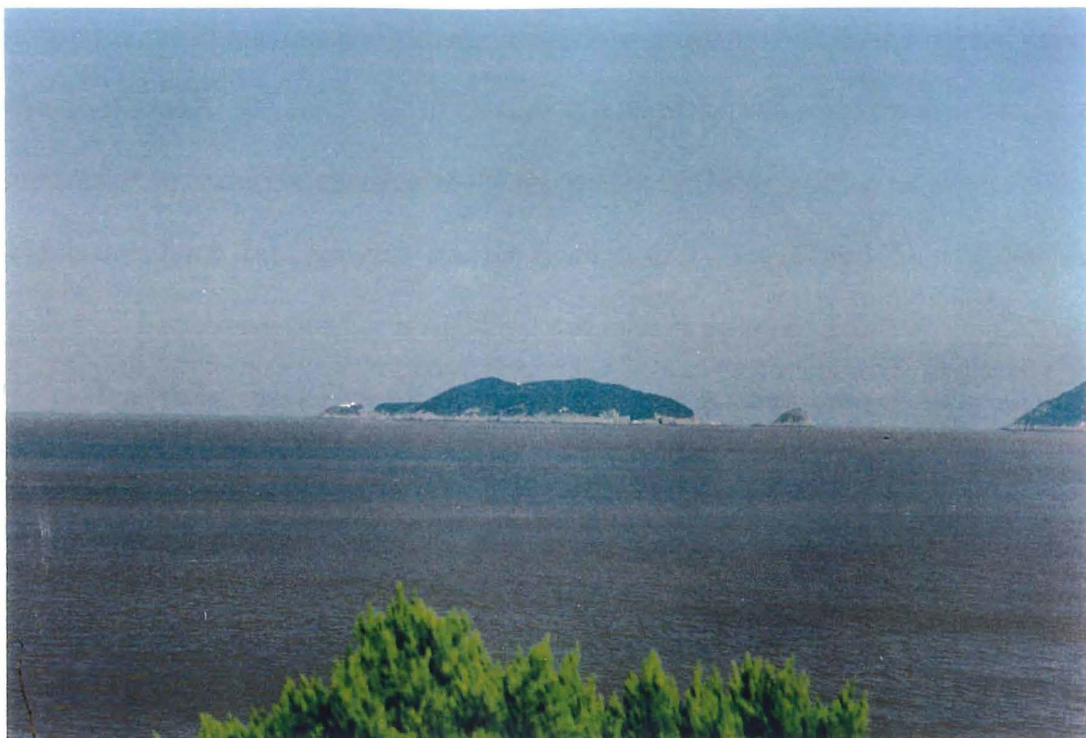


PLATE 104
Luoja Island



PLATE 105
Guanyin.
Purple Bamboo
Temple,
Putuo Island.

situated in the Purple Bamboo Grove. Behind the image of Guanyin is a painted seascape of water and islands. On either side of Guanyin is a mirror to emphasise the idea that Guanyin is surrounded by water and also to give the appearance of Guanyin sitting on waves. This, I was told, is to indicate that Guanyin is also the Goddess of the Sea (Plate 105). It is here that one really feels that Nanhai Guanyin is a goddess and ruler of the south seas.

True to her name, Nanhai Guanyin can be seen in other areas of the south seas. For example at Bai Shan Wan in Taiwan, which has already been mentioned above, I came across a beautiful statue of this form (Plate 106). This image has all the attributes of the Shuiyue Guanyin with the bamboo, the full moon, the rosary, and the vase of immortality and combines the traditional features of Baiyi Guanyin.¹³⁷ Shancai and Longnü, shown separately in Plates 107 and 108, are excellent representations of Guanyin's acolytes. The temple itself is at the most northernmost tip of Taiwan but still part of the South China Sea and this image and those of Yulan Guanyin and the statue overlooking the sea, described above, indicate the importance at this temple of Guanyin as a sea goddess.

The iconography of Nanhai Guanyin is also very much in evidence today in other parts of East Asia. For example, in the Naksan Temple in Korea, discussed in Chapter 3, there is, on the wall of one of the main halls, a painting of this form of Guanyin (Plate 109). In addition, on the outside wall of the nun's quarter there is a painting of Guanyin with Shancai riding on the waves near Putuo Island (Plate 110). These paintings are, of course, appropriate in a setting that is near the sea and contains a 'Potala Hall'.

From the above evaluation of the various sea-going forms of Guanyin it would appear that it was at the beginning of the eighth century that Water-moon Guanyin was conceived in a Chinese setting associated with Mount Potalaka. Images of Yulan, Aoyu, and Shuiyue forms of Guanyin

¹³⁷In this case the robes have been gilded as gold symbolizes power. This is a common feature of images including the white-robed type.



PLATE 106
Nanhai Guanyin.
Bai Shan Wan Temple,
Taiwan.



PLATE 107
Longnü.
Bai Shan Wan Temple,
Taiwan.



PLATE 108
Shancai.
Bai Shan Wan Temple,
Taiwan.

PLATE 109
Nanhai Guanyin.
Naksan.

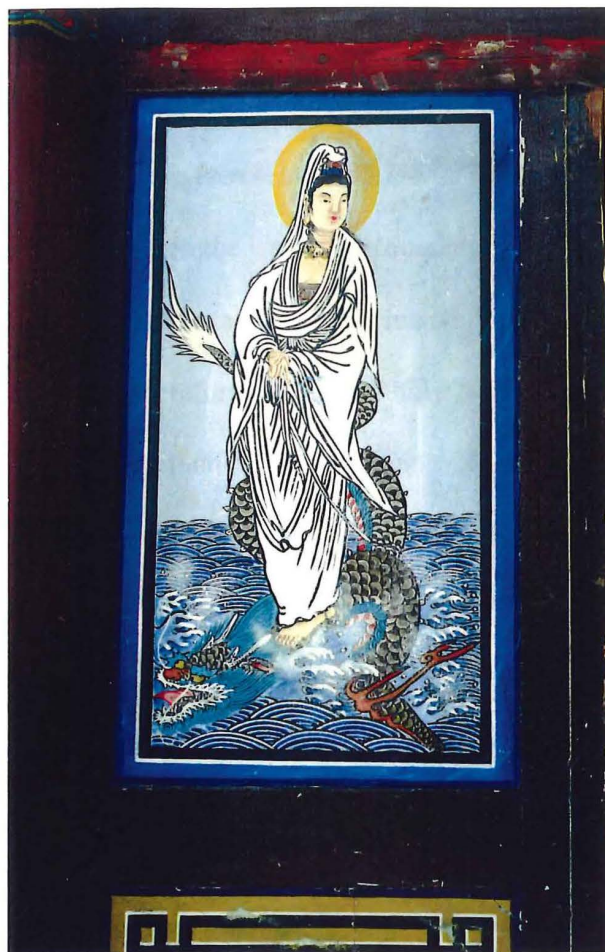


PLATE 110
Nanhai Guanyin with Shancai.
Naksan.

combined sometime between the eighth and twelfth centuries and when the cult of Miaoshan became associated with Baiyi Guanyin in the twelfth century it absorbed elements of Shuiyue Guanyin. The result of this union was Nanhai Guanyin. We then see a sea goddess in all her glory, riding high on the waves to protect all those who travel on the waters surrounding Putuo Island. This particular form incorporates the features and attributes of Aoyu Guanyin and 'Guanyin Crossing the Sea'. The function of 'Sea Goddess', therefore, did exist before Nanhai Guanyin came to be known but in a much more limited capacity than Nanhai Guanyin. Nanhai Guanyin can be seen in modern iconography riding on waves, standing on large fish and sea monsters in order to subdue evil or merely sitting by water with her trusted acolytes Shancai and Longnü and a white parrot who brings her a rosary. In these guises Guanyin can prevent shipwreck - one of the Eight Great Perils, calm the evil under the sea to prevent earthquakes and generally guard against any evil which might hinder her devotees from making an adequate living.