White-robed Guanyin: The Sinicization of Buddhism in China Seen in the Chinese Transformation of Avalokiteshvara in Gender, Iconography, and Role

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Guanyin, or Guanshiyin, the Chinese name for the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara is an excellent example of a being successfully transplanted into Chinese culture away from its Buddhist origin.[1] Starting in the late Tang dynasty, around tenth century, and during the next several centuries, Guanyin underwent a profound transformation to become the most popular Chinese deity. The first Chinese transformations of Avalokiteshvara were fundamental gender changes, showing all feminine forms. Once the sexual transformation of Guanyin was completed, she appeared in several variations. By taking on diverse forms with distinctively Chinese identities, roles, and iconographies, the foreign bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara became appropriate for Chinese religious sensibilities. Four main feminine forms of Guanyin with characteristic attributes appeared in China after the Tang dynasty. Of all the various human configurations of Guanyin, the White-robed Guanyin has become most popular and prominent among the Chinese because of the efficacy of this Guanyin's power to grant sons. This image of Guanyin was later related to a totally secular depiction of Guanyin as a "child-giving" deity. By the sixteenth century, Guanyin became a completely feminine and truly Chinese deity among all the imported Buddhist deities.

This paper is devoted to examining the process of the sinicization of Buddhism through the Guanyin cult in China, especially the iconography of the White-robed Guanyin. I will trace the origin and popularity of the White-robed Guanyin as a "child-giving" deity to her relationship with a group of indigenous scriptures that especially emphasize Guanyin's ability to grant sons.[2] This study involves the broad outline of "new Guanyin" images in Chinese art, and will discuss the social circumstances and reasons related to the feminization and sinicization of the bodhisattva through which the foreign, male deity finally became not only feminine but also the most popular Chinese deity.

Guanyin has been widely worshipped throughout Buddhist countries, and is believed to be the embodiment of compassion and to be able to save sentient beings from suffering.[3] Since the fourth century CE, a few hundred years after the introduction of Buddhism into China, Guanyin has become the most beloved of all other bodhisattvas.[4] The popularity of the cult of Guanyin during this period is attested to by evidence of worshipping and devotion to Guanyin found in the caves of Dunhuang.[5] Guanyin as the compassionate savior in times of danger was the favorite and most commonly found image at Dunhuang (Figure 1). All the paintings found at Dunhuang bear strong stylistic resemblance to one another.[6] Guanyin figures are depicted in a conventional format: the bodhisattva is placed in the center and backed by an aureole and nimbus. Various dangerous situations are depicted around Guanyin. Guanyin is attended by his donors who are usually

1 The Chinese name for the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara Guanyin literally means "the one who observes the sounds of the world."

2 Chün-fang Yü, "A Sutra Promoting the White-robed Guanyin as Giver of Sons," *Religions of China in Practice*, ed. Donald Lopez, Jr. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1996) 97.

3 For example, in Japanese Buddhist art, Kannon, the Japanese reading of Guanyin, has enjoyed the most popularity among Buddhas and other bodhisattvas. Donald S. Lopez, "A Prayer for the Long Life of the Dalai Lama" and Yü, "Chinese Women Pilgrims' Songs Glorifying Guanyin," *Buddhism in Practice*, ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1995).

4 The growing popularity of the cult of Guanyin was begun in the Six Dynasties period (222-589). It was one of the most chaotic and desperate ages in the history of China politically as well as socially. Given the combination of the political and social upheavals caused by many natural disasters, warfare, and destructive rebellions during this period, people in peril seemed to want a miracle-working deity and ardently wished to be saved from the upheavals by Guanyin's great power and compassion. Therefore, it is no wonder that the cult of Guanyin became so popular in the cataclysms of the period. Robert Ford Company, "The Tales of the Bodhisattva Guanyin," *Religions of China in Practice* 83-5.

5 The *Lotus Sutra* and other sutras depicting Guanyin's saving people from danger were spread throughout many regions of China and became very popular until the seventh century. The great power and efficacy of Guanyin and the promises of instant rewards to worshipers are well described in the Buddhist sutras. The most influential among them is the *Lotus Sutra*, of which in the Guanyin chapter—twenty-fourth chapter (twenty-fifth chapter in some copies), entitled *Pumen Pin*—Sakyamuni Buddha enumerates the types of dangerous situations and promises the miraculous rescue of those who are in extreme difficulty and call upon the name of the bodhisattva with great power and compassion. Due to the efficacy of chanting this chapter, the twenty-fourth chapter was often translated separately from the rest of the sutra and circulated as an independent scripture known as the *Guanshiyin Sutra* or *Guanyin Sutra*. The growing popularity of the cult of Guanyin during the Sui and Tang dynasties was attested to by a large number of copies of the scripture from Dunhuang: there are 1100 copies of scriptures related to Guanyin, including 860 copies of the *Lotus Sutra* which outnumbers by far copies of any other sutra found in the cave and almost 128 individual copies of the *Guanyin Sutra*.

6 The wall paintings, banners, and hanging scrolls of Guanyin found at Dunhuang range over a period of about four hundred years, from the early seventh to the eleventh century.

from the upper class, as indicated by the late-ninth to the late-tenth century imagery.[7] Guanyin figures are depicted as having round, chubby faces and full features, projecting the role of compassionate savior.

The Guanyin figures bearing a mustache clearly indicate the masculine aspects of the bodhisattva, and in the visual arts Guanyin was depicted as a young Indian prince throughout India and many Southeast and Central Asian countries.[8] Even in China, until the late Tang dynasty, there was no change in his depiction as a male deity as we can see from the hanging scrolls of Dunhuang. The Guanyin's images as a male deity still show canonical evidences derived from the *Lotus Sutra* and numerous Buddhist scriptures (the Buddhist sutras) and traces of common iconographic elements attributed to the image of Avalokiteshvara. However, the Chinese began to develop "new Guanyin" images which did not bear such Buddhist canonical foundations, but, rather, bore distinctive indigenous characteristics. One may regard Shuiyue Guanyin or Water-moon Guanyin as the beginning of the Chinese transformation of Avalokiteshvara.[9] One of the earliest dated Water-moon Guanyin paintings found at Dunhuang is done in mid-10th century (Figure 2). She is holding a willow branch in one hand and a water bottle in the other, which formed distinctive attributes of Guanyin during the Tang and later dynasties.[10] Guanyin seated on a ledge of rock, is backed by an aureole of a full moon and surrounded by a bamboo grove. Although the large nimbus of the full moon and bamboo grove featured new iconography for Guanyin, they had been a traditional setting for Chinese paintings. A later depiction of the Water-moon Guanyin, done during thirteenth or fourteenth century, shows a more feminized and indigenized image of Guanyin with no relationship to India (Figure 3). The pine tree which replaces the bamboo grove and the waterfall, typical features of Chinese landscape painting, combined with her relaxed, contemplative pose remind us more of Chinese literati paintings depicting a classical scholar retiring to a hermitage in the deep mountain, than of Buddhist scriptural depictions.[11] Thus, the origin of this new iconography might be decisively derived from the genius of creative Chinese painters, who took the Buddhist deity as their theme, dressed her in Chinese robes, and placed her in the traditional Chinese landscape setting. This new type of Guanyin served as the prototype for the later development of other indigenous, feminine images of Guanyin and also became the stylistic basis for the White-robed Guanyin.[12]

The growing popularity of the cult of Guanyin was strongly promoted not only by art but also by the production of indigenous scriptures and miracle collections.[13] Incorporation of the miracle tales into the female image of Guanyin made her a representative Chinese goddess. The universal accessibility of Guanyin was probably a reflection of the foreignness of the cult, which had not yet become rooted in specific locations.[14] In indigenous scriptures, all of these miracle tales were strongly related to figures of a specific name and place. Accordingly, the cult of Guanyin was especially colored by strong local traditions and firmly anchored in those places.[15] The miracle tales greatly helped Buddhism which was of foreign origin, to sinicize into China by showing the compassionate as well as omnipotent being who responded to the praying of specific, named, and historically existing individuals at particular places

7 Miyeko Murase, "Kuan-Yin as Savior of Men: Illustration of the Twenty-fifth Chapter of the Lotus Sutra in Chinese Painting," *Artibus Asiae* 33 (1971): 43.

8 Although bodhisattvas do not have innate sexual characteristics, the Guanyin chapter of the *Lotus Sutra* designates Guanyin as "good young man." Maria Reis-Habito, "The Bodhisattva Guanyin and the Virgin Mary," *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 13 (1993): 62.

9 Yü, "Guanyin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokiteshvara," in Marsha Weidner, ed., *Latter Days of the Law: Images of Chinese Buddhism 850-1850* (Lawrence: Spencer Museum of Art, U of Kansas, 1984) 156. Some early Buddhist texts translated in Chinese refer to the name of the bodhisattva as Guang-shih-yin, the Voice that illuminates the world, emphasizing Guanyin's special power as provider of immeasurable light. Since *guang* means the character for light or radiance, one can easily arrive to the imagery of Water-moon Guanyin. However, there is no scriptural basis of the moon and water for linking with Guanyin. Thus, Cornelius Chang argues, "The choice of Kuang instead of Kuan in the Chinese translation of the *Lotus* made in 286 was probably a deliberate and carefully studied one." Cornelius P. Chang, "Kunyin Paintings from Tun-Huang: Water-Moon Kuanyin," *Journal of Oriental Studies* (Hong Kong) 15.2 (1977): 143 n 107. According to Company, this usage of guang before seventh century was soon abandoned. Although the earliest dated visual image of the Water-moon Guanyin was depicted in the tenth century, the foundation of this result was already laid within the worshipers in China. Company, *Religions of China in Practice*, 83.

10 Guanyin usually carries a lotus in one hand and a water bottle in the other. These were typical attributes of the form of Avalokiteshvara. Later, a willow branch replaced the lotus. However, this change was not an indigenous invention of the Chinese but derived form from an esoteric scripture called *Dharani Sutra of Invoking Bodhisattva Guanyin to Subdue and Eliminate Harmful Poison*, in which the Buddha tells that offering willow branches and pure water invokes Guanyin. Yü, *Latter Days of the Law*, 154. See also Chang, 148-150.

11 Indeed, Yamamoto Yoko, in her study, *The Formation of the Moon and Water Kuan-yin Image*, convinces us that "the iconography of Water and Moon Guanyin should be viewed as a Chinese creation based on indigenous concepts of sages, retired gentlemen, and immortals, rather than on Indian prototypes." Yamamoto Yoko, "The Formation of the Moon and Water Kuan-yin Image," *Bijutsushi* 38.I (March 1989): 28-37, cited in Yü, *Latter Days of the Law*, 157.

12 Angela Howard, "The Creation of the Chinese White-robed Kuan-yin," paper delivered at the American Academy of Religion Conference, November 18, 1990, New Orleans, cited in Yü, *Latter Days of the Law*, 156.

13 According to Yü, "the sinicization and feminization of Kuanyin went hand in hand." The contemporary literary descriptions of Guanyin in indigenous scriptures, folk traditions, artistic renderings, and even the visions of devotees in their dreams or on their pilgrimage played an important role in their cooperation in transforming the bodhisattva's gender and creating different identities and roles for him. Yü, "Feminine Images of Kuan-Yin in Post-T'ang China," *Journal of Chinese Religions* 18 (1990): 61.

14 It was not until the Song dynasty (960-1279) that Guanyin was associated with an actual time and place in her miracles and legends. Reis-Habito, 63.

15 Yü, *Latter Days of the Law* 158.

and times.[16] The miracle tales not only helped Buddhism infiltrate into the Chinese culture and religion but, more importantly, helped the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara develop an increasingly Chinese face and characteristics.[17]

Guanyin lived an actual life through assuming a human manifestation in each legend. Four main feminine forms of Guanyin have appeared in China since the Tang dynasty. To make the bodhisattva distinctly Chinese in its character, the Chinese people granted the four feminine images of Guanyin different identities related to regional locals. This process of feminization and indigenization in China was so successful and complete that "many Chinese, if they are not familiar with Buddhism, are not aware of her Buddhist origin."[18] The White-robed Guanyin, among others, has played a very interesting role and is most appealing to the Chinese. The other three female forms and their iconographies were coalesced into the formation of White-robed Guanyin.

Of the four images, the most popular and prominent legend is the story of Princess Miao-shan Guanyin. Miao-shan's legend is anchored in Xiang-shan in Henan, an important Guanyin pilgrimage site. Miao-shan, the third daughter of King Miao-chuang, practiced Buddhism very devotedly and refused marriage. After saving many sentient beings, including her furious father, from a fatal illness by giving him her own eyes and arms willingly, she finally revealed her real identity in the form of the Thousand-armed and Thousand-eyed Guanyin.[19] The story of Miao-shan Guanyin identifies her with an ideal model of virginal chastity and female filial piety both of which are emphasized in Chinese Confucian society. Since Miao-shan is quite a popular name for Chinese girls, one may reach the conclusion that the author/authors of the scripture of Miao-shan Guanyin intentionally gave Guanyin a very common Chinese girl's name, "trying to make her as Chinese as possible."[20] But interestingly, there is no visually represented image of Miao-shan Guanyin. However, the legend of Miao-shan, among other sources, became the prime incentive to generate a feminine Guanyin and continually supported the basis and format of other feminine forms of Guanyin.

Nan-hai Guanyin (Guanyin of the South Sea) was another version of the Miao-shan Guanyin legend but was firmly anchored in Putuo island, which also became a national and international pilgrimage center of Guanyin worship.[21] The Guanyin of this legend was accompanied by a white parrot and her two attendants, Shan-cai (Sudhana) and Longnü (Dragon princess), which formed the popular triad for this image of Guanyin and began to be represented in art from the twelfth century on (Figure 4).[22] Because Buddhist scriptures do not designate Guanyin's relationship with both attendants at the same time, Yü argues that "these two attendants are the Buddhist counterparts of the Daoist Golden Boy and Jade Girl who were depicted as the attendants of the Jade Emperors since the Tang."[23] Although Guanyin of the South Sea can be solely identified with her two attendants and the white parrot, at times, she is only accompanied by the male attendant.

Another rather shocking transformation, developed during the Tang dynasty and in succeeding centuries, actually represented Guanyin as a seductress. Yulan Guanyin (Guanyin with a Fish Basket) was depicted as young, beautiful, and most surprisingly, sexually seductive (Figure 5).[24] The cult of Guanyin with a Fish Basket was originally worshipped in Shaanxi. She was called Guanyin with a Fish Basket because she appeared as a fishmonger, carrying a basket of fish on her arm. Unlike Miao-shan, Guanyin with a Fish Basket was deeply involved in secular relationships with men, offering first either marriage or sexual favor. But in the end, they remained virgins like Miao-shan, using sex as a didactic tool to educate people about the vice of their sexual lust and to free them of sexual desire forever. This last part might have been increasingly welcomed by the moralistic puritanism of Neo-Confucianism from the Song dynasty on.

16 Each tale informing a particular individual's name and place helped Chinese people understand those miracles, which was impossible under normal circumstances, not as a superstitious belief or fairy tale but as a "divine response" or the "truth of Buddhism" without suspicion about their authenticity. Company, *Religions of China,* 84-85.

17 Makita Tairyo regarded them as valuable documents revealing contemporary understanding Buddhism as a reflection of Chinese people's creative attempt to weave Buddhism of foreign origin into the fabric of Chinese culture. Yü, *Religions of China in Practice* 98.

18 Yü, *Latter Days of the Law* 151.

19 Thousand-armed and Thousand-eyed Guanyin, known as Dabei (Great Compassionate One) is the esoteric form and became popular during the Tang dynasty with the introduction of tantric Buddhism into China. Yü, *Latter Days of the Law* 168.

20 The indigenous scriptures provide the names and specific places of the donors who paid for printing and distributing of the text of the miracle tales. Among those texts, the character miao as in Miao-shan quite often appeared as part of the names of women donors or the wives of the donors. Yü, *Journal of Chinese Religions*: 82.

21 Mount Putuo on the Putuo island is the Chinese Potalaka, which has been accepted as the abode of the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara in an Indian island.

22 In Buddhist scriptures Guanyin is related with either Shan-cai or Longnü, not with both at the same time. The Gandavyuha chapter in the *Avatamsaka Sutra,* which may provide the canonical source for Shancai (Sudhana), tells the story of the pilgrimage of the young Sudhana in search of the truth. Guanyin as the twenty-eighth "good friend" is visited by him. The canonical basis of Longnü may be found in the esoteric texts and *Lotus Sutra*. The scriptural basis for the white parrot comes from the *Smaller Pure Land Sutra* which describes parrots and other rare birds live in the Pure Land, the place for those who achieve rebirth. Yü, *Latter Days of the Law* 163-66. For more details on Longnü, read n24.

23 Yü, *Latter Days of the Law* 163.

24 The themes of fish and fish basket, however, seem not to be crucial elements in depicting Yulan Guanyin as a seductress. In some *baojuan* such as *Xigua baojuan* (Precious Volume of the Watermelon) and *Guanyin Miaoshan baojuan* (Precious Volume of Guanyin-Miaoshan), she is not presented as a fishmonger. Thus, the change of locale certainly played a significant role in composition of the Guanyin legend. Yü, *Latter Days of the Law* 166-9.

The legend of Baiyi Guanyin, or White-robed Guanyin, became associated with Hangzhou.[25] The White-robed Guanyin began to appear from the tenth century on, and her popularity, especially in visual art, has been unsurpassed since that time. Eventually, the White-robed Guanyin was the most successful in sinicization compared to the others. The White-robed Guanyin is an unmistakable female deity and is typically identified by her long, flowing white cape (Figure 6). However, images of the several different identities of Guanyin were often intermingled and superimposed. Therefore, when examining the iconography of each Guanyin, one may find traces of different images of Guanyin in juxtaposition. Those images did not compete with or replace one another, but mutually authenticated each other and reinforced the efficacy of Guanyin as the omnipotent and omniscient deity.[26] For example, the White-robed Guanyin could be also accompanied by the two attendants and the white parrot, the three companions of Guanyin of the South Sea. *Guanyin on a Lotus Leaf*, dated to the eighteenth century of Qing dynasty, prompts us to identify her with Guanyin of the South Sea because of the white parrot and the male attendant (Figure 6). But Guanyin is clothed in a white cape, her identifying garment, and is reclining on a lotus leaf in her pensive pose. Stylistically, the pensive pose and iconography of Guanyin of the South Sea assimilated the elements of Water-moon and White-robed Guanyin, as seen here. *Five forms of Guanyin* painted by Ding Yunpeng, active in the Ming dynasty, presents the images of Guanyin with the Fish Basket, the White-robed Guanyin, and Guanyin of the South Sea in a row and demonstrates the iconographic relation of the various images of Guanyin (Figure 7). Guanyin's identity in China, enriched by the miracle folk tales, absorbed all the different images at the same time.

The image of the White-robed Guanyin is the most interesting and complex. The origin and increasing popularity of the cult of the White-robed Guanyin, which occurred after the tenth century, can be traced to her relation with a group of indigenous scriptures which provided her with a very Chinese biography and a new iconography as a goddess capable of granting children, especially sons.[27] In this aspect, the White-robed Guanyin is recognized as a child-giving goddess and often portrayed surrounded by children who sport around her and cling to her garments. It is noteworthy that in China the efficacy of Guanyin's power to grant sons was especially emphasized in the indigenous scriptures although the *Lotus Sutra* also mentions Guanyin's power of granting children to worshipers who desire one regardless of gender. The birth of a male heir is regarded as the most auspicious matter for congratulations in Chinese Confucian society. Due to her child-giving powers, the fame of the White-robed Guanyin spread and attracted pilgrims, and she was especially worshipped by women, whose most important duty after getting married, according to Confucian morality, is to give birth to a healthy male heir.[28] *Guanyin Bestowing a Son*, dated to the Ming dynasty (late sixteenth century), shows the Child-giving Guanyin holding a boy although she is not clad in a white cape (Figure 8). The robust boy, holding an official seal and wearing official belt, embodies the two greatest concerns of the Chinese in Confucian society: the desire for male heirs and for their success as government officials.[29]

This idea of the White-robed Guanyin as the giver of sons developed the iconography of Guanyin most frequently presented (holding a baby boy in her arm or on her lap) in the *Blanc de Chine* porcelain figures produced in Fujien province during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[30] This Child-giving Guanyin holding a baby boy is extremely similar to the Virgin Mary with the infant Jesus.[31] *Guanyin as the Christian Madonna* of *c*. 1675-1725 in the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts is a prime example (Figure 9). When one learns that these two different religious images were handled by the same artistic communities, it is not surprising to notice the iconographical resemblance between the Child-giving Guanyin and the Madonna and Child. Fujien was a coastal province where Christian missionaries visited as early as the thirteenth century. Between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, Spanish conquistadors and Jesuit missionaries brought sculptures to China and also commissioned Fujienese craftsmen, the very same artisans who produced the image of the Child-giving Guanyin, to create Christian images, most frequently of the Virgin and Child theme. As a result, "the Madonna looked somewhat Chinese and the Kuanyin looked almost 'Gothic'."[32] One also needs to recall that the development of the iconography and image of Guanyin was in progress at the time of the

25 The legend of White-robed Guanyin follows almost same story line of the Miaoshan Guanyin, despite its various details.

26 As the *Lotus Sutra* and other sutras state that Guanyin appears in many different forms to save sentient beings most effectively, the numerous personifications of Guanyin emphatically represent both the bodhisattva's compassion and omnipotent power.

27 Yü, *Religions of China in Practice* 97.

28 According to Confucian philosophy, there are seven vices which women should not commit throughout their lives. Among them, women's infertility was regarded as a sin. In the case of violating one of the seven vices, women could be expelled from their families or clan.

29 Sons' success in governmental service meant ability to provide financial security for their aged parents.

30 Forrest R. Brauer, *Blanc De Chine: In the Collection of Forrest R. Brauer*, with an introduction by Forrest R. Brauer (n. publ., 1970s?) 2. According to P. J. Donnelly, nine out of ten figures in Blanc de Chine were Guanyin in her human manifestation. P. J. Donnelly, *Blanc De Chine: the porcelain of Tehua in Fukien* (London: Faber, 1969).

31 This is the reason why many scholars of Chinese religion have compared the importance of Guanyin as a popular deity to that of the Virgin Mary and even called Guanyin "the Buddhist Madonna." The Jesuit missionaries also nicknamed her the "Goddess of Mercy." Reis-Habito, *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 61; Yü, *Religion of China in Practice* 97.

32 *Chinese Ivories from the Shang to the Qing*, catalogue of the exhibition organized by the Oriental Ceramic Society jointly with the British Museum, 24th May to 19th August, 1989, ed. Williams Watson (London: The Oriental Ceramic Society, 1984), 41, cited in Yü, *Journal of Chinese Religions*: 81.

importation of Christianity into China. Since the image of the Child-giving Guanyin holding a male child was never depicted prior to the Ming dynasty, and the majority of miracles reporting Guanyin's power to grant children are concentratad in the late Ming, one can conclude that the cult of the White-robed Guanyin as the giver of male heirs was firmly established during the years of the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries when Christian missionaries frequently commissioned the Fujienese craftsmen to produce the image of the Virgin and Child.[33] Chün-fang Yü, an expert in examining the sinicization of Buddhism in China, argues, "The religious basis for this iconography came from Buddhist scriptures, but its artistic rendering might have been influenced by the iconography of the Virgin."[34]

Guanyin could be understood as the motherly form of the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara for her kindness and susceptibility to the entreating devotees.[35] In many legends, Guanyin strongly negated her sexual relation and embodied female purity and positive aspects of womanhood, stressing her role as mother rather than wife.[36] This aspect was greatly welcomed by the puritan Confucian society. The compassionate and maternal White-robed Guanyin, more widely recognized as the Child-giving Guanyin in later periods, had a great appeal to the supplicants who wished to have sons because her existence in the family-oriented Chinese society was indispensable. It is clear that Indian Buddhism became more and more Chinese in order to be acceptable to the Chinese and to fit into the Chinese situation rather than the reverse pattern of the Chinese being adapted to the foreign ideas and practices.[37] In this way, the originally foreign, male deity was transformed completely into a female deity first, and then, successfully sinicized into China.

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33 Yü, *Journal of Chinese Religions*: 81.

34 Yü, *Journal of Chinese Religions*: 81.

35 Denise Lardner and John Carmody, *Serene Compassion: A Christian Appreciation of Buddhist Holiness* (New York: Oxford UP, 1996) 62.

36 In *Female Gender in Chinese Religious Symbols: Kuanyin, Ma Tsu and the 'Eternal Mother,'* Steven Sangren argues that many Chinese female goddesses "embody purely positive aspects of womanhood," and "female purity as manifested in female deities involves the negation of woman as wife and affirmation of her role as mother." Steven P. Sangren, "Female Gender in Chinese Religious Symbols: Kuan Yin, Ma Tsu and the 'Eternal Mother'," *Signs* 9 (1983): 14, cited in Yü, *Journal of Chinese Religions*: 84-5.

37 Kenneth K. S. Ch'en understands the process of the sinicization of Buddhism in China differently from other Asian countries. The Southeast and Central Asian countries such as Ceylon, Burma, and Thailand, were lesser civilizations compared to that of India. When Buddhism was introduced to their countries, the people welcomed it in their hope that their own cultures would rise to the level of a superior civilization. However, China already possessed a high level of culture when Buddhism was introduced around 1 CE. Kenneth K. S. Ch'en, *The Chinese Transformation of Buddhism* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1973) 5.

Figure 1. *Guanyin as Savior from Perils*, hanging scroll of *Guanyin Sutra*, ink and colors on silk, mid-late 10th century; Five Dynasties or Northern Song, from Cave 17, Dunhuang, 84.4 x 61.7 cm. Stein Collection of Central Asian Antiquities, The British Museum, London. Courtesy of the British Museum.

Figure 2. *Guanyin*, ink and colors on paper, mid-10th century; Five Dynasty, from Cave 17, Dunhuang, 82.9 x 29.6 cm. Stein Collection of Central Asian Antiquities, The British Museum, London. Courtesy of the British Museum.

[*above*] Figure 3. Water and Moon Guanyin, hanging scroll, ink, slight color, and gold on silk, 13th-early 14th century; southern Song Dynasty, 111.2 x 76.2 cm. The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri, Purchase: Nelson Trust.

[*upper right*] Figure 4. Guanyin, Dehua ware, molded and covered porcelain, height 22.9 cm, 17th-18th century; Qing dynasty. The Brooklyn Museum of Art, Brooklyn, New York. Gift of Dr. Ralph Marcove.

[*lower right*] Figure 5. Ding Yunpeng (1547-*c*. 1628), *Guanyin with a Fish Basket* (detail of Five Forms of Guanyin), handscroll, ink, color, and gold on paper, *c*. 1579-80; Ming dynasty, 28 x 134 cm. The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri, Purchase: Nelson Trust.

Figure 6. Guanyin on a Lotus Leaf, hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, *c*. 1700; Qing dynasty, 106 x 61 cm. Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis, Indiana. Gift of Mrs. John H. Roberts, Jr.

Figure 7. Ding Yunpeng, Five Forms of Guanyin, handscroll, ink, color and gold on paper, *c*. 1579-80; Ming dynasty, 28 x 134 cm. The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri, Purchase: Nelson Trust.

Figure 8. Guanyin Bestowing a Son, hanging scroll, ink, color and gold on silk, 16th century; Ming dynasty, 120.3 x 60 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase: Friends of Asian Art Gift, 1989.

Figure 9. Guanyin as the Christian Madonna, Blanc de Chine porcelain, *c*. 1675-1725; Qing Dynasty, 45.7 x 10.8 x 8.3 cm. The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, Virginia, Bequest of Forrest R. Brauer.