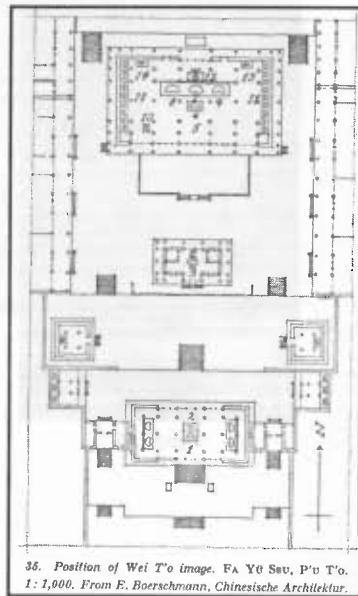




Figure 28

Figure 29



35. Position of Wei T'o image. FA YÜ SEU, P'Ü T'Ü.  
1: 1,000. From E. Boerschmann, *Chinesische Architektur*.

Nine

## Guanyin Images in Medieval China, 5<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> Centuries

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### INTRODUCTION

Guanyin, Avalokiteśvara in Sanskrit, is arguably one of the most popular devotional deities in China. Many books and articles have already been written about this deity. The rise of Guanyin as a devotional deity corresponds to the Mahāyāna movement that occurred within Buddhism, which began in India around the beginning of the Common Era. Central to the Mahāyāna movement was the bodhisattva ideal; a bodhisattva is a being who is resolved to gain complete wisdom not just for his own salvation but also for the welfare of all beings.<sup>1</sup> Underlying this ideal is the Mahāyāna concept of Buddhahood understood as the attainment of wisdom (*prajñā*) combined with a compassion (*karuṇā*) for all beings. In addition, the Mahāyāna path to Buddhahood is open to all who aspire to full enlightenment and are capable of feeling compassion for the sufferings of all beings. In practical terms, following the bodhisattva

1 Har Dayal, *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1932); A.L. Basham, "The Evolution of the Concept of the Bodhisattva," in L.S. Kawamura, ed., *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhism* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1981), 19–60; D.L. Lopez, Jr., & Steven C. Rockefeller, eds., *The Christ and the Bodhisattva* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1987).

career (*bodhisattva-caryā*) became the only path to full enlightenment. The bodhisattva ideal therefore functions at two levels:

The bodhisattva came to be both a paradigm and an object of devotion in the Mahāyāna, representing the commitment to which all should aspire as well as a compassionate savior upon whom all could rely.<sup>2</sup>

The Mahāyāna idea that Buddhahood is timeless and omnipresent gave rise to a large pantheon of celestial buddhas and bodhisattvas who possess supramundane abilities and act as powerful agents of mercy and salvation. Celestial buddhas and bodhisattvas are conceived as personifications of the different qualities or attributes of this ideal of Buddhahood. Avalokiteśvara, as a personification of *karunā* or compassion, thus figures prominently. The representation of celestial Buddhas and bodhisattvas began in late Kushan (1<sup>st</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> century C.E.) art in India, and continued in the Gupta (c. 300–600) period, with increasing clarity and systematization in iconographic distinctions. Early Chinese Buddhist art of the Six Dynasties period (317–589) initially followed developments of Indian Kushan art. By the sixth and seventh centuries, Gupta art began to make an impact. Increased traffic continued to introduce new cultic deities and iconography from India and Central Asia to China. Esoteric Buddhism that arose in India around that time was also beginning to influence China, especially during the Tang dynasty (618–907). Image types from India in general remained the authoritative source for Chinese imagery, but there were also transformations because of local doctrinal and devotional preferences. The accretion of layers of development, both internal and external, and their coexistence contribute to the eclectic, complex character of Chinese Buddhist art of the fifth through the eighth centuries. Avalokiteśvara images in China were no exception and underwent several stages of transformation, interweaving foreign sources with local interpretations.

In this paper, I will examine the early visual representations of Guanyin from its early developments in fifth and sixth centuries to the appearance of new forms of esoteric Guanyin in the seventh and early eighth centuries. (After

2 Lopez & Rockefeller, eds., *The Christ and the Bodhisattva*, 29.

the eighth century, the cult of Guanyin continued to flourish, but a complete review is beyond the scope of the present paper.) The expansion of the iconography of Guanyin also has immediate impact on neighboring countries under the sway of Buddhism. Examples of the new iconographic types of Guanyin in Korea and Japan will also be considered in this context.

### TEXTUAL SOURCES AND METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

While visual evidence of the worship of Guanyin as a devotional deity in China began in the fifth century, translations of Buddhist texts that mention Guanyin or focus on Guanyin have been circulating for some time. The corpus of texts associated with the cult of Guanyin is vast, numbering in the hundreds. The developments of these texts were also organic, providing new sources for the developments of novel iconographic types. In her comprehensive study of Guanyin in China, Chün-fang Yü outlined the major scriptural sources associated with the cult of Guanyin.<sup>3</sup> In addition, she summarized the varieties of the roles that Guanyin performs in these Buddhist texts, which can be summarized as follows: 1) Guanyin is introduced as a subsidiary figure in the background and does not have much of a personality or characteristics. Most significant in this capacity is Guanyin as one of two principal attendant bodhisattvas of Amitāyus (Measureless Life) or Amitābha (Measureless Light) Buddha, and the popular Pure Land worship in China increased Guanyin's name recognition. 2) Guanyin is a close associate and future successor of Amitāyus/Amitābha, and is thus a future Buddha. 3) Guanyin emerges as a

3 Yü Chün-fang, *The Chinese Transformation of Avalokiteśvara* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 31–91. Other major discussions of the Guanyin cult and textual sources include: Mochizuki Shinkō 望月信亨, “Kwanzeon bosatsu 觀世音菩薩,” in Tsukamoto Zenryū 塚本善隆, ed. *Mochizuki Bukkyō Daijiten 望月仏教大辞典* (Tokyo: Sekai seiten kankō kyōkai, 1966–68), 800–809; Alexander C. Soper, *Literary Evidence for Early Buddhist Art in China* (Ascona: Artibus Asiae, 1959), Supplementum, vol. 19, 155–167.

savior and is sometimes identified as a past Buddha. Chapters in the popular *Lotus Sūtra* and the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* (*Flower Garland Sūtra*) promote this worship. In addition, with the development of esoteric Buddhism, Guanyin was given new guises as a powerful esoteric salvific deity. 4) Finally, Guanyin is portrayed as a universal savior, a relatively late development.<sup>4</sup>

Methodologically, knowledge of textual sources is essential to understanding the contents of the worship of Guanyin and the developments of this cult. However, it must also be noted that visual evidence does not always synchronize with the chronology of the texts. In general there is a time lag between the availability of a text (a translated version, for example) and the appearance of a certain iconographic type. Certain texts are more relevant than others. Patronage, and devotional preferences are other factors that also need to be considered. In addition to doctrinal texts and ritual manuals, there also exists a large body of other kinds of literary sources, especially of a genre called “miracle tales,” and these can shed additional light on local worship of Guanyin.<sup>5</sup> Iconography, however, sometimes deviates from the prescriptive instructions in texts. When considering images of Guanyin in the larger context of Buddhist art within any given period, one also needs to address the role played by the bodhisattva in the broader developments of the Buddhist doctrine rather than merely as a direct representation of a particular Buddhist text. This is shown in the fact that iconographic programs of sites might draw on knowledge of a corpus of texts rather than being determined by a single text. These issues need to be kept in mind when interpreting the phenomenon of the visual representation of Guanyin and the functions of these images.

4 Yü Chün-fang, *The Chinese Transformation of Avalokiteśvara*, 33.

5 See Makita Tairyō 牧田諦亮, “Kannon shinkō no genjitsu 觀音信仰の現実,” *Chūgoku bukkyōshi kenkyū* (Tokyo: Daitō shuppansha, 1981), 193–213; Yü Chün-fang, *The Chinese Transformation of Avalokiteśvara*, 151–194.

## FIFTH AND SIXTH CENTURIES

### *Guanyin as Personal Devotional Images*

For iconologists and art historians, dated inscriptions offer the most concrete evidence for identification of images and chronology. However, a large number of early Chinese Buddhist images lack inscriptions, or may simply be called a “Buddha image.” The practice of identifying images with specific names became frequent and reliable only from about the second half of the fifth century onward. It coincided with a time when Buddhism expanded rapidly under the Northern Wei dynasty (386–534) and a distinctive idiom of Chinese Buddhist art was emerging. About the same time we begin to have firm records of the dedication of Guanyin as a devotional deity. The early Guanyin images are relatively small cast-bronze images of the Padmapāni (lotus-bearer) type familiar in Indian Buddhist imagery, holding a single stalk of lotus in one hand. Some of them also hold a water flask. They come from major production centers of Buddhist bronzes in Hebei, Henan, Shandong, Shanxi, and Shaanxi.<sup>6</sup> Judging from the fact that these are small, portable images, they probably functioned as personal devotional images and might have been worn on the body as talismans.

The first example, cast in bronze, has an inscription dating to the thirteenth year of the Taihe reign of Northern Wei (489), comes from Hebei, a territory under the domain of the Northern Wei dynasty (fig. 1).<sup>7</sup> The standing bodhisattva

6 Chinese archaeological reports on these finds include: *Wenwu*, no. 5 (1984): 21–43; no. 4 (1985): 9–14; no. 12 (1993): 36–43; *Kaogu*, no. 8 (1992): 741–744. For a discussion of Guanyin images of the Northern and Southern Dynasties see also Lee Yu-min, “Nanbeichao Guanshiyin zaixiang kao 南北朝觀世音造像考,” in Xing Yitian 刑義田, ed., *Zhongshiji yiqian de diyu wenhua, zongjiao yu yishu* 中世紀以前的地域文化, 宗教與藝術 (Taipei: Academia Sinica, Institute of History and Philology, 2002), 235–331.

7 *Zhongguo meishu quanji bianji weiyuanhui* 中國美術全集編輯委員會, ed., *Zhongguo meishu quanji: Wei, Jin, Nanbeichao diaosu* 中國美術全集: 魏晉南北朝雕塑 (Beijing: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1988), pl. 93.

holds a lotus in the right hand, while the left hand holds one end of the billowing scarf that encircles the body. It stands on an inverted lotus pedestal on a four-legged stand, which bears the inscription. The slightly three-bent pose and the naked upper torso follow Indian prototypes of bodhisattvas, but the rather slender body and the flame patterns on the leaf-shaped mandorla already show some aspects of a sinified style (the early Yungang phase in general shows more robust figural proportions). The second example shows even more pronounced sinification, seen in the heavier scarves that cover much of the body and the emphasis of the layered, rhythmic patterns of draperies (fig. 2).<sup>8</sup> The bodhisattva has a rectangular face and the rather unnatural flaring of headscarves from the crown has a decorative effect. The inscription engraved on the pedestal dates the image to the third year of the Xiping reign of the Northern Wei (518). It further identifies the image as “Guanshi[yin],” dedicated by two monks, Tanren 曇任 and Daomi 道密 of Puwuxian 蒲吾縣 (in present-day Pingshan 平山 county, Hebei province) for their parents and all sentient beings. In both examples, the bodhisattva holds a stem of a lotus, and relate to Padmapāni Bodhisattva in Indian Buddhist imagery. A relief from Yungang Cave 9 also shows a bodhisattva holding a lotus and a flask, sitting atop a lotus pond. Although lacking any inscription, Mizuno Seiichi identifies this late fifth-century image as Guanyin.<sup>9</sup> Unlike the later iconographic standard for Guanyin, these images do not carry an effigy of Amitābha on the crown. It was only toward the end of the sixth century that the iconography for Chinese Guanyin images became established: holding a vase, a stalk of lotus, and frequently bearing a Buddha effigy on the head crown.

8 Tokyo National Museum, *Kondō butsu—Chūgoku, Chōsen, Nihon—金銅仏—中国、朝鮮、日本—* (Tokyo: Tokyo National Museum, 1987), 28, 94–95.

9 Mizuno Seiichi 水野清一, “Kannon bosatsu to Fugen bosatsu 観音菩薩と普賢菩薩,” in *Chūgoku no bukkyō bijutsu 中国の仏教美術* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1968.), 262–268.

### ***Ambiguity in Iconography: Avalokiteśvara as Successor of Amitāyus/Amitābha***

Prior to the standardization of the iconographic attributes of Guanyin, a Buddha effigy is sometimes found on the crown of images of bodhisattvas seated with legs crossed at the ankles, which are usually identified as Maitreya Bodhisattva (Ch. Mile pusa 彌勒菩薩). Some Maitreya images also hold a water flask. Thus it seems that in early Chinese Buddhist imagery, there are certain analogies between Maitreya and Avalokiteśvara, for they both share the attributes of the water flask and a small Buddha image on the crown.<sup>10</sup>

The water flask, an ablution vessel originally used in brahmanic ritual worship, is a prominent feature in Gandhāran images of Maitreya Bodhisattva to emphasize Maitreya’s conversion from Brahmanism to Buddhism. Only a small number of Chinese examples, however, display this attribute, such as an example from Yungang Cave 11 (fig. 3).<sup>11</sup> It is not clear why Chinese images of Maitreya lost this iconographic trait; perhaps it is because the brahmanic aspect of Maitreya’s background was irrelevant to the Chinese. Instead, it was Maitreya’s messianic role as a savior that was emphasized.<sup>12</sup> By the end of the sixth century, however, the water flask increasingly became associated with Chinese Guanyin images. In textual sources, Avalokiteśvara is

10 This author has addressed this aspect in greater length in a conference paper, “The Identity of Bodhisattva Images in Early Chinese Buddhist art,” read at the “The Ambiguity of Avalokitesvara and Questions of Bodhisattvas in Buddhist Traditions” conference held at the University of Texas, Austin, October 1996.

11 The Maitreya image is in Yungang Cave 11, east wall, in Yungang shiku wenwu baoguan suo, ed. *Chūgoku sekkutsu: Unkō sekkutsu 中国石窟：雲崗石窟* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1989–1990), pt. 2, pl. 91. See also this author’s discussion of Maitreya images in early Chinese Buddhist art, *Chinese Steles: Pre-Buddhist and Buddhist Use of a Symbolic Form* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2004), 93–96.

12 See this author’s “Maitreya Buddha Statues at the University of Pennsylvania Museum,” *Orientalism* 32, no. 2 (2001): 24–31.

conceived as a *kumara*, a golden youth of the ideal age of fifteen or sixteen. Later Avalokiteśvara also interacts with the Hindu god Brahmā, giving rise to the notion of Lokeśvara, a form of Avalokiteśvara as the lord of the Universe. The association with Brahmā would account for Avalokiteśvara's acquiring the *kamaṇḍalu* as an attribute.<sup>13</sup> As Tucci noted, the ritual vase and the lotus became increasingly identical in their symbolism: the vase being the symbol of the magic universe where the priest operates, and the lotus being a cosmic and spiritual symbol of the universe.<sup>14</sup>

Another puzzling iconographic feature shared by both Avalokiteśvara and Maitreya images is the small Buddha image on the crown. A miniature representation of Amitābha, the spiritual father of Avalokiteśvara, on the headdress is standard for later Indian and Chinese images of Avalokiteśvara.<sup>15</sup> The iconography is based on a description of the bodhisattva in the *Amitāyur-dhyāna Sūtra* (T 365), and relates to Avalokiteśvara's role as successor of Amitābha. Some other texts that espouse Avalokiteśvara's new persona include the *Guanshiyin pusa shouji jing* (*Sūtra of Guanshiyin Bodhisattva's Receiving Prediction*, T 371) and the *Karuṇā-puṇḍarīka Sūtra* (*Beihua jing*, T 157).<sup>16</sup> However, the Buddha effigy is generally absent in early Chinese Guanyin images with inscriptions, but present in a fair number of cross-ankled seated bodhisattva, or Maitreya. A prominent early example is the main icon of Dunhuang Cave 275, which has been dated to the early decades of the fifth century (fig. 4).<sup>17</sup> Other examples are also found in the Yungang and

Longmen cave-temples (see fig. 3). Some scholars have used the attribute of the Buddha effigy to reinterpret certain early Indian images, such as the contemplating bodhisattva, as Avalokiteśvara.<sup>18</sup> Scholars of Chinese Buddhist art, however, are less willing to make this connection since the cross-ankled seated bodhisattva type is strongly associated with Maitreya.<sup>19</sup>

I propose that the addition of the Buddha effigy would not necessarily contradict with the reading of these cross-ankled seated bodhisattvas as Maitreya and that the Buddha on the headcrown is no other than Śākyamuni, Maitreya's forebear, for Maitreya modeled his path as a bodhisattva after that of Śākyamuni. Having an image on the headcrown is thus a tribute to the bodhisattva's progenitor. In later iconography the Buddha effigy on the crown of Avalokiteśvara is understood to represent Amitābha, the bodhisattva's spiritual father.<sup>20</sup> The relationship of Avalokiteśvara to Amitābha is then analogous to that of Maitreya to Śākyamuni. Such an analogy may explain the visual logic behind the transference of a specific iconographic feature from one deity to another. Since Maitreya became an established cultic figure in India and China long before Avalokiteśvara did, thus it seems that the formation of Avalokiteśvara's visual identity might have modeled after that of Maitreya.

By the second half of the sixth century, increasingly there were life-size or larger stone statues of Guanyin, attesting to the growing significance of the bodhisattva as a cultic deity. Many were attendant bodhisattvas, but in some instances these statues could have been principal icons in temples. One of

13 For studies of Avalokiteśvara's iconography in Indian art see Marie-Thérèse de Mallmann, *Introduction à l'étude d'Avalokiteśvara* (Paris: Civilization du Sud, 1948); Giuseppe Tucci, "A Propos Avalokiteśvara," *Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques*, 9 (1948-51): 173-220.

14 Tucci, "A Propos Avalokiteśvara," 178.

15 Mallmann, 22-25.

16 See also Yü Chün-fang, *The Chinese Transformation of Avalokiteśvara*, 35-36.

17 Dunhuang wenwu yanjiusuo 敦煌文物研究所, ed., *Chūgoku sekkutsu: Tonkō Bakkōkutsu* 中國石窟: 敦煌莫高窟 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1980-82), pt. 1, pl. 11.

18 Martin Lerner, *The Flame and Lotus: Indian and Southeast Asian Art from the Kronos Collection*, exh. cat. (New York: the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1984), 32-35, fig. 7; Lerner, "The Contemplative Bodhisattva in Indian Art," *The Art of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara—Its Cult-images and Narrative Portrayals. International Symposium on Art Historical Studies 5* (Osaka, 1986), 12-15; Stanislaw J. Czuma, *Kushan Sculpture: Images from Early India*, exh. cat. (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1985), 19-21.

19 Matsubara Saburō 松原三郎, "Kichō hōkoku (chōkoku) 基調報告(彫刻)," in *The Art of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara*, 7-11.

20 Mallmann notes that the effigy of Amitābha on the crown of Avalokiteśvara did not become a fixed canon until the ninth century.

the most aesthetically pleasing and powerful examples is the limestone statue in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, which dates to the end of the Northern Zhou dynasty (559–580) or the opening years of the Sui dynasty (581–619; fig. 5).<sup>21</sup> The statue is said to have come from Chang'an, the Sui capital. Standing at a towering height of 2.5 meters, the slightly swaying figure with a gentle expression must have been enshrined as a major icon in a temple. With a rather large head, distinct but gentle facial features, the bodhisattva is adorned with exquisitely detailed jewelry characteristic of late sixth-century bodhisattva imagery.<sup>22</sup> The statue has a small Buddha image on the crown, holds a lotus seedpod in the raised right hand while the left hand, broken, originally might have held a flask. Another impressive stone statue of Guanyin, dated to 581, the first year of the Sui dynasty, is currently in the Detroit Institute of Arts (fig. 6). The bodhisattva holds a flask in the left hand and a willow branch in the right hand. The willow branch has been associated with the magical power of healing and is thus an appropriate attribute of Guanyin the savior.<sup>23</sup> The same attributes are found on a gilt bronze image of Guanyin, also of Sui dynasty date (fig. 7). In this example the bodhisattva is rendered in a slender, languid form associated with late sixth to early seventh-century style. The willow branch becomes an important attribute in later iconography, such as the Watermoon Guanyin (Shuiyue Guanyin 水月觀音), Guanyin holding a willow branch (Yangliu Guanyin 楊柳觀音), or in some esoteric forms of Guanyin.<sup>24</sup>

21 Jan Fontein and Tung Wu, *Unearthing China's Past* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1973), 152–154.

22 See Denise Patry Leidy, "Avalokitesvara in Sixth-Century China," In Janet Baker, ed. *The Flowering of a Foreign Faith* (Mumbai: Marg Publications, 1998), 88–103.

23 Cornelius P. Chang, "Kuan-yin Paintings from Tun-huang: Water-Moon Kuan-yin," *Journal of Oriental Studies* XV (1977), 154–156.

24 *Ibid.*, 141–160.

### *Guanyin in the context of an enlarged Buddhist pantheon*

By the middle and latter parts of the sixth century, some Buddhist steles—a popular artform in sixth-century China—include images of Guanyin.<sup>25</sup> A number of complex steles of Northern Qi dates display a large group of figures into a single composition in multiple tiers or niches. These steles represent an increasing number of celestial buddhas and bodhisattvas that suggest the development of the Mahāyāna pantheon. An example is the *Shangguan Sengdu zaoxiangbei* 上官僧度造像碑 (figs. 8a, 8b), dated 563, found deposited beneath a pagoda at the Xianpingsi site in Boxian, Anhui province.<sup>26</sup> The stele is broken into two halves, perhaps the damage was sustained during the Buddhist persecution in 577; the broken fragments along with other sculptures and steles were "interred" beneath the foundation of a Song-dynasty (960–1279) octagonal brick pagoda.

The *Shangguan Sengdu bei* is an imposing stele of an original height of 2 meters, and measures 54.5 centimeters wide and 28 centimeters thick. The lower half (fig. 8a) presents a Buddha's assembly; a majestic Śākyamuni Buddha sits in the center, while his accompanying figures are arranged in two tiers. Eight seated disciples (*arhats*) are in the top tier. In the lower tier there are pairs of bodhisattvas, *pratyekabuddhas*, Central Asian warriors at the outer edge, and reborn beings emerging from lotuses. The bottom register represents a *pratyekabuddha* offering incense, flanked by lions and *lokapālas*. Depicted above the Buddha's niche is the debate between Mañjuśrī and Vimalakīrti, based on the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra* that became one of the most popular Mahāyāna texts in China. In terms of the carving, the figures display the columnar form typical of the Northern Qi style, but the treatment of drapery is given a flatter, more rigid and angular interpretation. The large

25 See this author's *Chinese Steles: Pre-Buddhist and Buddhist Use of a Symbolic Form*.

26 Han Ziqiang 韓自強, "Anhui Boxian Xianpingsi faxian Bei Qi shike zaixiangbei 安徽亳縣咸平寺發現北齊石刻造像碑," *Wenwu*, no. 9 (1980): 57–58, figs. 6, 7; Wong, *Chinese Steles*, 140, fig. 9.4.

heads and elongated bodies of the figures foreshadow traits of the ensuing Sui-dynasty style.

The upper half (fig. 8b) of the stele represents an imposing standing image of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva flanked by two minor bodhisattvas (the lotus pedestals for the triad can be seen at the top of fig. 8a). At the very top of the stele there are two more buddha-niches. The representation of Avalokiteśvara as a principal icon affirms the cultic status of the bodhisattva, who was shown with increasing frequency on steles and as an individual icon, and whose popularity was to eclipse that of Maitreya. The presence of the reborn beings on lotuses was associated with the Pure Land faith, which was also gaining currency in the second half of the sixth century. The interjection of Central Asian warriors into the composition, shown wearing tunics and boots and standing in a dynamic *contrapposto* pose with their heads turned around to face the viewers, reminds us of the strong presence of Central Asians in northern China during this period. The rich details of this monument make it one of the remarkable steles from the period.

Other complex steles also represent multiple deities in tiers or multiple niches. However, iconographic distinctions for many of the new celestial buddhas and bodhisattvas had not yet been developed. Many of them look identical. As a result, the patrons and carvers relied on inscriptions to identify the deities. The content of these representations gives further proof of the shifts in doctrinal developments that were taking place in this formative period of Chinese Buddhism and Buddhist art. An example is the *Chen Hailong zoaxiangbei* 陳海龍造像碑 from Shanxi (fig. 9), dated 562, of the Northern Zhou period.<sup>27</sup> The slab, with a plain, slightly rounded stele top, measures 120 centimeters in height and 56.5 centimeters in width. There are five columns of niches, with the third or central column featuring three principal niches. On either side of the central column are two rows of small buddha-niches. Next

27 *Zhongguo meishu quanji*, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao diaosu*, pl. 139; see also Shanxisheng bowuguan 山西省博物館, ed., *Shanxi shidiao yishu* 山西石雕藝術 (Beijing: Zhaohua meishu, 1962), pl. 20; Wong, *Chinese Steles*, 145–147, fig. 9.8.

to each image is a short inscription identifying the deity and the donor. Since there are six rows of inscriptions, rows three and four on the left and right sides of the third column both refer to the large niches. Not all inscriptions are legible, especially those in the top left. The following are the legible names of deities, from right to left and from top to bottom:

**Column 1:**

Niche 1: Practice of Perfections Buddha 度蓋行佛

Niche 2: Reflections of Moonlight on Water Buddha 水月光佛

Niche 3: Sunlight Buddha 日光佛

Niche 4: Superior Buddha 最上首佛

Niche 5: Sun, Moon, and Lapis Lazuli Brightness Buddha 日月流  
離[璃]光佛

Niche 6: Merit and Abundant Treasures Buddha 功德多寶佛

**Column 2:**

Niche 1: Pure Faith Buddha 淨信佛

Niche 2: Removing Doubtful Thoughts Buddha 除疑冥佛

Niche 3: Flower Color King Buddha 花色王佛

Niche 4: Bodhi Flower Buddha 菩提華佛

Niche 5: Supreme Lapis Lazuli Brightness Buddha 無上流離[璃]光  
佛

Niche 6: Obstructing Sun and Moon Light Buddha 弊日月光佛

**Column 3 (the central column):**

Niche 1, right: Dipaṅkara Buddha 定光佛

Niche 2, right: Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva 觀世音菩薩; left:  
Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva 大世[至]菩薩

Niche 3, right: [Śākyamuni] Buddha and bodhisattva of the front side  
[of the stele] 當陽佛, 菩薩; left: Bhaiṣajya-rāja Bodhisattva,  
Samantabhadra Bodhisattva 藥王菩薩, 普賢菩薩

**Column 4:**

Niche 2: Immeasurable Light (Amitābha) Buddha 無量光佛

Niche 5: Phoenix Voice Buddha 鸞音佛

Niche 6: Majestic and Divine Buddha 威神佛

**Column 5:**

Niche 3: All Buddhas 諸佛

Niche 5: Dharma Wisdom Buddha 法慧佛

Niche 6: Good Deeds Buddha 善宿佛

The inscription thus identifies the standing buddha in the top niche of the central column as Dipaṅkara, a Buddha of the Past. The central niche features a bodhisattva seated with legs pendent and can be identified as Maitreya Bodhisattva; by the latter part of the sixth century, the bodhisattva has evolved from the cross-ankled seated position to the seated position of having both legs pendant. The inscriptions on the right and left sides of the niche give the names of Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta, indicating that these two are the flanking bodhisattvas and not the main image. Though not mentioned by name, the image of the seated Buddha in the bottom niche probably represents Śākyamuni, flanked by Bhaiṣajya-rāja (Medicine Bodhisattva) and Samantabhadra (Bodhisattva of Principle).

The alignment of Dipaṅkara, Maitreya, and Śākyamuni represents the Buddhas of the Three Ages (*sansbifo* 三世佛), a principal theme in Northern Wei Buddhist art.<sup>28</sup> The cultic status of Maitreya and Śākyamuni is amplified by the fact that they are now accompanied by the great bodhisattvas. The configuration of these groupings, however, varies from later standard iconography. For example, Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta are the attendant bodhisattvas for Amitābha/Amitāyus in later Pure Land imagery, based on canonical texts (see further discussion below). On this stele, Maitreya Bodhisattva assumes a central position, but the unusual combination with

Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta suggests a transitional phase when Maitreya was still popular while the Pure Land cult was emerging. In the case of Śākyamuni, the accompanying bodhisattvas are Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra in seventh-century iconography, with examples found at Dunhuang. On this stele Bhaiṣajya-rāja takes the place of Mañjuśrī, perhaps because of the popularity of the *Lotus Sūtra* (see discussion above).

The twenty-four small buddhas do not have any distinguishable attributes, and visually they resemble the Thousand Buddhas motif. During the fifth and early sixth centuries, the Thousand Buddhas motif designates buddhas of numerous eons, one succeeding after another in the temporal dimension. However, by the second quarter of the sixth century, we begin to see new listings of buddhas, such as the Buddhas of the Four Directions (*sifangfo* 四方佛) or Buddhas of the Ten Quarters (*shifangfo* 十方佛)—spatial categories of buddhas mentioned in Mahāyāna texts such as the *Lotus Sūtra*, the *Golden Light Sūtra*, and the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*. The shift from temporal to spatial categories of buddhas indicates a more developed view of buddhahood. On the *Chen Hailong bei*, the references to light, sunlight, or brightness in many buddhas' names underscore their transcendent nature, for light imagery is a predominant symbolism in the Mahāyāna.

The names of these buddhas (several names in the upper left corner remain illegible) can be traced to two texts: the *Foshuo foming jing* 佛說佛名經 and the *Datong fangguang chanbui miezui zhuangyan chengfo jing* 大通方廣懺悔滅罪莊嚴成佛經.<sup>29</sup> In the latter text, a principal theme is Dipaṅkara's prophecy of Śākyamuni attaining buddhahood. The prominence of Dipaṅkara Buddha confirms the choice of the Buddhas of the Three Ages in the central column and hence the *Datong fangguang chanbui miezui zhuangyan chengfo jing* is more likely the textual source for the stele. Both texts might be produced in

28 The representation of this theme on Northern Wei Buddhist steles is explored in Wong, *Chinese Steles*, chs. 5, 6, 8.

29 T441 (trans. anon., Liang dynasty [502–557]), vol. 10, 308c, 258b, and T2871 (trans. anon., Liang dynasty [502–557]), vol. 85, 1341c–1342a, respectively. I would like to thank Jan Nattier for pointing out to me the usefulness of the CBETA search engine, and for helping me locate the sources in these two texts.



China.<sup>30</sup> Apparently they were popularly used in the contexts of confession and death rituals, as the veneration and appellation of thousand buddhas were important aspects of these rituals.<sup>31</sup> Since many Buddhist steles were erected to commemorate deceased family members of donors, the matching of their iconography to texts associated with confession and death rituals thus adds another dimension to appreciating these monuments.

Buddhist steles of the sixth century offer a wealth of information on Guanyin worship in the context of the developing Mahāyāna doctrine and pantheon. Another complex stele, the *Foshisi Ji yi zaoxiangbei* 佛時寺汲邑造像碑, dated 572, from Jixian, Henan, includes a representation of the twin bodhisattvas

of Maitreya and Avalokiteśvara.<sup>32</sup> From the well-known Wanfosi 萬佛寺 site in Chengdu, Sichuan, there is also a Guanyin stele, dated 548, that features the bodhisattva as the main icon, flanked by four manifestations of Guanyin on two sides.<sup>33</sup> Another mid-sixth century stele from Wanfosi portrays twin standing bodhisattvas on the obverse and a complex relief on the reverse that includes one of the earliest depictions of the western Pure Land in China. Given the subject of the Pure Land, associated with Amitābha/Amitāyus, it is possible that the two bodhisattvas on the obverse represent Guanyin.<sup>34</sup> Twin Guanyin images are also frequently depicted in the northeast, especially in the Hebei region, in the second half of the sixth century. From this large corpus of materials it is clear that Guanyin worship was developing rapidly in the sixth century, in tandem with the growth of Mahāyāna Buddhism in China.

#### *Guanyin as attendant bodhisattva of Amitāyus/Amitābha*

One of Avalokiteśvara's important roles is as one of two great bodhisattvas accompanying *Amitāyus/Amitābha*; the other great bodhisattva being Mahāsthāmaprāpta, or Dashizhi in Chinese. On the *Chen Hailong stele*, we have already seen Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta accompanying Maitreya, but this is somewhat unusual. In early Indian and Chinese Buddhist art, Avalokiteśvara sometimes accompany Śākyamuni. The prominence of the Amitāyus/Amitābha cult and Pure Land beliefs no doubt assisted the growth of the worship of Guanyin. The three principal texts associated with Amitāyus/Amitābha worship are the *Longer* and *Shorter Sukhāvāṭīvyūba Sūtras* and the *Guan Wuliangshoufo jing* and they all have been translated into Chinese a number of times.<sup>35</sup> In conjunction with devotional images

30 They were already noted as possible apocryphal texts in early indexes of Buddhist texts. See Makita Tairyō's discussion of the *Datong fangguang chanbui miezui zhuangyan chengfo jing* in *Gikyō kenkyū* (Kyoto: Kyoto daigaku jinbun kagaku kenkyūjo, 1976), 290–303. The *Datong fangguang jing* was popular in the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries but apparently became lost. The Taisho version is reconstructed from several Dunhuang manuscripts together with a section preserved in Chion-in 知恩院, Kyoto, Japan. A recent posting on [www.ebud.net](http://www.ebud.net) ("*Datong fangguang chanbui miezui zhuangyan chengfo jing*—zangchuan fojiao *Sheng dajietuo jing* Han wen ben xunzhao, fajue he zhengli lueji 《大通方廣懺悔滅罪莊嚴成佛經》—藏傳佛教《聖大解脫經》漢文本尋找、發掘和整理略記, in <http://www.ebud.net/book/readari.asp?no=30453>) mentions that the *Datong fangguang jing* has been matched to a text called *Sheng dajietuo jing* 聖大解脫經 in the Tibetan canon and that this text is recited for forty-nine days after the death of a relative. The essay also points out that the missing section in T2871 can now be supplemented with stele inscriptions from Fangshan. Given the fact that many apocryphal texts circulated at Dunhuang, it was probably there that the *Datong fangguang jing* was translated into Tibetan from Chinese.

31 Makita Tairyō, *Gikyō kenkyū*, 297–298. See also Shi Darui 釋大睿, "Zhongguo fojiao zaoqi chanzui sixiang zhi xingcheng yu fazhan 中國佛教早期懺罪思想之形成與發展," *Zhonghua foxue yanjiu* 2 (1998): 313–337. I also appreciate Petra Roesch for sharing her research on these confession rituals.

32 See this author's discussion of the Foshisi stele in *Chinese steles*, 147–148, fig. 9.9.

33 *Zhongguo meishu quanji, Wei, Jin, Nanbeichao disosu* 中國美術全集: 魏晉南北朝雕塑 volume, pl. 59; see also Yü Chün-fang, *The Chinese Transformation of Avalokiteśvara*, 77–78.

34 Wong, *Chinese steles*, ch. 10.

35 See Yü Chün-fang, *The Chinese Transformation of Avalokiteśvara*, 33–35; Luis Gómez, *Land of Bliss: The Paradise of the Buddha of Measureless*

and pictorial depictions associated with Pure Land worship, Avalokiteśvara makes frequent appearances in this context, in addition to the bodhisattva's role as an independent deity.

One of the earliest Amitayus triad, sculpted in stucco, is represented in Binglingsi Cave 169 in Gansu, dating to the 420s (figs. 10, 10a), when the site was under the reign of the Western Qin kingdom (385–431). The bodhisattva on Amitayus's proper right is an inscribed image of Guanshiyin, holding a lotus bud in one hand (fig. 10a).<sup>36</sup> This early representation of the Amitābha-Avalokiteśvara-Mahāsthāmaprāpta formula shows the burgeoning devotional faith in Amitābha/Amitayus and the Western Pure Land. In the sixth century, the representation of Amitābha/Amitayus became more frequent, in cave-chapels and temples. Some large stone images of Guanyin come from Amitābha/Amitayus triads in these contexts, such as a triad of monumental statues from the Xiangtangshan cave-chapel, currently in the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology of the University of Pennsylvania.<sup>37</sup> By the Tang dynasty, Pure Land depictions became the predominant theme in Chinese Buddhist imagery, and there are many examples of Guanyin depicted in murals (see further discussion below).

In rare occasions, the bodhisattva is also shown in the Śākyamuni-Avalokiteśvara-Maṅjuśrī grouping, with the two bodhisattvas denoting the two key qualities of the Mahāyāna notion of Buddhahood: compassion and wisdom. This grouping can be identified in a triad dated 534, with one bodhisattva holding a lotus and the other a book (fig. 11).<sup>38</sup> This configuration supports the

opinion that celestial bodhisattvas are conceived as personifications, or what Tucci calls "hypostasis," of certain aspects of Buddhahood.<sup>39</sup> Said to have come from Huayin, Shaanxi province, the bold carving and the descending dragon at the top of the sculpture resemble a number of northern dynasties sculptures recently recovered from the Longxingsi site at Qingzhou, Shandong.<sup>40</sup>

### *Seventh and Early Eighth Centuries*

Into the seventh and eighth centuries, Guanyin worship in China became even more prominent. Some of the roles of the bodhisattva or forms of representation known in the previous centuries continued. For example, large numbers of Guanyin images in bronze or gilt bronze have survived from the Tang dynasty, attesting to the popularity of Guanyin as a personal devotional deity (figs. 11). These cast-bronze images of the seventh and eighth centuries are rendered in sensuous, curvilinear fluid forms accentuated by the three-bent pose introduced from Indian imagery. The flowing scarves that encircle the bodies enhance a sense of movement and three-dimensional volume. Fully mature in the understanding of the human form, these Tang Guanyin images are among the most beloved in Tang sculptures.

In his role as an attendant of Amitābha/Amitayus, there also exist large numbers of stone sculptures or mural paintings from the Sui and Tang dynasties, continuing the development in the sixth century. An exquisite example dating to the early decades of the seventh century is from Dunhuang Cave 57 (fig. 13).<sup>41</sup> The mural portrays Amitābha's assembly, with Guanyin, on the left, clearly identifiable with a Buddha effigy on the crown. Under an elaborate tree canopy, Amitābha is surrounded by disciples, the two great bodhisattvas and minor ones, while smaller guardian figures are in the foreground. The small buddhas on Amitābha's halo, the jewelry of the great bodhisattvas and

*Light* (Honolulu & Kyoto: University of Hawai'i Press & Higashi Honganji Ōtani-ha, 1996); and Inagaki Hisao and Harols Stewart, *The Three Pure Land Sutras: A Study and Translation from Chinese* (Kyoto: Nagata Bunshodo, 1995).

36 Gansu sheng weiwu gongzhuodui, Binglingsi wenwu baoguansuo 甘肅省文物工作隊, 炳靈寺文物保管所, eds., *Chūgoku sekkutsu: Heireiji sekkutsu* 中國石窟: 永靖炳靈寺 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1986), pls. 21, 24.

37 Laurence Sickman, and A. C. Soper. *The Art and Architecture of China*, 3rd ed., rpt. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971), 115–116, figs. 72–74.

38 In Kushan art, a small number of carvings show Śākyamuni flanked by

Avalokiteśvara, holding a lotus, and Maṅjuśrī, holding a book or a sword.

39 Tucci, "A Propos Avalokiteśvara," 174.

40 See Lukas Nickel, ed., *Return of the Buddha: the Qingzhou Discoveries* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2002), pls. 2–9.

41 *Chūgoku sekkutsu: Tonkō Bakkōkutsu*, pt. 3, pl. 12.

Guanyin's buddha effigy on the crown are molded in clay and covered with gold pigments, rendering the images with luminosity associated with light imagery and spirituality in Buddhist symbolism. In the same cave-chapel, there is another mural with a simpler Amitābha's assembly: Amitābha flanked by two disciples and two bodhisattvas, with Guanyin on the right (fig. 13). All five figures stand on lotuses that rise out of a lotus pond, a key iconographic feature in the depiction of the western Pure Land. The large heads and rather static figures are characteristic of Sui to early Tang figural style, so are the florid treatment of the canopies and the movements of the apsaras. These two examples represent some of the earliest pictorial essays in Pure Land imagery.<sup>42</sup> By the middle of the seventh century, large-scale Pure Land murals that include much descriptive details of space as well as narrative depictions of the contents of sūtras began to be explored, indicated by the landmark Cave 220 dated to 642.<sup>43</sup>

### Guanyin as Savior

As the Guanyin cult was gathering force, pictorial narratives of the bodhisattva's magical power as a savior also developed. Such pictorial depictions are based on the *Lotus Sūtra*, which describes Avalokiteśvara's promise to save people from the perils of fire, drowning, being lost at sea, murder, attacks by demons, fierce beasts, poisonous snakes and insects, legal punishment, robbery, falling from steep precipices, natural calamities, civil and military unrest, and so on.<sup>44</sup>

The surviving examples of such narratives from Dunhuang murals and banner paintings demonstrate two types of composition and two sources.<sup>45</sup>

42 These simple compositions can still be found in Japanese art of late seventh to early eighth century dates, such as the well-known Lady Tachibana shrine, which houses a bronze triad of Amitābha, and the mural paintings in the Kondō 金堂 of Hōryū-ji 法隆寺.

43 *Chūgoku sekkutsu: Tonkō Bakkōkutsu*, pt. 3, pl. 24.

44 *T 262*, vol. 9, 58–59.

45 Luo Huaqing 羅華慶 reports a total of twenty-nine murals and twelve silk banners and paper scrolls that depict Avalokiteśvara's miracles, dating from

The first type constitutes one part of a larger narrative of the *Lotus Sūtra*. An example is from Dunhuang Cave 420, dating to the Sui dynasty (fig. 15).<sup>46</sup> A section in the composition's lower right shows Guanyin saving people from drowning and other perils. It constitutes part of a much larger composition representing the entire content of the *Lotus Sūtra*. Such a composition is a Chinese conception not attempted in India. The focus of the mural is on the *Lotus Sūtra* itself as an entity; the Avalokiteśvara chapter has not yet been isolated for individual representation.

The second type is the iconic composition entirely devoted to the *Avalokiteśvara Sūtra* (the twenty-fifth chapter of the *Lotus*). This type began in the seventh century during the Tang dynasty, an example being the mural of Dunhuang Cave 45 (fig. 16).<sup>47</sup> Focusing on Avalokiteśvara enacting his magical power, the composition shows the bodhisattva as a large icon in the middle while on the two sides are individual scenes depicting different types of perils. This second type is derived from Indian prototypes, such as the relief from Aurangabad Cave 7, of seventh-century date (fig. 17).<sup>48</sup> On two sides of the bodhisattva are scenes (usually eight) of people in perilous situations. The Indian examples mostly come from Gupta and post-Gupta period cave-temples in western India, dating approximately from the sixth to the eighth century.<sup>49</sup> The eighth-century mural from Dunhuang Cave 45 is closest to the Indian configurations, although injected with the indigenous landscape backdrop and the Chinese elaborate head-crown and figural style. The resemblance of the Tang mural to Indian compositions suggests that the latter may have provided a visual source for Tang compositions. The two

the late sixth to the twelfth century; see his "Dunhuang yishu zhong de 'Guanyin Pumenpin bian' he 'Guanyin jingbian,' 敦煌藝術中的 '觀音普門品變' 和 '觀音經變,'" *Dunhuang yanjiu*, no. 3 (1987): 49–58.

46 *Chūgoku sekkutsu: Tonkō Bakkōkutsu*, pt. 2, pl. 77.

47 *Chūgoku sekkutsu: Tonkō Bakkōkutsu*, pt. 3, pl. 131.

48 Carmel Berkson, *The Caves at Aurangabad* (New York: Mapin International, 1986), 124.

49 Yamada Kōji 山田耕二, "Indo no Kannon shōnan kyūsai zū インドの観音諸難救済図," *Bukkyō geijutsu* 125 (1979): 48–64.

types of composition may then be viewed as results of two developments: an internal one leading to a narrative depiction of the entire *Lotus Sūtra*, and an external one deriving its source from Indian examples.

### Early Esoteric Images of Guanyin

Images of Guanyin in the esoteric tradition are called transformed Guanyins (*bianhua Guanyin* 變化觀音).<sup>50</sup> Usually furnished with multiple heads and multiple arms, these transformed Guanyins are distinguished from the original Guanyins (called *zheng* Guanyin 正觀音 or *sheng* Guanyin 聖觀音). As an advanced bodhisattva, Avalokiteśvara has supernatural powers that enable him to manifest in different forms according to those in needs, a technique called skill-in-means, or *upāya* in Buddhist terminology. The portrayal of this bodhisattva as having multiple heads, and sometimes with multiple arms, is derived from the cosmic symbolism in the Indian tradition, such as the Hindu god Śiva who has three heads.<sup>51</sup> An example of Maheśvara (name of Śiva known in the Khotanese tradition) depicted on a wooden votive panel portrays the deity with three heads (fig. 18) can be seen as a predecessor of the multi-headed Avalokiteśvara, such as the Eleven-headed Guanyin (which will be discussed further below).<sup>52</sup> The adoption of Hindu symbolism into Buddhist iconography is a feature of esoteric Buddhism, and no doubt the enhancement of multiple heads and arms further accentuate Avalokiteśvara's mighty power as a savior.

50 Studies of this topic include: Research Society, The Ueno Memorial Foundation for Study of Buddhist Art, *The Origin and Development of Esoteric Kannon (Avalokiteśvara)*, Report VI (Kyoto, 1979); Hamada Takashi 濱田隆, "Mikkyō Kannonzō no seiritsu to tenkai 密教觀音像の成立と展開," in Sawa Ryūken 佐和隆研 and Hamada Takashi, eds., *Nyorai, Kannon* 如来 觀音 (Tokyo: Asahi Shimbun, 1984), 192–200.

51 Pratapaditya Pal, "Cosmic Vision and Buddhist Images," *Art International* XXV, no. 1–2 (1982): 8–39.

52 Roderick Whitfield and Anne Farrer, *Caves of the Thousand Buddhas: Chinese Art from the Silk Route* (London: The British Museum, 1990), cat. no. 134.

In developed esoteric iconography, there are six types of esoteric Guanyin, and they are associated with the six paths of existence from which sentient beings are saved by the respective Guanyins: Eleven-headed Guanyin (*Ekādaśamukhā*, Shiyimian 十一面), Thousand-armed Guanyin (*Sahasrabhujārya*, Qianshou 千手), Horse-headed Guanyin (*Hayagrīva*, Matou 馬頭), Lasso-holding Guanyin (*Amoghapāśa*, Bukong juansuo 不空絹索), Wish-granting Jewel Guanyin (*Cintāmaṇi-cakra*, Ruyilun 如意輪), and Zhunti 准提 Guanyin (*Cuṇḍi*).<sup>53</sup> The esoteric texts associated with Guanyin are usually *dhāraṇī* texts. They are found among two *dhāraṇī* collections: *Dhāraṇī Miscellany*, and *Collections of Dhāraṇī Sūtras*. In addition, there are dozens of texts devoted to specific forms of esoteric Guanyin.<sup>54</sup>

### Shiyimian Guanyin

Among the different forms of esoteric Guanyin, the Eleven-headed Guanyin was the first to make its appearance in the seventh century and, in part due to the patronage of Empress Wu (624–705) at the Tang court, became a prominent cultic deity from the late seventh to the early eighth century.<sup>55</sup> The Buddhist texts associated with the Eleven-headed Guanyin consist of a series of *dhāraṇīs*, or magical chants, intended to invoke the power of the deity, usually in the service of state Buddhism. The earliest text, the *Ekādaśamukhā*, was discovered among the manuscripts found in Gilgit in Kashmir, and is probably of fifth to sixth-century date.<sup>56</sup> The text was also

53 Yü Chün-fang includes Baiyi Guanyin in her list and omits Zhunti, though the common list of six esoteric Guanyins are: Eleven-headed, Thousand-armed, Horse-headed, Wish-granting Jewel, Lasso-holding, and Zhunti.

54 Yü Chün-fang, *The Chinese Transformation of Avalokiteśvara*, 48–72.

55 Studies of the Eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara include: Donald Alan Wood, "Eleven Faces of the Bodhisattva." Ph.D. dissertation (University of Kansas, 1985); Tove E Neville, *Eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara: Chenresigs, Kuan-yin or Kannon Bodhisattva: its Origin and Iconography* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1998).

56 Nalinaksha Dutt, ed., *Gilgit Manuscripts* (Calcutt: Calcutt Oriental Press, 1939), vol. 1, 59.

translated into Chinese in the sixth century, and subsequently retranslated in the seventh and eighth centuries.<sup>57</sup>

One of the earliest representations of an Eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara is found in the Kanheri cave-chapel in southern India dating to the sixth century; the heads are piled up vertically, in the 1-3-3-3-1 pile (fig. 19).<sup>58</sup> Thus it is clear that the worship of the Eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara originated in India and was introduced to China in the sixth century. However, in subsequent periods this deity was not prominent in India, but became significant in China in the latter part of the seventh and early eighth centuries, especially at court.

At Dunhuang, there are several seventh-century representations of this deity, including Caves 334 and 321. In the Cave 334 mural, the seated deity has more of an Indian flavor, both in the vertical arrangement of the heads, stacked up in the 3-2-3-2-1 fashion, and also in the sinewy proportions of the figure, and shading of the dark-skinned bodhisattva (fig. 20).<sup>59</sup> In the example from Cave 321, the standing bodhisattva has six arms, while the eleven heads are arranged in the conical fashion: 3-5-2-1 (fig. 21).<sup>60</sup> Although there is the use of some shading around the eyes and nose, by and large the bodhisattvas are rendered in the Tang courtly style. The rich floral patterns and the lavish jewelry and scarves are typical of the Tang style in textiles and the decorative arts. Cave 321 has been associated with the reign of Empress Wu because of the mural depiction of *Baoyu jing* 寶雨經, a text presented to Empress Wu

in 693 and which she used to proclaim herself a cakravartin, a universal ruler; this association thus gives a dating of the cave-chapel to the 690s.<sup>61</sup>

About the same time, a number of Eleven-headed Guanyin images are also known from the Tang capitals of Chang'an and Luoyang. Most prominent are the sculptures that originally adorned the multi-faced pillar called the Tower of Seven Treasures, or Qibaotai 七寶臺, commissioned by Empress Wu and which was the centerpiece sculpture/architecture in Guangzhaisi 光宅寺, a temple in Chang'an.<sup>62</sup> The tower or pillar has since been dismantled, but there are altogether thirty-two relief sculptures that have survived. Some have inscriptions dating between 703 and 724. Many are Buddha triads, among them are several rendered with the earth-touching hand gesture, with reference made to the famous image of the Buddha at the Mahābodhi Temple. In addition, there are seven Eleven-headed Guanyins among the sculptures, clearly indicating that the bodhisattva was one of the most prominent deities represented on the pillar (fig. 22). The bodhisattva has the heads piled in the 1-5-4-1 conical fashion, unlike the vertical style associated with the Indian examples. For Empress Wu, Buddhism was an instrument to augment her political status and legitimacy.<sup>63</sup> The powers of Buddhist deities were invoked to protect the

57 1) *Ekādaśamukha-dhāraṇī-sūtra* (*Shiyimian Guanshiyin shenzhou jing* 十一面觀世音神咒經, T1070), trans. Yasogupta, 564–72; 2) *Ekādaśamukha-dhāraṇī-sūtra*, chapter 4 of the *Dhāraṇī-samuccya-sūtra* (T901), trans. Atigupta, 654; 3) *Ekādaśamukha-dhāraṇī-sūtra* (*Shiyimian shenzhou xin jing* 十一面神咒心經, T1071), trans. Xuanzang 玄奘, 656; 4) *Shiyimian Guanzizai pusa xin miyan niansong yigui jing* 十一面觀自在菩薩心密言念誦儀軌經 (T1069), trans. Amoghavajra, mid-eight century; see Wood's discussion of the textual sources, in "Eleven Faces of the Bodhisattva," 10–15.

58 Neville, *Eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara*, fig. 9.

59 *Chūgoku sekkutsu: Tōkō Bakkōkutsu*, pt. 3, pl. 83.

60 *Chūgoku sekkutsu, Tōkō Bakkōkutsu*, pt. 3, pl. 55.

61 Lee Yu-min, "A Preliminary Study of the Mural Paintings in Cave 321 at Mogao, Dunhuang," paper presented at the Taiwan 2002 Conference on the History of Painting in East Asia," forthcoming in symposium volume. There is, however, a different reading of this mural as a depiction based on the *Shilun jing*, which in turn dates the mural to the early eighth century; see Wang Huimin 王惠民, "Dunhuang 321, 74 ku Shilun jingbian kaoshi 敦煌321, 74窟十輪經變考釋," *Yishushi yanjiu* 6 (2004): 309–336.

62 For discussions of the Qibaotai sculptures see Yen Chuan-ying, "The Sculptures from the Tower of Seven Jewels: The Style, Patronage and Iconography of the Monument," Ph.D. dissertation (Harvard University, 1986); Wood, "Eleven Faces of the Bodhisattva," 54–76. See also Chang Qing 常青, "Tangdai Chang'an fojiao yishu yangshi ji qi yuanyuan 唐代長安佛教佛敎藝術樣式及其淵源," in Lucie Chang Yue, ed., *Baoxiang Zhuangyan 寶相莊嚴* (Beijing: Wenwu Press, 2003), 129–145.

63 See Antonino Forte, *Political Propaganda and Ideology in China at the End of the Seventh Century* (Napoli: Instituto Universitario Orientale, 1976).

state, and her patronage was one of the reasons the Eleven-headed Guanyin gained such importance in China, and subsequently in Japan. In this group of bodhisattvas, the style is characterized by the frontal treatment of the erect, tubular body with a small waist, a bulging small abdomen, and the tightly clinging drapery delineated in sharp lines.

There are also further references to Empress Wu and the power of the Shiyimian Guanyin. In June of 696, the Khitans (Qidan 契丹), a vassal state in the northeast of Wu Zhou's empire, rose in rebellion. Empress Wu launched a military campaign to suppress the rebellion and it took more than a year to stabilize the military and political crisis. She also summoned the help of Buddhist and Daoist priests. Fazang 法藏 (643–712), the eminent monk associated with the Avatamsaka school, was dispatched to perform a Buddhist ritual for the protection of the state. A statue of the Eleven-headed Guanyin was established at the altar, and the power of the deity was invoked at the ritual.<sup>64</sup> An inscription preserved in the Shōsō-in 正倉院 records that Empress Wu commissioned a thousand embroidered images of the Eleven-headed Guanyin in commemoration of Emperor Gaozong's death.<sup>65</sup>

Some other known examples of Tang Eleven-headed Guanyins include a bodhisattva head found at Xi'an (fig. 23), the Tang capital site. The bodhisattva has a broad face and a crown-like arrangement of the heads above. Another example is a wooden statue, with the variant nine heads instead of eleven, housed at Hōryū-ji 法隆寺 in Nara, Japan. Records show that it entered the temple in the year 719 and must have been brought back to Japan from China by one of the returning pilgrim monks before that time (fig. 24). These

artifacts of cultural transmission attest to the close connection between Japan and China, and of Japan's engagement in an increasingly cosmopolitan idiom of Buddhist art of the seventh and into the eighth century.

Among the mural paintings of the Kondō 金堂 or Main Hall of Hōryū-ji, which probably date to the late seventh or early eighth century, there is also a depiction of the Eleven-headed Guanyin or Kannon (figs 25a, 25b). Like the Chinese examples, the bodhisattva is shown in the frontal, erect pose, giving the figure an iconic status. In this example, the bodhisattva's main head has an additional head emerging from each side, seven bodhisattva heads above, each in turn has a Buddha effigy on the crown, and a Buddha head at the top, thus showing a 3-7-1 arrangement. The Eleven-headed Kannon at Hōryū-ji is one of eight individual bodhisattvas depicted in the murals. Juxtaposing this esoteric or transformed Kannon as a pair is a standard image of Kannon, called Shō Kannon, with Buddha Amitābha on his crown. The pair represents some of the earliest esoteric images in Japan.

Slightly later in Korea, around 750, a similar Eleven-headed Kannon is represented among the relief figures surrounding the central Buddha in the circular chamber with a dome ceiling at Sōkkuram (fig. 26). One of the capabilities of the bodhisattva is to protect the state, and thus it played a significant role in state Buddhism, from Tang China to Japan and Korea.

After the initial popularity of the Eleven-headed Guanyin in late seventh to early eighth century in China, other esoteric forms of Guanyin were also introduced (Qianshou, Matou, Bukong juansuo, etc.) and these subsequently were transmitted to Japan and Korea as well. Remains of esoteric images of Guanyin in China are relatively rare. Notable exceptions are the statues found at the Anguosi 安國寺 site at Chang'an, which include the Horse-headed Guanyin as well as other esoteric images of eighth to ninth-century dates (fig. 27).<sup>66</sup> The Dahaisi 大海寺 temple site in Luoyang has also yielded esoteric images that included the Eleven-headed Guanyin, probably of ninth-century

64 This record is not found in secular historical sources, but in the ninth-century Korean author Ch'oe Ch'iwŏn's 崔致遠 biography of Fazang, "Tang Da Jianfusi gu sizhu fanjing dade Fazhang heshang zhuan 唐大薦福寺故寺主翻經大德法藏和尚傳," in *T*2054, vol. 50, 285. See also discussion in Chin Jinhua, "Fazhang (643–712) and the Yunjusi," paper presented at the Chinese Buddhism conference, Hsi Lai Temple, Los Angeles, June 2005, 9–10.

65 See Itō Shinji 伊藤信二, "Kodai no shūbutsu 古代の續仏," *Nihon no bijutsu* 470 (2005): 18.

66 The statues are now in the Beilin Museum in Xi'an; see Cheng Jianzheng, ed. *Xi'an Beilin bowuguan*, 124, 126–131.

dates.<sup>67</sup> The largest corpus of esoteric images of Guanyin, however, comes from Dunhuang, with many banner paintings dating from the ninth to the twelfth century.<sup>68</sup> The wealth of these materials will be subject for another occasion, but I hope that this paper has demonstrated the richness of Guanyin worship in visual representations even before its blossoming in later China.

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67 Henan sheng Zhengzhou shi bowuguan 河南省鄭州市博物館, "Henan Xingyang Dahaisi chutu de shike zaoxiang 河南滎陽大海寺出土的石刻造像," *Wenwu* 3 (1980): 56–66.

68 These examples can be found in the Stein Collection, in the British Museum, and the Pelliot Collection, in the Musée Guimet, among others.

"Datong fangguang chanhui miezui zhuangyan chengfo jing—zangchuan fojiao Sheng dajietuo jing Han wen ben xunzhao, fajue he zhengli lueji 《大通方廣懺悔滅罪莊嚴成佛經》—藏傳佛教《聖大解脫經》漢文本尋找、發掘和整理略記." In <http://www.ebud.net/book/readari.asp?no=30453>.

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PLATES



Figure 1 Guanyin  
Northern Wei dynasty, d. 489  
Hebei, China  
Gilt bronze  
H. 21.7 cm  
Hebei Provincial Museum  
From *Zhongguo meisbu quanji: Wei, Jin, Nanbeichao diaosu*, pl. 93



Figure 2 Guanyin  
Northern Wei dynasty, d. 518  
Hebei, China  
Gilt bronze  
Private collection, Japan  
H. 27.1 cm  
From *Tokyo National Museum, Kondō butsu—Chūgoku, Chōsen, Nihon*, col. pl. 15



Fig. 3 Maitreya Bodhisattva  
Northern Wei dynasty, 3rd quarter  
of the 5th century  
Yungang Cave 11, east wall  
Sandstone and pigments  
From *Chūgoku sekkutsu: Unkō sekkutsu*, pt. 2, pl. 91



Figure 4 Maitreya Bodhisattva  
Northern Wei dynasty, 5th century  
Dunbuang Cave 275  
Clay sculpture with pigments  
From *Chūgoku sekkutsu: Tonkō Bakkōkutsu*, pt. 1, pl. 11

Figure 5 Guanyin  
Late Northern Zhou or Early  
Sui dynasty, c. 580

Xi'an

Gray limestone with pigments  
and gilding

H. 249 cm

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Francis Bartlett Donation of  
1912

Photograph © Museum of Fine  
Arts, Boston



Figure 6 Guanyin  
Sui dynasty, dated 581

Limestone

H. 91.4 cm

Detroit Institute of Arts

City of Detroit Purchase

Photograph © 1963 The Detroit Institute  
of Arts

Figure 8b Shangguan Sengdu zaoxiangbei,  
upper half

From Han Ziqiang, "Anhui Boxian  
Xianpingsi faxian Bei Qi shike  
zaoxiangbei," fig. 7



Figure 7 Guanyin

Sui dynasty (581–619)

Gilt bronze

H. 44.3 cm

The Metropolitan Museum of Art,  
New York

From The National Palace  
Museum, Hai-Wai Yi-chen:  
Chinese Art in Overseas Collection:  
Buddhist Sculpture, vol. 1, pl. 67



Figure 8a Shangguan Sengdu  
zaoxiangbei, lower half

Northern Qi, dated 563, d. 563

Boxian, Anhui

Limestone, H. 97 cm

Anhui Provincial Museum

From Zhongguo meishu quanji: Wei Jin  
Nanbeichao diaosu, pl. 122

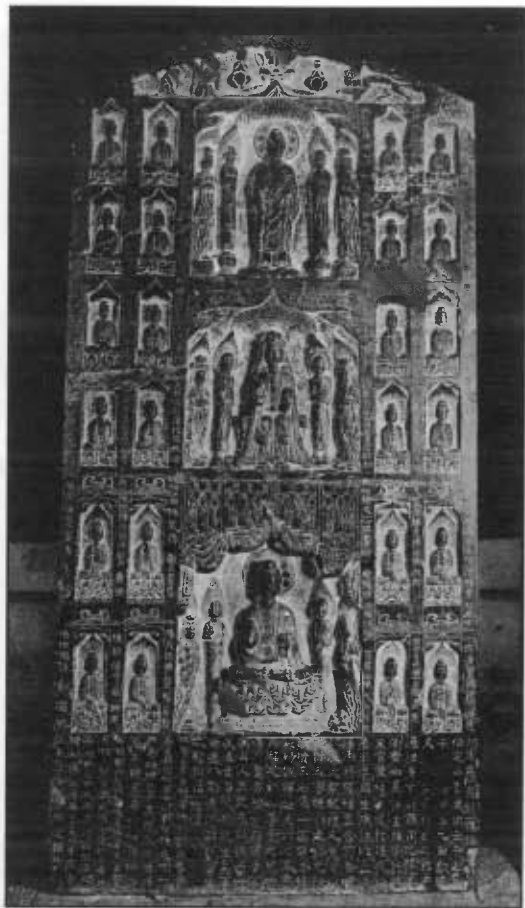


Figure 9 *Chen Hailong zaoxiangbei*  
Northern Zhou dynasty, d. 562  
Anyixian, Shanxi  
Stone; H. 120 cm  
Shanxi Provincial Museum  
From *Zhongguo meisu quanji: Wei jin*  
*Nanbeichao diaosu* volume, pl. 139



Figure 10a *Amitāyus triad*  
Western Qin kingdom, 420s  
Binglingsi Cave 169  
Clay with pigments  
From *Chūgoku sekkutsu: Heireiji sekkutsu*, pl. 21



Figure 10b *Guanyin*, detail of  
*Amitāyus triad* in fig. 9a  
From *Chūgoku sekkutsu: Heireiji sekkutsu*, pl. 24

Figure 11 *Sākyamuni-Avalokiteśvara-Mañjuśrī triad*  
Northern Wei, dated 534  
Huayin, Shaanxi  
Limestone, H. 155 cm  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art,  
New York, Rogers Fund, 1919  
(19.16)

From Nickel, ed. *Return of the Buddha: the Qingzhou Discoveries*, p. 68, fig. 56



Figure 12 *Guanyin*

Tang dynasty, late 7th–early 8th century  
Gilt bronze  
H. 23.6 cm

The Metropolitan Museum of Art  
From *The National Palace Museum, Hai-Wai Yi-chen: Chinese Art in Overseas Collection: Buddhist Sculpture*, vol. 2, pl. 117



Figure 13 *Amitābha's assembly, Avalokiteśvara on left*

Early Tang, c. 630  
Dunhuang Cave 57,  
south wall

Wall mural

From *Chūgoku sekkutsu: Tonkō Bakkōkutsu*, pt. 3,  
pl. 12

Figure 14 *Amitābha's pure land*

Early Tang, c. 630  
Dunhuang Cave 57, north wall

Wall mural

From *Dunhuang shiku yishu*, *Caves 57, 322*  
volume, pl. 46

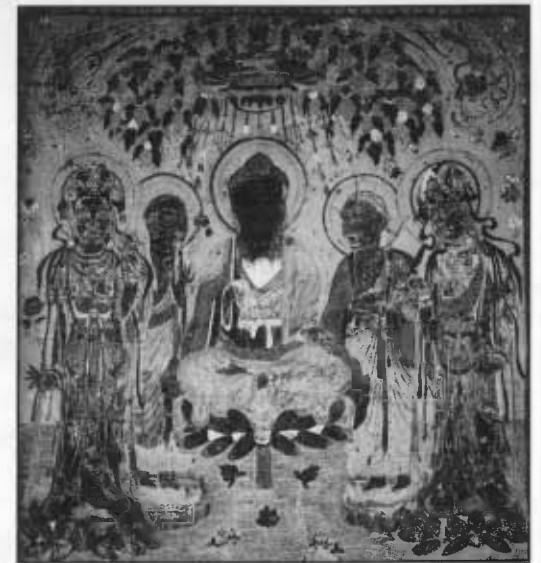


Figure 15 Depiction of The Lotus Sūtra  
Sui dynasty (581–619)  
Dunbuang Cave 420  
Wall mural, ceiling  
From *Chūgoku sekkutsu, Tonkō Bakkōkutsu*, pt. 2, pl. 77



Figure 16 Depiction of the “Guanyin Chapter” of The Lotus Sūtra  
Tang dynasty, late 7th–early 8th century  
Dunbuang Cave 45  
Wall mural, south wall  
From *Chūgoku sekkutsu, Tonkō Bakkōkutsu*, pt. 3, pl. 131



Figure 17 Avalokiteśvara as savior from the eight great perils  
Aurangabad Cave 7, India  
7th century  
Stone  
From Carmel Berkson, *The Caves at Aurangabad*, p. 124



Fig. 18 Mabeśvara  
6th century  
From Dandā-oilik, Khotan  
Wood and pigments  
H. 33 cm  
The British Museum, OA 1907.11-11.71  
From Whitfield and Farrer, *Caves of the Thousand Buddhas*, cat. no. 134

Fig. 19 *Eleven-beaded Avalokiteśvara*  
6th century  
Kanheri Caves, western India  
Stone  
H. 150 cm  
From Neville, *Eleven-beaded  
Avalokiteśvara*, fig. 9



Fig. 20 *Eleven-beaded Guanyin and  
bodhisattvas*  
Tang dynasty, 2nd half 7th century  
Dunhuang Cave 334, east wall  
Wall mural  
From *Chūgoku sekkutsu: Tonkō Bakkōkutsu*,  
pt. 3, pl. 82



Fig. 21 *Eleven-  
beaded Guanyin and  
bodhisattvas*  
Tang dynasty, late 7th  
century  
Dunhuang Cave 321, east  
wall  
Wall mural  
From *Chūgoku sekkutsu:*  
*Tonkō Bakkōkutsu*, pt. 3,  
pl. 55

Fig. 22 *Eleven-beaded Guanyin*  
Tang dynasty, late 7th–early 8th century  
From Baoqingxi, Xi'an  
Limestone  
H. 117.7 cm  
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston  
*Special Chinese and Japanese Fund*  
Photograph © Museum of Fine Arts,  
Boston



Fig. 23 Head of Eleven-headed Guanyin  
Tang dynasty, early 8th century  
Excavated at Xi'an  
Marble  
H. 25.5 cm  
Beilin Museum, Xi'an  
From Cheng Jianzhen, ed., Xi'an  
Beilin bowuguan, p. 134



Fig. 24 Nine-headed Guanyin  
Tang dynasty, early 8th century  
Entered Hōryū-ji, Japan, in 719  
Sandalwood  
H. 47.9 cm

From Ono Katsutoshi, *Shōrai bijutsu*, col. pl. 1



Fig. 25a Eleven-headed Kammon  
Early Nara period, c. 710  
Kondō of Hōryū-ji, Japan  
Wall mural  
From Tanaka, *Wall Paintings in the Kondō, Hōryū-ji Monastery*, wall painting no. 12



Fig. 25b Detail of Fig. 25a



Fig. 26 Eleven-headed Kwanum  
Unified Silla period, c. 752  
Sökukuram, Kyeongju, Korea  
Stone

From Kim and Lee, *Arts of Korea*, pl. 98



Fig. 27 Matou Guanyin  
Tang dynasty, 8th-9th  
century

From Anguosi site, Xi'an

Marble

H. 89 cm

Beilin Museum, Xi'an

From Cheng Jianzhen, ed.,  
*Xi'an Beilin bowuguan*,  
p. 127



Ten

## No Text, Only Images: The Veneration of Dizang 地藏 and Guanyin 觀音 at Sichuan Beishan

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Textbook accounts generally segregate savior Buddhas and bodhisattvas according to explicitly differentiated functions. In this manner Dizang (Skt. Kṣitigarbha) is often represented as the savior of hells, a role for which he is particularly well known in modern Chinese Buddhism, whereas Guanyin (Skt. Avalokiteśvara) is regarded as the Buddhist epitome of compassion who performs an encompassing array of religious functions usually relating to the living world. However, close scrutiny of the evidence, particularly the visual and inscriptional materials, reveals that Dizang and Guanyin were frequently worshipped together in medieval China. This association of Dizang with Guanyin is not surprising in light of the several parallels in their early religious functions. For example, both are characterized as saviors responsible for relieving sufferings and averting perils in the six paths of rebirth, particularly in the unfortunate realms. In fact the portrayal of Dizang's salvific activities and attributes in the *Scripture on the Ten Wheels* (*Shilun jing* 十輪經) closely resembles the description of Guanyin in the *Lotus Sūtra*.<sup>1</sup> Scholars

1 The parallels are so striking that Alexander C. Soper has argued that the introduction of Dizang in the *Scripture on the Ten Wheels* was a later addition to the original scripture, and this section was modeled after chapter 25 of the *Lotus Sūtra*, a chapter devoted to exalting Guanyin worship. See Alexander C. Soper, *Literary Evidence for Early Buddhist Art in China* (Ascona, Switzerland: *Artibus Asiae* Publishers, 1959), pp. 210–211. [I should thank Stephen Teiser for insightful comments on an early version of this

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## Contents

Editor's Preface.....	7
Founder's Opening Remarks.....	11
Chün-fang Yü. Keynote Speech: "Kuan-yin and Chinese Culture" .....	19
José Ignacio Cabezón. "The Cults of Peaceful and Wrathful Avalokiteśvara at Sera Monastery" .....	35
Edward Crangle. "The Bodhisattva Intent: Guanyin and the Dynamics of Healing in Buddhist Meditation" .....	65
Jeffrey Hopkins. "Avalokiteśvara and Tibetan Presentations of Compassion" .....	111
Miriam Levering. "Why Does Dabei Guanyin Have a Thousand Eyes? A Study of Guanyin in Chan Texts, Culminating in a Study of Case 89 in the <i>Biyanlu</i> ( <i>Blue Cliff Record</i> )" .....	145
Jan Nattier. "Avalokiteśvara in Early Chinese Buddhist Translations: A Preliminary Survey" .....	181
Shunzo Onoda. "Origin of the Design of Qing Dynasty Embroideries of Caturbhujā Avalokiteśvara" .....	213