

Searching for the Dharma, Finding Salvation – Buddhist Pilgrimage in Time and Space

Proceedings of the Workshop
“Buddhist Pilgrimage in History and Present Times”
at the Lumbini International Research Institute (LIRI),
Lumbini, 11 - 13 January 2010



Edited by

Christoph Cueppers & Max Deeg

LUMBINI INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE

2014

Searching for the Dharma, Finding Salvation – Buddhist Pilgrimage
in Time and Space

LIRI Seminar
Proceedings Series

Edited by

LUMBINI INTERNATIONAL
RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Volume 5



Searching for the Dharma, Finding Salvation – Buddhist Pilgrimage in Time and Space

Proceedings of the Workshop
“Buddhist Pilgrimage in History and Present Times”
at the Lumbini International Research Institute (LIRI),
Lumbini, 11 - 13 January 2010

Edited by
CHRISTOPH CUEPPERS & MAX DEEG

Lumbini International Research Institute
Lumbini 2014

Lumbini International Research Institute
P.O. Box 39
Bhairahawa, Dist. Rupandehi
NEPAL
E-mail: liri@mos.com.np

© Lumbini International Research Institute

Cover photo: Buddhist monks from Amnye Machen on pilgrimage

© Katia Buffetrille

All rights reserved.

*Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study,
research, criticism or review, no part of this book may be
reproduced in any form, by print, photocopy, microfilm,
scanner or any other means without prior written permission.
Enquiries should be made to the publisher.*

ISBN 978-9937-2-8825-5

First published in 2014

Printed in Nepal by Dongol Printers, Kathmandu

CONTENTS

MAX DEEG	
Introduction	1
JAMES M. HEGARTY	
Going Nowhere: Power and Polemic in Brahminical Pilgrimage Literature	29
JOHN S. STRONG	
The Beginnings of Buddhist Pilgrimage: The Four Famous Sites in India	49
MAX DEEG	
When Peregrinus is not Pilgrim: The Chinese “Pilgrims’” Records – A Revision of Literary Genre and Its Context	65
BANGWEI WANG	
A Portrait Left by Faxian on His Pilgrimage to India	97
BERNADETTE BROESKAMP	
The Implementation and Popularization of a New Visual Idiom - the Upper Tianzhu Monastery (上天竺寺) in Hangzhou and its Famous White-Robed Guanyin (白衣觀音) Sandalwood Statue	109
PETER SKILLING & SANTI PAKDEEKHAM	
Phra Thaen Sila-at: From <i>Pañcabuddhabyākaraṇa</i> to Pilgrimage	141
TIBOR PORCIÓ	
Some Peculiarities of the Uygur Buddhist Pilgrim Inscriptions	157
CHARLES RAMBLE	
The Complexity of Tibetan Pilgrimage	179
KATIA BUFFETRILLE	
The Pilgrimage to Mount Kha ba dkar po: A Metaphor for bardo?	197
HIM LAL GHIMIRE	
Pilgrimage Tourism Networks: Prospects and Challenges in Nepal	221
Plates and Figures	251

THE CONSTRUCTION AND DISSEMINATION OF A NEW VISUAL IDIOM – THE WHITE-ROBED GUANYIN (白衣觀音) AND THE UPPER TIANZHU MONASTERY (上天竺寺) IN HANGZHOU

BERNADETTE BROESKAMP¹

What gave rise to the creation of the native Chinese iconography of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara as the White-Robed Guanyin? The following article intends to answer the question through an investigation into the historical and buddhological components involved.

For nearly a thousand years, the Upper Tianzhu Monastery (Shang tianzhu si 上天竺寺) outside of Hangzhou 杭州 has been a major Buddhist pilgrimage site in China, owing its popularity to the efficacious workings of a single and “miraculously created” sandalwood statue of Guanyin *pusa* 觀音菩薩 (Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara).

Since the latter half of the eleventh century, this sandalwood icon has been known to us through poems of the eminent Song dynasty literati-official, Su Shi 蘇軾 (often referred to as Su Dongpo 蘇東坡, 1037-1101), who was a friend of the charismatic abbot Biancai Yuanjing 辯才元淨 (1011-91) of the Upper Tianzhu Monastery.² In his poems Su Shi addressed the central icon of the Upper Tianzhu Monastery as *baiyi xianren* 白衣仙人 (“White-Robed Immortal”) or *baiyi dashi* 白衣大士 (“White-Robed Mahāsattva”, or “White-Robed Great Being”) indicating that the deity was clad in a white robe. Though these epithets do not indicate the deity’s gender, modern English translations commonly use the term “White-Robed Goddess” instead, concluding that the term clearly bespeaks the female manifestation of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara so popular from the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) onwards. This point alone would not be worth a discussion, had the Upper Tianzhu Guanyin not been the very first highly venerated White-Robed Guanyin statue that we know of in Chinese history and the Upper Tianzhu Monastery not the site where the cult of the White-Robed Guanyin started out to become the most popular cult in China, finally

1 I wish to thank Rob Linrothe and my professor em., T.S. Maxwell, for polishing my English drafts, and Brenda Li, HK, for correcting my translations from Chinese sources.

2 On the relationship between Su Shi and Biancai Yuanjing see Grant 1994. Su Shi was vice-prefect of Hangzhou from 1071-1073 and returned to Hangzhou as prefect in 1089-1090.

embracing all faiths. We may doubt that it was merely a matter of coincidence that the most admired Song dynasty poet was the first to mention the deity in his poems, thereby spreading the knowledge about the Upper Tianzhu sandalwood icon among the educated classes.

What caught my interest in this particular case was not the mentioning of a “spontaneously formed” or “self-made” (*zizuo* 自做) sandalwood icon of Guanyin – there are, of course, many – but the instance that although the icon’s iconography was not the commonly known and inherited one, within a few decades it reached such a widespread popularity that it nearly replaced the former standard iconography of Guanyin³ in the Chinese mind-set. The scholarly focus on the deity’s later gender transformation was of no help in disentangling the bundle of conjectures about the creative process behind this novel iconography.⁴

The case is highly problematic insofar as we are confronted with a huge list of written sources about the benefits of the Upper Tianzhu temple’s sandalwood statue throughout the past thousand years, but the icon itself has not come down to us, nor any description or depiction of it. The actual appearance of this statue is entirely left to our imagination. The whole situation is even more blurred by the fact that there exist no firmly dated early icons of the White-Robed Guanyin anywhere. Scholars of Chinese Buddhism have to rely on the assumptions of art historians concerning undated images for their theory of Guanyin’s iconographic transformation, but these may be weak and the attributions inappropriate.

The White-Robed Guanyin has, moreover, become a prominent example for the popular theory of *sinicization* or *domestication* of Buddhism in China. This theory of how Indian Buddhism was transformed into a Chinese one, has been criticized by Robert Sharf who instead opts for an “understanding of local social and institutional structures, cosmology, metaphysics, attitudes toward the spirit realm and the afterlife – in short, the local *episteme*”⁵ to use a more differentiated and historically embedded approach in analyzing the spread of Buddhism in all its facets, particularly its visual programme, in China. This is, in fact, the path I am going to explore here. By way of introduction I should mention another obstacle which seems to have curbed a

3 Although many different forms of Avalokiteśvara have been depicted, his standard iconography, known from the Tang dynasty onwards, showed Avalokiteśvara holding a willow twig in his right and a water vessel in his left hand. The items were presented to him by the people of Vaiśālī as described in the “Dhāraṇī Sūtra Invoking the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara to Dissipate Poison and Harm” (Qing Guanshiyin pusa xiaofu duhai tuoluoni zhou jing 請觀世音菩薩消伏毒害陀羅尼咒經), T.1043.34c.14. This most popular iconographic form underscores the healing mission of Avalokiteśvara. The willow twig supplanted the lotus flower as his distinct attribute already during the Sui dynasty, see Wong 2007: 264. Daniel Stevenson writes that the term *yangzhi* 楊枝, meaning „willow sprig“, was used in Chinese to translate the Sanskrit term *dantakāṣṭha*, which designates a soft branch from a banyan tree to clean teeth, see Stevenson 1986: 94-95.

4 1986: 17-80; Yü 2001; Campany 1993: 233-272; Tay 1976: 147-177.

5 See Sharf 2002: 23.

thorough understanding of the White-robed Guanyin's visual concept: our modern misinterpretation of what is *feminine* in shape and what not. Aesthetic perceptions of presumed differences in physiognomy are a product of a culturally fixed set of values and not universal. Nevertheless, these values seem to have pushed the debate heavily in one direction without generating convincing results.⁶ Despite the fact that there is no visual evidence, Chün-fang Yü, for instance, was convinced that Guanyin in a feminine guise was already in existence during the Tang dynasty (618-906 C.E.),⁷ whereas Rolf A. Stein claimed more reasonably that the feminine form of Guanyin did not appear before the end of the eleventh century.⁸ Their text-oriented approach, however, fails to answer the question of the obviously abrupt change in the visual programme of this deity and to relate this fact to a specific time frame within Chinese history and to a local religious or ideological environment.

Iconographic traits of an icon do not appear out of nowhere and their persistence cannot be underestimated. They follow a prescribed set of rules which give intrinsic meaning to the icon and these traits are not arbitrarily exchangeable but compulsory. The implementation of a new iconography, therefore, means nothing less than a change of identity, as these elements convey symbolic values and manifest certain qualities that are essential for the interpretation of a new conception of a deity. Instead of trying to find the right Buddhist scripture which offers us the proper iconographic description we are looking for, the question should be directed at an interpretation of the consciously chosen new iconographic formula and its underlying principles in accordance with the historical context from which it most probably could have arisen.

Starting with an investigation into the visual material, I want to address the following questions from an art historian's perspective. In which context could the new visual identity for the Bodhisattva Guanyin be created and, more importantly, accepted by the populace? What were the mechanisms behind these changes, which presumably started around the turn of the tenth to the eleventh century? What made a new pictorial programme necessary and which factors were decisive for this development? Applying the "hermeneutics of suspicion"⁹ to written sources, and with an iconological approach to the extant visual material, I hope to settle the question of the establishment and popularization of the White-robed Guanyin's iconography in this paper.

6 See for instance the statement in Yü 2001: 248: "The White-robed Kuan-yin, on the other hand, looks decidedly feminine. In fact, not only Kuan-yin, but bodhisattvas in general have looked rather feminine since the Tang."

7 See Yü 1992: 197.

8 See Stein 1986: 22. He quotes a story from Hong Mai's 洪邁 (1123-1202) *Yijian zhi* 夷堅志, chap. 50, in which Guanyin appears explicitly as a female in a dream.

9 Paul Ricoeur coined the phrase known in English by the translation of his book on Sigmund Freud, see his *Freud and Philosophy. An Essay on Interpretation* (Ricoeur 1970).

Separating Facts from Fabrications: a Critical Look at Local Records

Before turning to the specific ideology which caused the change of identity in the visual conception of the Bodhisattva, we must take a closer look at the local and monastic records. We can then deconstruct the repetitively propagated fabrications concerning the historicity of the efficacious White-Robed Guanyin icon at the Upper Tianzhu monastery.

As the name itself reveals, the foundation of the Upper Tianzhu Linggan Guanyin Monastery¹⁰ was intimately connected to and legitimized by the discovery of the mysterious sandalwood icon. The major events are presented in chapter 80 of the local Hangzhou gazetteer *Xianchun Lin'an zhi* 咸淳臨安志 as follows:¹¹

上天竺靈感觀音寺

後晉天福四年僧道翊結廬山。中夜有光就視得奇木。命孔仁謙刻觀音像。會僧勳從洛陽持古佛舍利來因納之頂間妙相具足。錢忠懿王夢白衣人求治其居。王感寤乃即其地創佛廬號天竺看經院。咸平初郡守張去華以旱迎大士至梵天寺致禱即日雨自是遇水旱必謁焉。天聖中僧詵夢像浮空而行出小山曰吾欲憩此明日僧寂至語夢協乃謀徙。今處乳竇峰轟其前白雲獅子中印諸峰左右環拱。嘉祐末守沈禮部文通以為天竺起於司馬晉時踰七百載而觀音發跡西峰甫及百年遂分為二所謂上天竺也。[...]

靖康初郡迎大士禱雨於法惠寺屬有狄難僧道元祕大士像於井。[...] 賊退瓦礫中忽鏗然有聲始知井所在得聖像歸之院。

Upper Tianzhu Efficacious Guanyin Monastery:

In the 4th year of the Tianfu period of the Later Jin (939 CE) the monk Daoyi settled down in a mountain hut. In the middle of the night there was a beam of light and he immediately inspected the strange wood [it came from]. He asked Kong Renqian to carve a Guanyin image. He met monk Xun who came from Luoyang carrying an old Buddhist relic which he put into the wonderful image's crown to [make it] complete. The king Qian Zhongyi¹² dreamt of a white-robed person requesting a place to stay.

10 The title "Efficacious Guanyin" (Linggan Guanyin 靈感觀音) was conferred upon the monastery in 1065 CE, see the record of Bao Qinzhi noted in *Xianchun Lin'an zhi* ("Lin'an gazetteer from the Xianchun era"), chap. 80: 16b. The gazetteer was compiled by the prefect Qian Yueyou 潛說友 in 1268.

11 *Xianchun Lin'an zhi*, chap. 80: 14b-15b.

12 The last Wuyue king Qian Zhongyi (Qian Chu 錢俶) reigned from 947-978 CE. Sources let modern scholars to assume that the White-Robed Guanyin was venerated even before 940 CE, see, for example, Howard 1985: 11; Choe 1991: 90, though neither the records of Tang dynasty painting, the *Lidai minghua ji* 歷代名畫記 (preface from 847 CE), the *Tang chao minghua lu* 唐朝名畫錄 nor the *Yizhou minghua lu* 益州名畫錄 (with a preface of 1005 CE) mention the White-Robed Guanyin as a subject for painting.

Moved and enlightened [by the dream], the king initiated the construction of the Buddhist hut called Tianzhu kanjing yuan as a place for him [to stay]. With the onset of a drought in the beginning of the Xianping period (998 CE) the county commissioner Zhang Quhua welcomed the *mahāsattva* arriving at the Fantian¹³ temple and devoted prayers [to him]. That very day it rained. Since then, when there is flood or drought, to pay a visit [to the *mahāsattva*] is a must.

In the middle of the Tiansheng period (1026-1027 CE) the monk Shen dreamt of the image floating in the air, walking up the little mountain saying ‘I wish to rest here’. The next day the monk went alone [to the place] described in the dream to assist and plan a change of his [i.e. the image’s] residence. Where he resides today, the Rudou hill is in his front, the Baiyun, Shizi¹⁴ and Zhongyin¹⁵ hills to the left and right encircle him saluting. At the end of the Jiayou period (1063 CE) the commissioner Shen [Gou] communicated to rite minister Wen that the Tianzhu [temple] arose from Sima Jin’s¹⁶ time over 700 [years ago] and Guanyin manifested traces on the western hill just a hundred years ago. Then, [the Tianzhu monastery] was divided and the second one was called Upper Tianzhu. [...]

At the beginning of the Jingkang period (1125 CE) the county welcomed the *mahāsattva* at the Fahui temple to pray for rain. Due to the difficulties with the barbarians, the monk Daoyuan secretly put the image of the *mahāsattva* into a well. [...] The thieves withdrew; suddenly a voice like a *jingling* [bell] came from the middle of the rubble. So they got to know that the well was the location of the holy image and returned it to the temple.

The text obviously presupposes knowledge about the site which needs to be explained here in order to fully understand the context. The Lower, Middle and Upper Tianzhu temples are located in the Western Hills outside of Hangzhou called Wulin mountains. From the sixth century onwards the little limestone hill right in the centre of the Wulin mountains was venerated by Buddhists as the “Peak That Arrived Flying” (Feilaifeng 飛來峰, also called “Central India Peak”, Zhongyinfeng 中印峰), and was apparently recognized as a “physical outpost” of the Indian Ḡḍhrakūṭa mountain,

13 This temple in the palace grounds was originally named Baota 寶塔, but also Nanta si 南塔寺, Shijia zhenshen sheli ta 釋迦真身舍利塔 and Hangta si 杭塔寺. The name was changed to Fantian si 梵天寺 in 1064-67 CE.

14 These names are also mentioned in Qisong’s 契嵩 (1007-1072) description of the Wulin mountains; see his record Wulin shan zhi 武林山志 in Tanjin wenji 鄧津文集, chap. 12, T.2115.710a.7.

15 The small hill is also called Feilaifeng 飛來峰 (“Peak That Arrived Flying”), and believed to be a peak from the Ḡḍhrakūṭa mountain in India, see Shahar 1992: 205.

16 The Jin dynasty (265-420 CE) rulers’ family name was Sima. The monasteries at the site are believed to be foundations of the Western monk Huili 慧理 who allegedly came to Hangzhou in 326 CE; see Xianchun Lin’an zhi, chap. 80: 1a, and Shahar 1992: 194.

where according to Mahāyāna tradition Buddha Śākyamuni expounded important *sūtras*. The foremost of these was the Lotus-*sūtra*, the core text of the Tiantai 天台 school. To mention the sacred Feilaifeng site, which must have been the location where the piece of sandalwood was purportedly found, was not necessary but definitely instrumental in legitimizing the image and its novel iconography.

Apart from the legendary discovery of the sandalwood icon, the basic constituents of the record are accumulated fragments incongruent with other historical sources presented in the same chapter of the gazetteer Xianchun Lin'an zhi. First of all, throughout the Wuyue 吳越 period (907-978 CE) the Tianzhu temple's name was "Five-Hundred Arhats Cloister" (Wubai luohan yuan 五百羅漢院) and it was only renamed by imperial decret to Tianzhu in 1020 CE in response to the request of Tiantai monk Ciyun Zunshi 慈雲遵式 (964-1032) who had been nominated as its abbot in 1015 CE.¹⁷ The construction of a building called *kanjing tang* 看經堂 ("Hall for Reading the Scriptures") was part of the expansion work at the Tianzhu monastery during his ambitious abbacy. Furthermore, a record written by Bao Qinzhi 鮑欽止 at the end of the eleventh century says explicitly that on behalf of the imperial court the Tianzhu monastery was divided into two, the Upper (上) and Lower (下) monasteries in 1023 CE, and from this time the Upper Tianzhu monastery was the location of the Guanyin image.¹⁸ Bao Qinzhi's record is also the earliest to mention that the new additional title "Efficacious Guanyin" (Linggan Guanyin 靈感觀音) was conferred upon the monastery in 1065 CE. Presented in this way, the statement implies that the sandalwood icon of Guanyin was previously located at the Lower Tianzhu monastery, and what was later called the Upper Tianzhu temple may originally have been just a remote hut at some distance from the monastic compound used by Tianzhu monks to pursue studies and meditation practices in isolation.¹⁹ The other incident concerning the mysterious recovery of the Guanyin icon sometime after 1125 CE may mask the fact of the original wooden icon's first loss and the installation of a substitute as compensation.²⁰ The substitute carved around 1125 CE could indeed have had a more

17 In 1015 CE, the name of the monastery was Lingshan 靈山. See the entry on the Lower Tianzhu Lingshan monastery 下竺靈山教寺 and Hu Su's 胡宿 (996-1067) record in Xianchun Lin'an zhi, chap. 80: 4a and 6a. ff.

18 See his record in Xianchun Lin'an zhi, chap. 80: 16b: 粵自晉末嘗為道場逮聖朝天聖始分上下方而觀音像所在歷載 "It is said that since the end of the Jin it was a ritual place until the imperial court – in the beginning of the Tiansheng era (1023 CE) – divided the upper from the lower (Tianzhu) site and which from then onwards was the location of the Guanyin image." Though his record, written on behalf of the Hangzhou prefect Chen Xuan 陳軒, is the earliest record that has come down to us, it does not mention the predecessor Zhang Quhua who allegedly welcomed the Guanyin image at the Fantian monastery in 998 CE.

19 The whole situation is quite confusing because scholars in general thought of the Upper Tianzhu monastery as being an independent one which was established earlier.

20 This was not the only loss to occur. According to the record of Huang Jin 黃潛 (1277-1357) the temple burned down again in 1337, see DeBlasi 1998: 170, and again in 1360, whereafter the grand councilor offered gold as reward to the person who recovered the image, see Yü 1992: 209.

feminine appearance due to the legend of princess Miaoshan that had become so popular by then.²¹

When one analyzes the contextual setting of the early eleventh century, the Lower Tiantzhu monastery, and especially its abbot Ciyun Zunshi, play a major role. As one of the two most celebrated Tiantai reformers, Ciyun Zunshi is well known for his Guanyin veneration and repentance practices. In 999 CE, during his tenure as abbot of the Baoyun Monastery 寶雲 (990-1002) in Mingzhou (modern Ningbo), he ordered the carving of a sandalwood Guanyin image and promoted the deity's worship as a means to transform vernacular religious practices.²² Zunshi personally left a record about the icon's consecration procedure, but this does not contain any comment on the circumstances of its execution. These are however vaguely summarized in the much later "Record of the Venerable Siming's Teachings and Practices" compiled by the Tiantai monk Zongxiao (宗曉, 1151-1214):²³

三師住寶雲。自幸得觀音幽贊。命匠造旃檀大悲像。像成工有誤折手執楊枝。師驚且恐。即自接之。不施膠漆而混合如故。即撰一十四願文。其略曰。己亥咸平二年四月。四明沙門遵式刻像。懼晦于後世。手題記云。沈淨月刻相貌。章淨修等須像財物。像成立于大法堂。召僧百人。奉行經法而證之。

Third:²⁴ The master lived at Baoyun [monastery]. Believing that [he] enjoyed discreet patronage from Guanyin, he called a craftsman to make a sandalwood icon of Dabei (Great Compassion [Guanyin]). When the image was completed, the willow twig held in the hand [of the image] was broken by mistake. The master was alarmed and frightened, but then accepted it. Without needing any glue or lacquer, [the broken] part was restored as if it had never been broken. Then [he] composed votive verses containing fourteen vows. His summary says: Second year, fourth month of the Xianping era (999 CE). The Siming *śramaṇa* Zunshi carved the image. Fearing that the later generations might not know [who made the image, he] inscribed this: Shen Jingyue carved the countenance; Zhang Jingxiu and others adorned the image with various accessories. The icon was installed in the Great Dharma Hall. He [Zunshi] summoned the monks, a hundred men [in all]. They professed to follow the Buddhist law and confirmed it.

The information given here is quite astounding and possibly close to the truth, as Zunshi is not depicted as being overconfident about his deeds but full of doubts. The modifications in the icon's appearance that were executed by Zunshi are clad in cryptic words. Assumptions about the result are, therefore, highly hypothetical. A

21 See Dudbridge 1978.

22 Stevenson 1999: 345. The intention was to eradicate popular blood sacrifice to local gods and ancestors through the promotion of Buddhist repentance practices.

23 Siming zunzhe jiao xing lu 四明尊者教行錄, T.1937.933a.4-14.

24 The whole entry lists four numinous traces from Ciyun Zunshi's life.

comparison of two Guanyin images, one with the standard Wuyue iconography at Hangzhou's Ciyun cave (plate 1) and the White-Robed Guanyin at the Yanxia cave (plate 2) possibly sheds light on how we are to understand the hints provided by Zunshi's record. The standard Wuyue iconography depicts Guanyin with a raised right hand grasping the willow twig in front of his chest whereas the White-Robed Guanyin representation holds both hands together and lowered in front of the body. This kind of modification is not too difficult to carve and the concept itself was already known from *arhat* and *bodhisattva* depictions from the Tang dynasty onwards.²⁵ We may surmise that the sandalwood icon finished by Zunshi at the Baoyun monastery was initially wrapped in a white silk cowl laid over head and body to cover the modifications in its iconography.

In his record on the Lower Tianzhu monastery, the prefect of Hangzhou, Hu Su 胡宿 (996-1067), wrote that Zunshi made another sandalwood image of Guanyin and installed it in the centre of the *samādhi* hall.²⁶ Apart from this meagre information there are no further references anywhere about the icon. It seems to be the case that information concerning Zunshi's role was carefully played down or deliberately avoided in order to leave room for the establishment of a streamlined myth and the circulation of the story about former king's dream of the white-robed deity visiting him.

Regarding the innovative visual concept, it seems likely that, in addition to certain Dhāraṇī texts, a variety of visual imagery from the North-western regions were influential in shaping Guanyin's new guise in southeastern China. This influx of imagery from Central Asia presumably became available after the unification of the empire under the Song dynasty in 960 CE and 978 CE, respectively, in the Wuyue region. The earliest extant examples of this new visual concept of Guanyin are two small clay figurines (plate 3) excavated from a relic chamber on the third floor of the Ruiguang pagoda 瑞光塔 in Suzhou together with a wooden box that holds an inscription dated 1013 CE.²⁷ The two identical figurines are meticulously painted and show the standing bodhisattva with a white head cowl covering the body down to the knees and colourful clothing beneath it. They keep their hands lowered and crossed at the wrists, clasping prayer beads in front of the body like the White-Robed Guanyin sculpture in the Yanxia cave (plate 2). Their existence strongly suggests the spread of a new Guanyin cult which could well be connected to Zunshi's stay in Suzhou in 1015 CE, where he delivered several lectures at the Kaiyuan monastery attended by thousands of listeners.²⁸

25 See Wang 2005: 335, fig. 6.11.a (Longhu pagoda), and 138, fig. 3.4, (Dunhuang Mogao cave no. 217). Cave 217 was excavated after 708 CE, see Wang 2005: 139, and 412, note 83.

26 See Xianchun Lin'an zhi, chap. 80: 6b: 又造旃檀觀音像置三昧堂中 慈相穆如智者之遺法也 "He again made a sandalwood image of Guanyin and installed it in the centre of the *samādhi* hall. Its compassionate appearance is as profound as the *dharmā* transmitted by Zhiyi."

27 Suzhou Museum 2006: 186. The clay sculptures are 38 cm in height.

28 Stevenson 1999: 348.

To sum up, the entire narrative about the Upper Tianzhu Monastery's foundation lacks historicity and seems to have been consciously construed by Tiantai monks to legitimize the existence of a venerated icon with unfamiliar iconographic traits. The spreading of this patched version was facilitated by the fact that books dating to the end of the Tang dynasty and the Five Dynasties period in the imperial library had fallen victim to a fire in the early spring of 1015 CE.²⁹ This incident and the lack of historical material made the Wuyue kings ideal subjects for portrayal in later Buddhist historiography as exemplary pious Buddhist disciples, who could be employed as proponents of Guanyin's new guise. In order to better understand the evolution of the new engulfing Guanyin imagery, we have to refrain from two premises: the first being the notion that the so-called White-Robed Guanyin was per se a female deity, and the second to take writings about dreams and visions as factual truth rather than as intentional retrospective projections in later Buddhist historical documents.

The Source of Discussion: Two Different Guanyin Sculptures at the Yanxia Cave

The Yanxia cave 煙霞洞 in Hangzhou's Southern Hills 南山 has two life-size sculptures of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara (plate 2 and 4) standing on small plinths a meter above ground level on each side of the entrance patio.³⁰ Because there are several inscriptions dating to the Wuyue period (907-978 CE), all the high relief sculptures were generally believed to be carved in the same period.³¹ This assumption is neither supported by iconography nor by style. Monumental stone sculptures from the Wuyue kingdom form a coherent and homogenous corpus of artwork with a distinct stylistic pattern and iconography in which an earlier and a later phase can clearly be distinguished. The popularity of Avalokiteśvara in the Wuyue kingdom is attested by several images of different sizes carved in stone in high and low relief. Early Wuyue carvings favour the Bodhisattva as a solitary iconic figure and not necessarily as a member of the "Pure Land Triad" (Buddha Amitābha with Mahāsthāmaprāpta and Avalokiteśvara) which is more common in the later phase.³²

29 Kurz 2003: 194. Kurz writes that also Ouyang Xiu had to rely on oral information from relatives in Jiangnan to write his "Historical Records of the Five Dynasties" (Wudai shiji 五代史記) and the "New History of the Five Dynasties" (Xin wudai shi 新五代史), see p. 197.

30 There are remains of narrative scenes carved in low relief on the right side of the entrance, unrelated to the sculptures in high relief which have mostly obliterated them. These small-size reliefs indicate that the original composition and structure of the cave's artwork was reworked at a later time.

31 An inscription once mentioned the donor Wu Yanshuang 吳延爽, brother-in-law of king Qian Wenmu 錢文穆王 (r. 932-941) of Wuyue 吳越, who had an arhat carved in a niche. No inscription or source ever mentioned the monumental Guanyin sculptures. See Howard 1985: 10.

32 In the middle of the tenth century another variant of the Avalokiteśvara image in *rājalīlāsana* posture became prominent as a solitary figure in Wuyue. This type is commonly called "Water-moon Avalokiteśvara" (Shuiyue Guanyin 水月觀音).

Though Avalokiteśvara is depicted holding his standard attributes, the willow twig and the water vessel, some peculiarities make the Wuyue images distinct. They show Avalokiteśvara in *padmāsana* on a stepped lotus pedestal with a tiny water vessel on the palm of his left hand in his lap and holding the willow sprig in his raised and twisted right hand close to the chest while the twig leaves cover his right shoulder (plate 1).³³ This Wuyue depiction of Avalokiteśvara was still appreciated during the early Song dynasty (plate 5).³⁴ Since they are inconsistent in style and concept with the Wuyue remains at other sites around Hangzhou, both Yanxia Avalokiteśvara sculptures must have been carved in a later period.³⁵ A proper dating of these sculptures is, therefore, crucial to the whole topic discussed in this paper.

In addition to the above-mentioned Wuyue period donor inscriptions and the legend about the origin of the *arhat* sculptures in the Yanxia grotto,³⁶ chapter 78 of the “Lin’an Gazetteer from the Xianchun Era” (Xianchun Lin’an zhi 咸淳臨安志)³⁷, contains an entry on the renaming of the Yanxia Cloister into Qingxiu Cloister 清修院. On this basis we can conclude that the life-size Avalokiteśvara sculptures were carved around 1065 CE.³⁸ This fact has been ignored until now.

清修院

廣順三年吳越王建舊額煙霞。治平二年改今額有煙霞洞大如屋窈深莫見其極後晉開運元年僧彌洪遇異人指示其處中有石刻羅漢六尊錢氏別刻十二尊足成之洞有巖曰象鼻有石垂下若手曰佛手巖

-
- 33 There is no extant Wuyue stone sculpture of Avalokiteśvara that still preserves the proper attributes without deterioration. The earliest monumental solitary sculpture is at Shilong cave, very close to the Ciyun cave which Angela Howard dates to 942 CE, see Howard 1985: 11. My own investigation shows that the Ciyun cave cannot have been constructed before 965 CE.
- 34 The low relief carving of Avalokiteśvara is found in the vicinity of the Tianzhu monastery at Feilaifeng 飛來峰, Hangzhou, dated by inscription to 1022 C.E. It should be noted that unlike Wuyue Bodhisattva images, this one is clad in a long shawl that covers the arms completely, a feature that became popular in Northern China during the tenth century, see the three bodhisattvas at Dunhuang Mogao cave 220, north wall of the passageway, renovated 925 CE, published in Ning 2004: color plate no 12.
- 35 The emotional quality in facial expression as seen in the Yanxia Guanyin sculptures was nowhere achieved in Wuyue stone carvings. There is no reason to assume that professional artisans could switch the style and content in which they were trained, and produce monumental artifacts in such high quality without long-term preparation in artistic skills. The ideology behind such sculptures also presupposes the presence of an established authority who promoted this new ideology.
- 36 The story is about the monk Mihong 彌洪 who “opened up the mountain” (*kai shan* 開山) for Buddhist practices and found the cave, see the entry on Yanxia dong in Xianchun Lin’an zhi, chap. 29: 6a.
- 37 The gazetteer was compiled by Qian Yueyou 潛說友 in 1268. Reading the gazetteer, it becomes quite clear that Qian Yueyou relied solely on other written sources and never visited the places he describes himself. Had he done so, he could not have ignored the impressive Guanyin sculptures at the cave’s entrance.
- 38 Xianchun Lin’an zhi, chap. 78: 11b.

Qingxiu cloister:

In the third year of Guangshun (953 CE) the Wuyue king established the [cloister] formerly called Yanxia. In the second year of the Zhiping era (1065 CE) it was given the present name. The Yanxia cave is huge as a house. It is so obscure and deep [inside] that its farthest end cannot be seen. In the first year of Kaiyun era of the Later Jin (944 CE) the monk Mihong met an extraordinary person who showed him his place which had stone carvings of six *arhats* inside. The [ruling] Qian clan had another twelve images carved to complete it. The cave has a boulder called ‘Elephant’s trunk’ and another one hanging down like an arm, hence the name ‘Buddha’s hand boulder’.

An imperial edict renaming a site was usually presented with a lavish donation of money to refurbish it properly. The date 1065 CE is of special interest as it actually coincides with the efforts of Shen Gou 沈遘 (1028-1067)³⁹, the prefect of Hangzhou in the early 1060s, to strengthen the Tiantai school’s 天台宗 position, which in contrast to the favoured Chan school 禪宗 did not receive much assistance from the Imperial court. It was Shen Gou who petitioned the imperial court to convert the Upper Tianzhu Monastery from a Meditation (*chan* 禪) back into a Teaching (*jiao* 教) institution affiliated to the Tiantai school. He also recommended the monastery to be named Efficacious Guanyin Monastery (Linggan guanyin si 靈感觀音寺). These endeavours were all due to the perceived efficaciousness of the sandalwood icon, which, according to the monastery’s record, saved the people of Hangzhou from flood in 1065 CE.⁴⁰ Shen Gou removed the Chan Buddhist abbot from the Upper Tianzhu monastery and replaced him with Biancai Yuanjing, a second-generation *dharma* heir of Tiantai master Ciyun Zunshi 慈雲遵式 (964-1032), the famous former abbot of the Lower Tianzhu 下天竺寺 Monastery nearby. He received further assistance from prime minister Zeng Gongliang 曾公亮 (998-1078) who personally donated a large amount of money to the monastery in 1065 CE. In fact, the sources document a concerted action to give prominence to the Tiantai school. The Yanxia grotto’s White-Robed Guanyin sculpture neatly fits into this framework. Most probably it represents a contemporaneous version of the genuine sandalwood icon at the Upper Tianzhu Monastery. This icon must have held an elevated position exclusively in the Tiantai school’s religious concepts and practices during the eleventh century. The question arises as to why there are two different life-size sculptures of Bodhisattva Guanyin opposite each other at the entrance to the Yanxia cave. It may be surmised that such a unique representational entity served a specific ideological purpose. Both sculptures carry a depiction of Buddha Amitābha in their crowns and thus their identity cannot be doubted. Both represent the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. It now becomes clear that a replacement of the deity’s two intrinsic

39 See his biography in Songshi 30.331.10652-3.

40 See Yü 2001: 361.

iconographical “markers” had taken place. The one on the right side of the entrance (plate 4) carries the age-old, conventional attributes – the willow twig in his right and a water vessel in his left hand – while the other (plate 2) is endowed with two entirely different attributes in a novel combination: a lengthy shawl or cape worn over head and crown while fully covering the arms down to the wrists, and prayer beads (*shuzhu* 數珠, “counting beads”)⁴¹ in the lowered hands, in this case provided with long finger nails, a feature characterizing male members of the Chinese literati class (plate 6).⁴² If the proposed date of 1065 CE for the carving of the Yanxia cave Guanyin sculptures is accepted, and the other governmental activity promoting the Tiantai school in those days is acknowledged, an answer to our question could be that the sculptures are a monumental visual statement of a keenly anticipated imperial approval of Avalokiteśvara’s new iconography as equal to the ancient one.

This interpretation has consequences on a wider scale. It means that the concept of the White-Robed Guanyin in reality became popular in the first half of the eleventh century. The idea that it had already been in vogue since at least the early tenth century has to be questioned. Furthermore, the historical context, as discussed here, directs the focus on to the Tiantai school and its eminent reformers, Ciyun Zunshi and Siming Zhili 四明知禮 (960-1028) who shaped and popularized Tiantai practices in a way never seen before.

Several Steps back in History: Traces in the Development towards the New Conception

Before turning to a discussion of the local *episteme* in Hangzhou in the early eleventh century, I wish to argue against the notion that the concept of the White-Robed Guanyin was meant to replace or transform an ancient vernacular Chinese cult in which a female deity played the central role.⁴³ On the contrary, I am convinced that, from its very beginnings, Guanyin’s novel appearance conveyed inherently and exclusively Buddhist ideals. To better understand the process of visual transformation we can turn first to possible Indian origins and analyse the impetus from those sources.

The distinction between two categories – purity and impurity – plays an important role in the ancient Indian value system and has left its impact on all Indian religions. Deduced from this concept, the colour white, which is also associated with god Brahma and called *brāhmaṇa-varṇa*, symbolically represents the highest stratum in different units of classification as it qualifies the level of purity achieved on a societal or spiritual level.⁴⁴ Buddhist texts employ the polarity of white (*śukla*) and black

41 Also called *fozhu* 佛珠, “Buddha beads”, or *nianzhu* 念珠, “reciting beads”, skt. *aṣṣamālā*.

42 The pre-eminence of the Confucian literati class in Northern Song society cannot be underestimated, see Welter 2006.

43 This is argued by Yü 2001: 407-419, who proposes as antecedents indigenous goddesses such as Nüwa 女媧, and by Idema 2000: 205-226.

44 See the discussion on colors in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* by Kintaert 2005.

(*kṛṣṇa*) symbolically for the categories pure-impure (*anāsrava-sāsrava*; *śubha-aśubha*), good-evil (*kuśala-akuśala*) and relate these pairs to basic Buddhist notions of happiness and suffering (*sukha-duḥkha*).⁴⁵ In accord with the belief in transmigration, white connotes furthermore disconnection from mundane life, renewal and new existence as additional meanings linked to the notion of purity. In succession, all Indian religions have developed sets of purification rituals which form the core of diverse religious practices and in this way strict asceticism is esteemed the ultimate form of religious purification practice.⁴⁶ In this perspective, an undyed and stainless piece of cloth worn by a Brahmin ascetic underscores in visual terms the aspect of untaintedness by worldly contaminations and the aim to eliminate karmic bonds. Integrated into Buddhist narratives, this pre-Buddhist ascetic ideal, for instance, plays a central part in the Mahājanaka-jātaka – visually presented in a wall painting in Ajanta cave No.1 – where a white-robed ascetic, holding prayer beads in his left hand, gives instructions about renunciation to the king (plate 7). It should not come as a surprise then, that in ancient India Buddhist lay practitioners (*upāsakas*, *upāsikās*), following a set of disciplinary vows, wore white robes to indicate their determination to follow an ascetic lifestyle close to that of Buddhist monks.⁴⁷ As early as the time of emperor Aśoka lay devotees were called the “white-robed ones”.⁴⁸

Still the question remains: how to relate this ascetic concept to Avalokiteśvara, the *bodhisattva* of compassion? A fragmented Sanskrit manuscript, written in Central Asian Brāhmī script on birch-bark, provides us with a missing link. Discovered in a cave at Qizil on the northern route of the Silk Road by Albert von Le Coq in 1906 and translated into German by Dieter Schlingloff in 1961,⁴⁹ this treatise, though clearly belonging to the Hīnayāna school of the Sarvāstivādins, introduces new methods of visualization practices unknown to earlier Buddhist meditation concepts and explicitly mentions the visualization of a white-robed (*avadāta*) woman as the embodiment of compassion (*karuṇā*) in the heart of the practitioner in three different instances.⁵⁰ In visual terms, this Hīnayāna concept of compassion was obviously based on the Indian white-robed female lay devotee. The idea that the one who restrains personal consumption cultivates compassion with all sentient beings is a logical consequence and seems to have been prevalent from early beginnings.

The Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra provides us with yet another famous serene white-robed exemplar in a Mahāyāna context. According to this *sūtra*, the 120-year-old

45 See Slavik 1994: 42.

46 For a discussion of the sources for Indian asceticism see Bronkhorst 1998.

47 The Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra (Dazhidu lun 大智度論 T.1509, *juan* 13: 158c.15-160c.16, explains the precepts for the “White-Robed Ones” (*baīyi* 白衣, *avadātavasana*); on the five vows an *upāsaka* observes all the time (159c.23-160a.4) and the eight vows observed on the six fasting days each month (159b.25-159c.13) see Seiwert 2003: 153.

48 See Guruge 1994: 44-45.

49 See Schlingloff 1964.

50 See Schlingloff 1964: 136-137, 144 and 171.

Brahmin ascetic Subhadra was the last man to be converted by Buddha Śākyamuni as he lay on his deathbed. Due to his powers accumulated from life-long ascetic practices, Subhadra achieved enlightenment and entered *nirvāna* even before Śākyamuni by inflaming himself from within.⁵¹ In many Gandhāran relief stelae depicting the *parinirvāṇa* scene, a completely muffled Subhadra, sitting in deep *samādhi* on the floor, is placed prominently in front of Śākyamuni's deathbed (plate 8). It is this pictorial motif that became the prototype of an ascetic in Central Asia and China, a figure clad in white robes with his head wrapped in a scarf or cowl.⁵² The head covering became an appropriate sign for deep meditation,⁵³ whereas the white dress covering the whole body represented the ascetic life-style and the achieved state of purity resulting from it.

Though we have no pictorial evidence, it seems likely that at quite an early stage these different entities were fused with the ideological conception of Avalokiteśvara in Central Asia. As early as the sixth century the Buddhist scripture “Dhāraṇī Miscellany” (Tuoluoni zaji 陀羅尼雜集, T.1336) describes a manifestation of Avalokiteśvara as “white-robed” (*baiyi* 白衣), sitting on a lotus with his hair piled up high and holding a lotus flower in one hand, a water vessel in the other.⁵⁴ Despite the lotus flower, which is already the symbol of utmost purity, the three other mentioned characteristics, the white (loin) cloth, the piled-up hair and the water vessel *kamaṇḍalu* clearly describe the appearance of an Indian ascetic. The same text tells us that images representing this manifestation were used in specific *dhāraṇī* rituals to remove karmic bonds as well as physical ailments.⁵⁵ Regarding ritual practice, the later “Dhāraṇī sūtra of the Thousand-eyed Thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara”⁵⁶, translated by Zhitong 智通 during the Zhenguan reign period (627-49 CE) of the Tang dynasty,

51 See the translated versions in Waldschmidt 1948: 224-238.

52 The depiction of a covered head in this case must have been a necessary adaptation to the conditions of the barren Central Asian environment with no trees beneath which to practice long sessions of meditation. See the identical depiction of Subhadra in the Dunhuang mural from the Sui dynasty (581-617), cave 29, published in Baker 1998: 71, pl. 4, and the discussion in Ebert 1985: 85.

53 I thank Petra Roesch for pointing this out to me.

54 See chapter 6 of the Tuoluoni zaji 陀羅尼雜集, T.1336.612b.17-19: 行此陀羅尼法。應以白淨若細布。用作觀世音像。身著白衣坐蓮華上。一手捉蓮華一手捉澡瓶。使髮高豎。“Follow this dhāraṇī method. [You] need a white, clean, fine cotton cloth. Use it to create an image of Guanshiyin. The body is clad in white clothes sitting on a lotus flower. One hand holds a lotus flower, one hand a water vessel. Show the hair piled up high.” The identical phrase is again used in chapter 10, T.1336.635a.23-24. This source was already mentioned by Stein 1986: 28, and Yü 2001: 169-172. We should be clear that the Indian idea of “white-robed” indicates the men's loincloth and nothing else, whereas in China it could only be imagined as something covering the whole body.

55 Some small gilded bronze statuettes from the early sixth century showing Avalokiteśvara standing with a lotus stalk and a water vessel are still extant.

56 T.1057, Qianyan qianbi Guanshiyin pusa tuoluoni shenzhou jing 千眼千臂觀世音菩薩陀羅尼神咒經.

advised practitioners explicitly to put on white clothes when holding the “Feast of the Eight Precepts” (*bajiezhai*/八戒齋) on the fifteenth day of every month, promising that chanting Avalokiteśvara’s “Great Compassion Dhāraṇī” (Dabei zhou 大悲咒) 108 times will eradicate all sins and hindrances.⁵⁷ In the fourth chapter of Atikūṭa’s Dhāraṇīsamgraha,⁵⁸ Avalokiteśvara’s eleven-headed manifestation further expounds powerful spells which, he declares, he obtained as an *upāsaka* in a far distant era, and in the course of lecturing he instructs the practitioner to use prayer (i.e. counting) beads for effectively reciting the spells.⁵⁹

These examples demonstrate that all necessary components for creating the novel iconography can already be traced in texts of the early Tang dynasty. Yet we cannot assume that visionary descriptions in texts imply the presence of a contemporary visual medium in Chinese sanctuaries of the kind we know from much later periods in Chinese history. Though Avalokiteśvara appears already as a white-robed person in a dream in Sengyou’s 僧祐(445-518) biography of Guṇabhadra (394-468),⁶⁰ we should acknowledge the difference between the appearance of a deity in written narratives and the prescribed standard iconographical rendering of an icon to be venerated by the public. The only extant but deteriorated scroll paintings from Murtuk (plate 9) and Toyok in Central Asia that show a completely muffled white-robed emanation of Avalokiteśvara as a secondary figure to the central standard iconic image of the Bodhisattva most probably date to the 10th-11th centuries.⁶¹ We have no evidence of earlier images depicting a white-robed manifestation of this kind in connection with Avalokiteśvara.⁶²

In many Chinese Buddhist scriptures, such as the Lotus-sūtra, Avalokiteśvara functions as an exterior savior to the threatened devotee whose supplications he hears and responds to. In no way is his compassionate attitude based on the cultivation of ascetic practices, an idea undisputed in India. To fully comply with the complex, genuinely Indian notion of this bodhisattva and to convey his ascetic character in visual terms was, indubitably, a great challenge to Chinese artists as there did not exist any such visual “terminology”. Though they emulated in detail the Indian model during the Tang dynasty (618-907), the visual idiom and its encoded meanings may not have been grasped thoroughly due to a lack of familiarity with the Indian concept

57 T.1057.85a.18-23, see McBride 2008: 71.

58 Tuoluoni ji jing 陀羅尼集經 (“Collection of Spells”), T.901, compiled ca. 654CE.

59 T.901.813a.4-5, and T.901.813a.27-28.

60 Chu sanzang jijì 出三藏記集, juan 14, T.2145.105c.23; see the discussion in Stevenson 1987: 225.

61 I thank Lilla Russell-Smith for this information based on recent research.

62 In Dunhuang Mogao cave no. 61, integrated into a scene depicting Wutai shan, we find a narrative depiction of Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī dressed in white garments and head-cover like a lay practitioner while meeting the Indian monk Buddhapāli. The cave was excavated between 1947-1951, see the discussion in Heller 2008: 29-50; see the depiction of the detail from the Wutai shan map, p.45, fig. 2.6.

behind it. Asceticism as an ultimate value and the visual allusions to Indian asceticism could be apprehended only with difficulty and not easily transplanted into Chinese culture. This is especially true for the transmission of the visual forms. To the knowledgeable reader, the tendency towards emphasizing the ideal of personal efforts and restraint was already discernible in early Buddhist scriptures by the subtle change in the perception of Avalokiteśvara's embodied virtues which differ conspicuously in the two most influential *sūtras*, the Lotus and the Avataṃsaka. The primary difference lies in the proposed methods to achieve salvation, which puts "the active way of learning and meditation of the Gaṇḍavyūha (a section of the Avataṃsaka), and the passive way of faith and devotion of the *Lotus*" as polarities into tension.⁶³ Needless to say, the popularity of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara in China is generally accepted as deriving mainly if not solely from his salvific capacities displayed in the Lotus-sūtra. Yet, the Lotus-sūtra also emphasizes merit-gaining through cultivating compassion as an essential part of Buddhist practice.

It was the precarious situation during the late ninth and tenth century that finally reorientated the remaining Buddhist monastic communities in China. The unstable social and political constellations started with the Huichang 會昌 persecution of Buddhists in 845 CE and continued with constant turmoil towards the end of the Tang dynasty (906 CE) and between the contesting rulers of the smaller states thereafter.⁶⁴ Buddhist traditions were broken and scattered, and monastic libraries burned down. The vacuum left by these turbulent times fuelled quite contrary approaches to the common Buddhist heritage; the dominant Fayen Chan school 法眼禪宗 in the Wuyue kingdom supported the reassessment of Buddhist teachings, culminating in a reformulation of and a stronger emphasis on religious practices in the later half of the tenth century. By contrast, the Linji Chan school 臨濟禪宗 preferred a strict rejection of traditional teaching methods and practices, emphasizing their mode as antinomian and antischolastic.⁶⁵ As we will see, this was also the period in which new visual concepts of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara could arise beyond the former limitations.

The struggle to create an all-encompassing visual expression of Avalokiteśvara's qualities becomes obvious in a painting from Dunhuang dating approximately to the mid-tenth century (plate 10). We are confronted with a conflation of Avalokiteśvara's inherited and novel aspects into a single visual idiom, suggesting a context in which the supposedly unfamiliar concept of a White-Robed Avalokiteśvara was not fully accepted without the inherited attributes, still indispensable for the correct identification of the deity.⁶⁶ In opposition to this holistic or integrative visual concept of the

63 See Läänemets 2006: 331-332. Läänemets emphasizes the personal efforts of the practitioner as the decisive moment in the Gaṇḍavyūha in marked contrast to the Lotus-sūtra, which postulates the hearing of Avalokiteśvara's name as the most effective way to salvation.

64 The Zhejiang region, furthermore, faced a peasant rebellion in 859 and the rebellion of Huang Chao 黃巢 (874-884).

65 For a thorough analysis, see Welter 2006.

66 This unique presentation of Avalokiteśvara retains the attributes of his ancient visual concept in

bodhisattva exists what we might call a conceptual counter-image of Avalokiteśvara, stemming from approximately the same time but from the south-eastern Wuyue kingdom. This unique, diminutive sandalwood shrine (plate 11) dating to 961 CE at the latest shows Avalokiteśvara as the central icon without the commonly known attributes. Instead, he holds prayer beads in his slightly raised hands and is clad in a long shawl which does not cover his crowned chignon. This peculiar shrine is exceptional as it does not correlate with stylistic idioms in Buddhist art known from this region and the Wuyue period in particular; yet it conveys stylistic features that remind us of tenth-century wall and scroll paintings from the north-western region of China.⁶⁷ The little child pilgrim Sudhana depicted to the left of Avalokiteśvara links this small shrine to the Gaṇḍavyūha section of the Avataṃsaka sūtra which emphasizes personal efforts on the part of the practitioner in his pursuit of enlightenment.⁶⁸ The prayer beads as a visible attribute represent these personal efforts and are immediately understood as such by the ardent disciple. This indispensable tool for prayer sessions indicates perfectly penance practices which consist of, among other activities, the continuous chanting of shorter *mantras* and longer *dhāraṇīs*.

The discovery of the small Guanyin shrine provides us also with new information about the Chan Buddhist state preceptor of the Wuyue kingdom, Tiantai Deshao 天台德韶 (891-972), who supervised the ongoing construction of the Huqiu pagoda in Suzhou where the Guanyin shrine was found in a relic chamber. We know scarcely anything about his teachings as he did not leave written documents behind like his famous disciple, the scholar-monk Yongming Yanshou 永明延壽 (904-975), whose ample commentaries on Buddhist teachings had a great impact on later generations.⁶⁹ Both had been disciples of the Chan master Fayen Wenyi 法眼文益 (885-958) who was particularly influenced by Huayan 華嚴 (Avataṃsaka) teachings.⁷⁰ An entry on Tiantai Deshao's disciple Shiyun 師蘊 in Zanning's 贊寧 (919-1001) Song Gaoseng zhuan 宋高僧傳 (dated 988 CE) mentions that they visited Mount Wutai 五臺山 (here called Qingliang shan 清涼山) together during the Longde 龍德 era (921-922 CE) of the Liang 梁 Dynasty.⁷¹ It seems quite probable that the small shrine was

China (emblem of Buddha Amitābha in the crown, the willow twig and the water vessel) and combines them with a white outer robe covering his crest and full body (a visual idiom of the White-Robed Guanyin) like a monk's *kāśāya* while sitting leisurely in front of a large full-moon disc encircling his entire body (a visual idiom of the "Water-Moon Guanyin").

67 See examples from Dunhuang (Ning 2004: 28, plate 12) and Shanxi (Chai 1997: 167, plates 25, 26).

68 A jade Sudhana figure was excavated from the underground chamber of the Leifeng Pagoda 雷峰塔 in Hangzhou dating to the Wuyue period, see Zhejiangsheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 2002: 4-32.

69 For more information see Welter, Albert 2011. Yongming Yanshou's Conception of Chan Orthodoxy in the Zongjing Lu.

70 Brose 2009: 246. Since the Tang dynasty the Wutaishan area has been the centre of Huayan teachings.

71 See Brose 2009: 187, note 331, and Song Gaoseng zhuan, juan 23, T.2061.860a.16-17.

originally carved in the Wutaishan region and taken back to Wuyue as a pilgrimage item, either by Tiantai Deshao himself or by some other Wuyue monk.

In 953 CE, Deshao had lost texts of the Buddhist Tiantai tradition brought back from Japan to China and reinvigorated the Tiantai school with its focus on the Lotus-sūtra, Avalokiteśvara veneration and repentance practices.⁷² The importance of Tiantai repentance practice was significant for Yongming Yanshou as well who is known to have recited Avalokiteśvara's "Great Compassion Dhāraṇī" six times a day.⁷³ Their activities make it clear that the distinction between different Buddhist schools in the Wuyue kingdom can by no means be drawn as sharply as later sources try to make us believe. On the contrary, there was in fact mutual influence driven by the intention to preserve the full range of Buddhist teachings and practices.

More than just a Strategy for Survival: Tiantai Reforms in the Early Song Dynasty

The surrender of the Wuyue kingdom to the Song empire in 978 CE had a huge impact on the fate of Buddhist institutions centred in Southeast China as the imperial court, located in Kaifeng in the North, brought the former direct access to political and financial patronage to an abrupt end. The newly established ruling elite of non-local Confucian bureaucrats was more or less hostile towards the "foreign" Buddhist religion and its institutions. The situation became worse after a riot organized by a Buddhist monk in Hangzhou in 985 CE.⁷⁴ In spite of this general aversion to Buddhist institutions, the Linji Chan school remained unaffected and was even promoted by the powerful Song official Yang Yi 楊億 (974-1020) at the imperial court.⁷⁵ In a political climate in which the ruling class preferred a Buddhist school which pursued teaching concepts that entirely contradicted and even abolished core values of the Tiantai school like traditional scholasticism and ritual practices, the difficulty in preserving the Tiantai school's heritage must have been palpable for those concerned.⁷⁶

72 See the article of Brose 2006 (2008): 21-62.

73 "The Record of Self-Cultivation of Chan Master Zhijue" (Zhijue chanshi zixing lu 智覺禪師自行錄, XZJ.1232) lists 108 daily acts among which the recitation of the "Great Compassion Dhāraṇī" serves "to repent for the sins of all sentient beings in the Dharma Realm, which they commit with their six senses", see Yü 2001: 275, and Reis-Habito 1991: 43-44, as well as Reis-Habito 1993: 320.

74 Huang 1999: 295.

75 The *Jingde chuandenglu* 景德傳燈錄 ("Jingde-Era Lamp Transmission Record", T.2076), originally compiled by the Wuyue monk Daoyuan 道原 of the Fayen Chan school in 1004, was edited under the supervision of Yang Yi and issued in 1009. Contrary to Daoyuan, Yang Yi conceived Chan Buddhism as "a special practice outside the teaching" (*jiaowai biexing* 教外別行), see Welter 2008: 38.

76 The bureaucrats wielded more political power when emperor Zhenzong ascended the throne in 998 CE. In the words of Albert Welter, this new breed of officials was "less enamored with the stuffy ritualism associated with older Tang Buddhist traditions, more enticed by the punchy

Despite the officials' critical attitude, however, the co-operation on a local level among government bureaucrats and Buddhist clergy worked smoothly to the benefit of the people.⁷⁷ In fact, the impact that Buddhist monks had on the morality of the common people was appreciated by Confucian scholars; in this regard especially, the Tiantai tradition contributed a wider range of communal religious practices that integrated lay practitioners than any other Buddhist school.

Based on the Lotus-sūtra's teachings, the cultivation of compassion was promoted by the Tiantai school and taken as the paramount means of ensuring salvation. Since the time of its founder Zhiyi 智顓 (538-597), the Tiantai school had advocated the conferral of bodhisattva precepts on lay practitioners and emphasized repentance rites (*baichan* 拜懺) as a useful means to generate self-cultivation. Among other ritual manuals, Zhiyi composed the "Repentance for the Invocation of Avalokiteśvara" (Qing Guanshiyin chanfa 請觀世音懺法)⁷⁸, a rite lasting forty-nine days for monks and twenty-one days for lay practitioners. During this procedure the performer identifies himself with the compassion and omniscience as powers of salvation of the bodhisattva and removes not only his own obstructions but those of all sentient beings in the six realms.⁷⁹ Zunshi elaborated and expanded this rite, which had once effected his cure from a severe illness and had also contributed to his enlightenment experience. He published a new and longer version of this repentance rite soon after the consecration of the first sandalwood sculpture of Guanyin that he had ordered.⁸⁰

Both eleventh-century Tiantai reformers, Siming Zhili and Ciyun Zunshi, composed extensive ritual tracts, which upon close examination express a variety of their concerns. While many of Zhili's writings belong to the category of defining and defending Tiantai orthodox teachings against other interpretations within the Tiantai school itself, Zunshi's work devises practical schemes for Tiantai orthopraxy by expanding inherited ritual tracts and creating new ones. Their personal comments attached to some tracts reveal a clear insight into the normative crisis they were facing and a firm intention to determinedly tackle the challenges of their age. Lamenting the decay of Buddhist moral values and discipline within monastic communities, they were deeply, and with good reason, concerned about the survival of Buddhist practices in general. Though written some decades later, Su Shi's highly critical résumé of the Buddhist clergy of his time is quite illuminating and sums up how much Buddhist core values were being neglected:

rhetoric and enigmatic exchanges attributed to the new Chan-style dialogues". See Welter 2006: 171.

77 See Halperin 1997: 292-296.

78 In the *Guoqing bailu* 國清百錄, T1934.795b.16-796a.3.

79 Stevenson 1986: 74, note 92.

80 "Samādhi Rite for the Dhāraṇī that Eliminates Poison and Harm by Invoking Avalokiteśvara" (Qing Guanshiyin xiaofu duhai tuoluoni jing sanmei yi 請觀世音菩薩消伏毒害陀羅尼三昧儀, T.1949).

To fast and observe the monastic rules, to recite the scriptures, to construct pagodas and temples – these are the activities through which Buddhists should spread their teachings day and night. But presently many disciples consider it better to cultivate no-mind than to fast and observe the monastic rules, better to ‘be free of words’ than to recite the scriptures, and better to ‘do nothing’ than to construct pagodas and temples. Inside themselves they have no-mind, their mouths have no words, and their bodies no actions. All they do is eat to the full and relax. Thus they greatly cheat the true intentions of the Buddha.⁸¹

Realizing that the preservation of Buddhist practices were not even guaranteed within monastic communities, Zunshi and Zhili felt the necessity to entrench them in the everyday life of lay practitioners. The greatest challenge the Tiantai monks were facing was the prevalent *Zeitgeist* of the early Northern Song period, shaped by the newly established meritocracy of literati officials. According to their understanding, the dominant scholastic Buddhist schools of the former Tang dynasty (618-906 CE), the Huayan and Tiantai, had been involved in the weakening of society and the demise of the dynasty.⁸² Lavishly sponsored by a Tang court and aristocracy inclined to opulence and grandiosity, these Buddhist schools were remembered for conducting pompous state rituals and maintaining vast monastic estates. The literati elite of the early eleventh century sought to distinguish clearly between all facets of the Song dynasty’s “culture” (*wen* 文) and the aristocratic culture of the Tang,⁸³ which for the Song represented degenerate self-indulgence and deceit. This approach contributed to a rejection of the sensuous allure of Tang aesthetics during the early Song dynasty and the promotion of a refined but unostentatious aesthetic as the characteristic idiom of Song culture, preferring to admire an austere demeanor instead.⁸⁴ All efforts made by the Tiantai monks Zunshi and Zhili to redefine Buddhist values and practices have to be viewed in the light of these premises. Following the guidelines of the ruling Song culture they reformulated the central ideas already inherent in the Buddhist value system, but adapted and shaped them by using innovative means and expressions. Their intention was to preserve Buddhist scholastic studies and repentance practices while stressing austerity and discipline as central aspects of the Tiantai Buddhist path in contrast to the Linji Chan school which not only repudiated scholastic studies and ritual practices but enforced discipline in lifestyle as well.

Already in 996 CE, Zunshi tried to revive the idea of a Pure Land society comprising exclusively members of the local Chinese elite in biannual gatherings at the Baoyun monastery in Mingzhou, but these gatherings ceased immediately after

81 Translated in Egan 1994: 165-166. Quote from the *Yanguan dabei ge ji* 鹽官大悲閣記, *Su Shi wenji* 蘇軾文集 12.387.

82 Welter 2008: 6.

83 Welter 2006: 215.

84 See Egan 2006: 4.

he left Mingzhou in 1002 CE.⁸⁵ His subsequent promulgation of Guanyin repentance practice could well have been a result of that failure, implying a turn towards the less sophisticated common lay practitioners. In the following years he developed a range of new ritual manuals for compassionate activities connected to the Guanyin cult. Among these are several versions of the rites of “feeding the hungry ghosts” (*shishi egui* 施食餓鬼), and the “release of living creatures” (*fangsheng* 放生). In later comments on Buddhist festivals, Zunshi criticized ordinary people who saw annual Buddhist performances as useful rites for mourning their family ancestors instead of as rites having a soteriology of their own, intended as pure charity generating the Mahāyāna spirit of universal compassion.⁸⁶ The obvious lack of understanding of Buddhist ethics presumably caused Zunshi and Zhili to start out with an ambitious project, having as its goal nothing less than the transformation of the entire society by transforming each individual into the Bodhisattva Guanyin. While essentially adhering to Tiantai principles, this idea implied a “verbal” reorientation of Zhiyi’s original concept of spiritual development as a series of six stages through which a practitioner progressively achieves the realization of his own innate Buddhahood.⁸⁷ Zhili gave this idea a more concrete form by stating explicitly in his “Repentance Ritual of the Thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara” that “We must know that the Great Compassion Guanyin is our original nature. As we now wish to return to this origin, we praise the origin and take vows.”⁸⁸ Bodhisattva Guanyin once again took a pivotal role in the proliferation of Tiantai Buddhist values and practices, but with certain amendments regarding his renewed identity. The striking element in the conception of Bodhisattva Guanyin now emphasized by the Tiantai school was the ascetic quality of his character as an inevitable requirement for generating purity and compassion. A few decades ahead of Zunshi, the eminent Wuyue scholar-monk Yongming Yanshou had already stated that the bodhisattva vocation required both assiduous ascetic discipline and compassionate activities to achieve progress on that very path.⁸⁹ Ascetic discipline in this context comprised daily meditation sessions and repentance practices as well as fasting (only one vegetarian meal in the forenoon).

The *bodhisattva* ideal itself required an expressive visual form capable of transmitting the important characteristics ascribed to Guanyin as immediately tangible to the practitioner. This was obviously not ensured by the inherited traditional

85 Pure Land practice, i.e. the determined focus on rebirth in the Pure Land of Buddha Amitābha, was initially not part of Tiantai practice but incorporated by Zunshi and Zhili as a proper and already popular means. The gathering emulated Huiyuan’s 慧遠 (336-416 CE) establishment of a Pure Land society, see Zürcher 1959: 219-33. In 978 CE, emperor Taizong granted Huiyuan the title *yuanwu* 圓悟 (“Perfectly Enlightened”) which led to a resurgence of such religious communities, see the discussion in Getz 1994: 239-244.

86 Stevenson 1999: 364-365.

87 Mohe zhiguan 摩訶止觀, chap. 1, T.1911.10b, see Getz 1994: 209.

88 Qianshouyan dabeixinzhou xingfa 千手眼大悲心咒行法, T.1950.974c.14-15: 仍須了知大悲觀音即我本性。今欲復本故稱本立願。 See also Yü 2001: 287, and Reis-Habito 1993: 333.

89 See Getz 1999: 484.

visual concept of Guanyin which stressed his royal character and healing powers represented by a willow twig and a water vessel. (plate 4). The new compelling image of the White-Robed Guanyin combined the ideas of royal power, ascetic prowess and altruistic compassion and fully resonated with the Tiantai religious ethos of the early eleventh century. The White-Robed Guanyin can be termed the visual epitome of Tiantai lay orthopraxy and, therefore, a reflection of the practitioner who envisions his own innate being, towards which he strives, in the image. The outward projection enhanced his inward striving to enact the part of Guanyin and become a “real personification” of the *bodhisattva*. In his ritual tracts Zunshi based his reasoning regarding the dynamics of ritual efficacy on the Chinese understanding of reciprocal action, i.e. of “stimulus” (*gan* 感) on the part of the practitioner and “response” (*ying* 應) on the part of the *dharma* principle which generates benefit in every sense.⁹⁰ This concept is rooted in the ancient Chinese perception of “cosmic workings” as expressed in the term *ganying* 感應 which is usually translated as “sympathetic resonance”.⁹¹ Mundane benefits and otherworldly protection for the living and the deceased had been earned from cosmic powers or harmful ghosts in exchange for offering sacrifices. The replacement of this with a Buddhist system of ritual performance and moral behaviour conducted by lay practitioners could enter popular consciousness and thereby transform the general idea of efficacious ritual action, now endowed with a decidedly moral overtone.

It is unlikely that Zunshi’s and Zhili’s ideas could have been disseminated beyond their own region and in such a short period, had there not been another ambitious and highly knowledgeable agent at hand, who understood that the essential values of the Tiantai school are beneficial for the whole society. This agent was Wang Qinruo 王欽若 (962-1025), the prefect of Hangzhou in 1019-1020 CE and former chancellor of emperor Zhenzong 真宗 (r. 997-1022). Though previously more inclined to Daoism, Wang Qinruo became a fervent missionary for the Tiantai school and did not hesitate to make use of religious manipulations.⁹² His past involvements at court probably enabled him to play a decisive role in creating the lore of the miraculously appearing and wonder-working sandalwood sculpture of the White-Robed Guanyin and in establishing the Upper Tianzhu monastery as a pilgrimage site. Deeply impressed by Zunshi, he became his powerful supporter at court and even persuaded the emperor

90 Stevenson 1999: 382. Modern usage would term it as “you receive nothing by giving nothing,” or more drastically as “no pain, no gain.”

91 Originally a theory of portents, it later embraced all kinds of impulses that work as stimuli (*gan*) which set off responses (*ying*) from cosmic forces, deities etc. See the long discussion in Sharf 2002: 77-133; also Campamy 1993: 264-65.

92 See Huang 1999: 303, and Stevenson 1999: 399, note 30. Wang Qinruo had helped Emperor Zhenzong to consolidate the dynasty by manipulating heavenly portents during the *fengshan* 封禪 ceremony on Mount Tai in 1008 CE. In this case revelatory dreams on the part of the emperor and the miraculous appearance of heavenly documents were as significant as the dream of the Wuyue king about the white-robed person visiting him and the miraculous appearance of the sandalwood icon.

to turn the Tianzhu monastery into a public monastery, to declare West Lake of Hangzhou a protected site for the release of living creatures, and finally, to officially incorporate Tiantai scriptures into the Buddhist canon.⁹³ Through Wang Qinruo's efforts Zunshi received the honorific title "Cloud of Loving Kindness" (*ciyun* 慈雲) from the emperor. Wang Qinruo and his wife donated over six million in cash to help expand the main temple hall of the Tianzhu monastery and other eminent scholar-officials followed suit with generous donations.⁹⁴

In 1015 CE, when Zunshi was installed as abbot of the Lingshan monastery 靈山寺 (later Tianzhu) in Hangzhou, the monastery was in a ruined state. Founded during the Sui dynasty by Zhenguan 真觀 (538-611), an eminent disciple of Tiantai founder Zhiyi, Zunshi felt blessed because he was able to promote again Tiantai teachings at this important sacred site.⁹⁵ Despite some local funding from the Hangzhou community, the reinstallation of Tiantai Buddhism that Zunshi had in mind was a difficult and almost impossible matter.

The attraction of a charismatic abbot was not enough to ensure continuity and sustainability of a monastery on a long-term basis. The mundane concern of establishing a consolidated economic perspective for the Tianzhu monastery to function even after their teacher's demise might not have been Zunshi's primary issue at all, but a farsighted literatus like Wang Qinruo, well-versed in financial and historical matters, had a different way of looking at the circumstances and of solving problems.

Having supervised the compilation of the important encyclopedia *Cefu Yuanguai* 冊府元龜 until 1013 CE, Wang Qinruo had acquired detailed knowledge of an internationally famous pilgrimage site in Jiangsu which had flourished from the time of the later Tang dynasty. There, people venerated a Sogdian monk named Sengqie 僧伽 (628-710) in Sizhou 泗州, who reputedly had numinous powers and founded the Puguangwang monastery 普光王寺, where his body had been preserved in lacquered form.⁹⁶ This Sengqie cult was an important financial asset to the city, because taxes had to be paid by every pilgrim on passing the Sizhou transit point located on the Grand Canal which connected North and South China.⁹⁷ Like Sizhou, Hangzhou as a trading centre was easily accessible via the Grand Canal and river systems and was, from that point of view, an ideal site for establishing another hub for pilgrims. Wang Qinruo donated a statue of Sengqie, who was venerated as an incarnation of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, to the Tianzhu monastery and Ciyun Zunshi subsequently composed a ritual manual.⁹⁸

93 Huang 1999: 304.

94 Huang 1999: 304.

95 Stevenson: 1999: 348-349. This information we get first-hand from Zunshi's letter to Zhili, see Tianzhu chanzhu shang Siming fashi shu 天竺讖主上四明法師書 in Siming zunzhe jiaoxing lu 四明尊者教行錄, chap. 5, T.1937.907a.4-8.

96 Barrett 2005: 105-106.

97 Barrett 2005: 110.

98 Huang 1999: 304.

From Veneration to Practice: Shaping anew Tiantai's Lay Identity

When we acknowledge that the White-Robed Guanyin was a template for the Tiantai lay practitioner to identify with, we may question how Zunshi was able to convince devotees to follow the ascetic example of Bodhisattva Guanyin and practice austerities on a daily basis. How did he succeed in making this ascetic ideal an attractive model to be pursued by many people from the more wealthy classes of society?⁹⁹ The Tiantai accentuation of the *upāsaka* precepts in the early eleventh century obviously implied a continuous observance of the eight precepts instead of the usual five (*pañcaśīla*); the eight precepts needed to be observed by pious devotees only on *upavasatha* (*uposatha*) days and included fasting after noon and sexual abstinence.¹⁰⁰ The key to Zunshi's success in popularizing the tightening of lay practitioners' discipline, thus turning the tide from consumption to abstention as the most appropriate means for attaining salvation, is given in the manual he composed for the "Ghost-Feeding" ritual. No pre-Song Tiantai liturgies for this ritual are recorded and Zunshi was the first to make use of this means in the Tiantai context.¹⁰¹ He chose the "Ghost-Feeding" ritual in reaction to the common practice of appeasing resentful ghosts and deceased ancestors with lavish meat and wine offerings.¹⁰² In his version of the "Food-Bestowal Liturgy", the practitioner invokes Bodhisattva Guanyin first. The invocation causes the visualization of the *bodhisattva* who is none other than the practitioner himself and, self-assured of his innate Guanyin capacities, he pronounces the following sentence during the short ritual conducted by himself:

我此施食功德如世尊言即與供養無量百千俱胝恒河沙諸佛正等無異¹⁰³

The merit of my bestowing of food is, as the World-Honored One said, the same as [the merit] of making offerings to Buddhas [equal in measure] to the immeasurable sand-grains of innumerable hundreds of thousands of [grains] of the Ganges river – equal and not different.¹⁰⁴

Remarkable in this case is the implied empowerment of the lay practitioner whose compassionate activity of bestowing a small amount of food on the hungry ghosts is compared to immeasurable offerings to innumerable Buddhas. In an economic sense, this relatively minor deed was highly efficacious. A side effect of the ritual was the

99 Ascetic practice was only interesting for those who could make choices and not for those in society who were already on the verge of starvation. See the discussion in Stark 2003: 5-19.

100 The rules for fasting by lay Buddhists (*upāsaka*, *upāsikā*) who follow the five commands (*pañcaśīla*) are described in Xi Chao's 郤超 (336-377) *Fengfa yao* 奉法要 translated by Zürcher 1959: 164-165.

101 Lye 2003: 281.

102 On local cults see von Glahn 2004.

103 Zunshi's liturgies are gathered in his "Golden Garden Collection", *Jinyuan ji* 金園集. The quotation is from chap. two, XZJ.950.11c.14.

104 Translation by Hun Yeow Lye 2003: 290, with modifications by Max Deeg.

liberation of deceased kin and the increasing of one's lifespan.¹⁰⁵ Merit-making in the Tiantai context was now interpreted in an entirely different way: the practitioner did not merely continue venerating Buddhist icons by making flower and incense offerings, participating in communal prayer sessions under spiritual guidance, but enacted *bodhisattva* Guanyin within himself to liberate hungry ghosts and contribute to universal welfare without a monk as mediator, performing the ritual on his own behalf. A related form of self-identification with an enlightened being was earlier used in esoteric Buddhist rituals, but Zunshi transformed it for and applied it to the Tiantai context. Though the fully ordained monk retained the authority to determine and teach Buddhist orthopraxy, lay ritual practices – at least the “Feeding Ghosts” rituals – were appreciated as equivalent to those of the monks. This idea had lasting consequences as its promulgation promised independent efficacious religious practice conducted by a lay practitioner.

Fasting practice (*zhaijie* 齋戒) as a requirement enabled even humble persons to pursue an efficacious religious life by making use of their saved food surplus to conduct “Feeding Ghosts” rituals as an act of compassion. Such a practice elevated their status not only within the religious community, but also within society in general. Females who abstained from meat and kept to a vegetarian diet were regarded as particularly virtuous by Confucians as female thrift was a sign of household prosperity.¹⁰⁶ On a societal level the proposed Buddhist ideal of prudence and the restraint of personal consumption coincided with the officials' concept of Song culture. Though the primary Buddhist intention was actually immaterial merit-making for attaining salvation, it did also generate mundane remunerations, when such an ascetic ideal was followed on a grander scale in society. In the terminology of modern economics, sustained growth is only possible if the practice of deferred gratification is accepted, i.e. the willingness to sacrifice current satisfaction for future gain.¹⁰⁷ Throughout history, Buddhist monastics lived according to this principle and served as exemplars for the lay community.¹⁰⁸ The shift in Buddhist lay practitioners' behaviour from more passive veneration to active ritual practice, including an ascetic lifestyle similar to that of the monks and nuns, raised the lay people's status within the Buddhist community as it put power and authorisation into the hands of lay devotees. Such a new religious role model was obviously attractive for the self-aware literati class used to decision-making on their own and concerned about independence from monastic services.

Despite being the “high potentials” in society, the Song literati elite lived in great uncertainty, always exposed to sudden changes in court politics which could

105 Lye 2003: 288 and 295.

106 Lu 2002: 78.

107 Krugman 1994: 78.

108 Stephen Teiser 1988: 204-205 writes that “because they have renounced the family, monks are able to enrich family life. Having dedicated themselves to an ascetic way of life that claims to

negatively affect the lives of all members of their family.¹⁰⁹ The awareness that even high positions at court could not prevent them from ending up as victims of political intrigue, naturally made these elites more inclined to financial prudence than to the display of their high status through lavish consumption. The acceptance of prudence and restraint as important moral values shared by all members of a family clan contributed to sustainability by preserving their wealth for generations. Observing vegetarian fasts was at times so popular among the Song populace that some officials felt rather threatened by the pervasive existence of such religious fervour.¹¹⁰

Constant restraint of personal consumption is rather difficult to sustain unabated as is the yearning for attainments beyond present temporal existence. Without a rigid system of daily practices consisting of long prayer and meditation sessions it is nearly impossible to endure such hardship. We can assume that in the early Song dynasty lay devotees put on a white piece of cloth for conducting rituals and prayers to clearly distinguish these activities from profane ones and thus develop awareness of their innate Guanyin-hood. Regular gatherings at monasteries were undoubtedly essential to recruit spiritual guidance and foster communal support by group membership. A pilgrimage experience to the origin and focus of this Tiantai path of practice, to the White-Robed Guanyin sandalwood statue at the Upper Tianzhu temple in Hangzhou, may in many cases have inspired the pursuit of a religious life which promised worldly and other-worldly remunerations. Both Zunshi and Zhili emphasized that the quantity of invocations and recitations, conducted not as mere mechanical repetitions but with a sincere and attentive attitude, could multiply the efficacy of religious practice.¹¹¹

The increasing popularity of these practices most probably also account for another phenomenon, namely the sudden disappearance of Buddhist stone relief niches dedicated by lay devotees to enhance the karma of their deceased kin. As soon as lay Buddhist practices were regarded as sufficiently efficacious, they supplanted donations of comparatively expensive small-scale Buddhist artwork in stone.

Conclusion

The early eleventh century was a decisive period for Chinese Buddhism in shaping somewhat opposed strands of Buddhist religiosity. Antonello Palumbo observed of the struggles between Buddhists and Daoists in early medieval China that “religious polemics produced religious identities; (and) the latter emerged at the end of a process started by and through the former”.¹¹² This characterizes the situation of the eleventh century very well, though in this case the competing parties were two Buddhist

deny the principle of procreation, monks contribute a regenerative force to that very world they appear to transcend.”

109 Halperin 1997: 33.

110 Lu 2002: 97.

111 Getz 1994: 319.

112 Palumbo 2010: 6.

schools – Tiantai and Linji Chan – struggling for recognition and support by those in power. The general and local contextual settings of that period allow us, in combination with an iconological investigation and a critical analysis of style in Buddhist artwork, to draw conclusions about certain creative steps that made an implementation of the new visual idiom for the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara possible. The arguments presented here advocate that the new Tiantai idiom of the White-Robed Guanyin was not achieved by transforming or including a non-Buddhist deity in an attempt to render the “foreign” religion more attractive to the local populace. The change in Guanyin’s visual imagery was rather generated from genuine Buddhist concepts and articulated exclusively Buddhist ideals which lie at the core of Tiantai teachings at the turn of the millennium. Two decisive components of Avalokiteśvara’s identity, compassion and asceticism, were conveyed in the visual formula of the White-Robed Guanyin in terms which could more easily be understood and emulated by the lay practitioner familiar with Tiantai Buddhist practices. Tiantai practice especially attracted women to pursue their religious dedication more fervently as “it provided a means for women to speak out and gain control over themselves and their surroundings”.¹¹³ The practice laid the foundation for women to enact Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara within themselves, and resonant with this ideological concept it was only a small step to create an imagery of the White-Robed Guanyin in feminine guise. The White-Robed Guanyin as the embodiment of Buddhist moral cultivation was highly appreciated by the Song literati elite who supported and promoted the proliferation of the renewed Tiantai Guanyin cult as a suitable means for self-cultivation throughout China.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

- T. Taishō shinshū daizōkyō 大正新修大藏經. 1924-1932. Edited by Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaikyoku 渡辺海旭. Tokyo: Taishō issaikyō kankōkai (Online access by www.cbeta.org).
- XZJ.(Manxin)Xuzangjing 卍新續藏經, The Shinsan Dainihon Zokuzōkyō 卍新纂大日本續藏經. Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai 國書刊行會 (Online access by www.cbeta.org).
- Qian Yueyou 潛說友 (*jinsi* 1244). 1970. Xianchun Lin’an zhi 咸淳臨安志 [Gazetteer of Lin’an Written in the Xianchun Reign (1265-1274)]. Zhongguo fangzhi congshu 中國方志叢書 [Series of Chinese Gazetteers], Huazhong difang 華中地方 [Central China’s Regions], no. 49. Taipei: Chengwen chubanshe youxian gongsi 成文出版社有限公司.

113 Lu 2002: 73.

Secondary Sources

- Baker, Janet (ed.). 1998. *The Flowering of a Foreign Faith: New Studies in Chinese Buddhist Art*. Mumbai: Marg Publications.
- Barrett, T.H. 2005. "Buddhist Precepts in a Lawless World. Some Comments on the Linhuai Ordination Scandal". In William M. Bodiford (ed.). *Going Forth. Visions of Buddhist Vinaya*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press: 101-123.
- Bronkhorst, Johannes. 1998. *The Two Sources of Indian Asceticism*. Second edition. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Brose, Benjamin. 2009. *Buddhist Empires: Saṅgha-State Relations in Tenth-Century China*. PhD dissertation, Stanford University.
- . 2006 (2009). "Crossing thousands of Li of waves: The return of China's lost Tiantai texts". *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 29.1: 21-62.
- Campany, Robert Ford. 1993. "The Real Presence". *History of Religions* 32.3: 233-272.
- Chai, Zejun 柴澤俊 (ed.). 1997. *Shanxi siguan bihua 山西寺觀壁畫*. Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe.
- Choe, Songeun. 1991. *Buddhist sculpture of Wu Yüeh, 907-978: Chinese sculpture of the tenth century*. PhD dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
- DeBlasi, Anthony. 1998. "A Parallel World: A Case Study of Monastic Society, Northern Song to Ming". *Journal of Sung-Yuan Studies* 28:155-175.
- Dudbridge, Glen. 1978. *The Legend of Miaoshan*. Revised edition 2004. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ebert, Jorinde. 1985. *Parinirvāṇa. Untersuchungen zur ikonographischen Entwicklung von den indischen Anfängen bis nach China*. Wiesbaden: Steiner Verlag.
- Egan, Ronald C. 1994. *Word, Image and Deed in the Life of Su Shi*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.
- . 2006. *The Problem of Beauty. Aesthetic Thought and Pursuits in Northern Song Dynasty China*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.
- Getz, Daniel Aaron Jr. 1994. *Siming Zhili and Tiantai Pure Land in the Song Dynasty*. PhD dissertation, Yale University.
- . 1999. "T'ien-t'ai Pure Land Societies and the Creation of the Pure Land Patriarchate". In Gregory, Getz 1999: 477-523.
- Glahn, Richard von. 2004. *The Sinister Way. The Divine and the Demonic in Chinese Religious Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Grant, Beata. 1994. *Mount Lu Revisited. Buddhism in the Life and Writings of Su Shih*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Gregory, Peter (ed.). 1986. *Traditions of Meditation in Chinese Buddhism*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Gregory, Peter; Getz, Daniel A. Jr. (eds.). 1999. *Buddhism in the Sung*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

- Guruge, Ananda W.P. 1994. "Emperor Aśoka and Buddhism: Unresolved Discrepancies between Buddhist Tradition & Aśokan Inscriptions". In Anuradha Seneviratna (ed.). *King Aśoka and Buddhism. Historical and Literary Studies*. Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society: 37-91.
- Halperin, Mark Robert. 1997. *Pieties and Responsibilities: Buddhism and the Chinese Literati, 780-1280*. PhD dissertation, University of California, Berkeley.
- Heller, Natasha. 2008. "Visualizing Pilgrimage and Mapping Experience: Mount Wutai on the Silk Road". In Philippe Forêt and Andreas Kaplony (eds.). *The Journey of Maps and Images on the Silk Road*. Leiden: Brill: 29-50.
- Howard, Angela. 1985. "Royal Patronage of Buddhist Art in Tenth Century Wu Yueh: The Bronze Kuan-yin in the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond". *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities*: 1-60.
- Huang, Chi-chiang 1999. "Elite and Clergy in Northern Sung Hang-chou: A Convergence of Interest". In Gregory, Getz 1999: 295-339.
- Idema, Wilt. 2000. "Guanyin's Acolytes". In Jan A.M. De Meyer and Peter M. Engelfriet (eds.). *Linked Faiths. Essays on Chinese Religions and Traditional Culture in Honour of Kristofer Schipper*. Leiden: Brill: 205-226.
- Kintaert, Thomas. 2005. "The Use of Primary Colours in the Nāṭyaśāstra". In Sadananda Das and Ernst Furlinger (eds.). *Sāmarasya: Studies in Indian Arts, Philosophy and Interreligious Dialogue – in Honour of Bettina Bäumer*. New Delhi: D.K. Printworld: 245-273.
- Krugman, Paul. 1994. "The Myth of Asia's Miracle". *Foreign Affairs* 73.6: 62-78.
- Kurz, Johannes L. 2003. "A Survey of the Historical Sources for the Five Dynasties and Ten States in Song Times". *Song-Yuan Studies* 33: 187-224.
- Läänemets, Märt. 2006. "Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara in the Gaṇḍavyūha". *Chung-Hwa Buddhist Studies* 10: 295-339.
- Lu, Huitzu. 2002. "Women's Ascetic Practices during the Song". *Asia Major* 15.1: 73-108.
- Lye, HunYeow. 2003. *Feeding Ghosts: A Study of the Yuqie Yankou Rite*. PhD dissertation, University of Virginia.
- McBride, Richard D. 2008. *Domesticating the Dharma. Buddhist Cults and the Hwaŏm Synthesis in Silla Korea*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Naquin, Susan; Yü, Chün-fang (eds.). 1992. *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ning, Qiang. 2004. *Art, Religion & Politics in Medieval China. The Dunhuang Cave of the Zhai Family*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Palumbo, Antonello. 2010. "From Constantine the Great to Emperor Wu of the Liang: The rhetoric of imperial conversion and the divisive emergence of religious identities in Late Antique Eurasia". (unpublished paper).
- Reis-Habito, Maria D. 1993. *Die Dhāranī des grossen Erbarmens des Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara mit tausend Händen und Augen: Übersetzung und Untersuchung*

- ihrer textlichen Grundlage sowie Erforschung ihres Kultes in China*. Nettetal: Steyler Verlag.
- . 1991. "The Repentance Ritual of the Thousand-armed Guanyin". *Studies in Central & East Asian Religions* 4: 42-51.
- Ricoeur, Paul. 1970. *Freud and Philosophy. An Essay on Interpretation*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Schlingloff, Dieter. 1964. *Ein buddhistisches Yogalehrbuch*. Humboldt-Universität: Berlin.
- Seiwert, Hubert (in collaboration with Ma Xisha). 2003. *Popular Religious Movements and Heterodox Sects in Chinese History*. Leiden: Brill.
- Shahar, Meir. 1992. "The Lingyin Si Monkey Disciples and the Origins of Sun Wukong". *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 52.1: 193-224.
- Sharf, Robert H. 2002. *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism. A Reading of the Treasure Store Treatise*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Slavik, Jan. 1994. *Dance of Colours. Basic Patterns of Colour Symbolism in Mahāyāna Buddhism*. PhD dissertation, Göteborg.
- Stark, Rodney. 2003. "Upper Class Asceticism: Social Origins of Ascetic Movements and Medieval Saints". *Review of Religious Research* 45.1: 5-19.
- Stein, Rolf A. 1986. "Avalokiteśvara/Kouan-yin, un exemple de transformation d'un dieu en déesse". *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 2: 17-80.
- Stevenson, Daniel Bruce. 1986. "The Four Kinds of Samādhi in Early T'ien-t'ai Buddhism". In Gregory 1986: 45-97.
- . 1987. *The T'ien-t'ai Four Forms of Samādhi and late North-South Dynasties, Sui, and Early T'ang Buddhist devotionalism*. PhD dissertation, Columbia University.
- . 1999. "Protocols of Power: T'zu-yün Tsun-shih (964-1032) and T'ien-t'ai Lay Buddhist Ritual in the Sung". In Gregory, Getz 1999: 340-408.
- Suchan, Thomas. 2003. *The Eternally Flourishing Stronghold: An Iconographic Study of the Buddhist Sculpture of the Fowan and Related Sites at Beishan, Dazu ca. 892-1155*. PhD dissertation, The Ohio State University.
- Suzhou Museum 苏州博物馆 (ed.). 2006. *The Cultural Relics of the Pagoda of Yunyan Temple and the Pagoda of Ruiguang Temple (Tiger Hill, Suzhou), collected by the Suzhou Museum 苏州博物馆藏虎丘云岩寺塔瑞光寺塔文物*. Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe 文物出版社.
- Tay, C. N. 1976. "Kuan-yin: The Cult of Half Asia". *History of Religions* 16.2: 147-177.
- Teiser, Stephen F. 1988. *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Waldschmidt, Ernst. 1948. *Die Überlieferung vom Lebensende des Buddha. Eine vergleichende Analyse des Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra und seiner Textentsprechungen, 2. Teil, 224-238*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Wang, Eugene Yuejin. 2005. *Shaping the Lotus Sutra. Buddhist Visual Culture in Medieval China*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

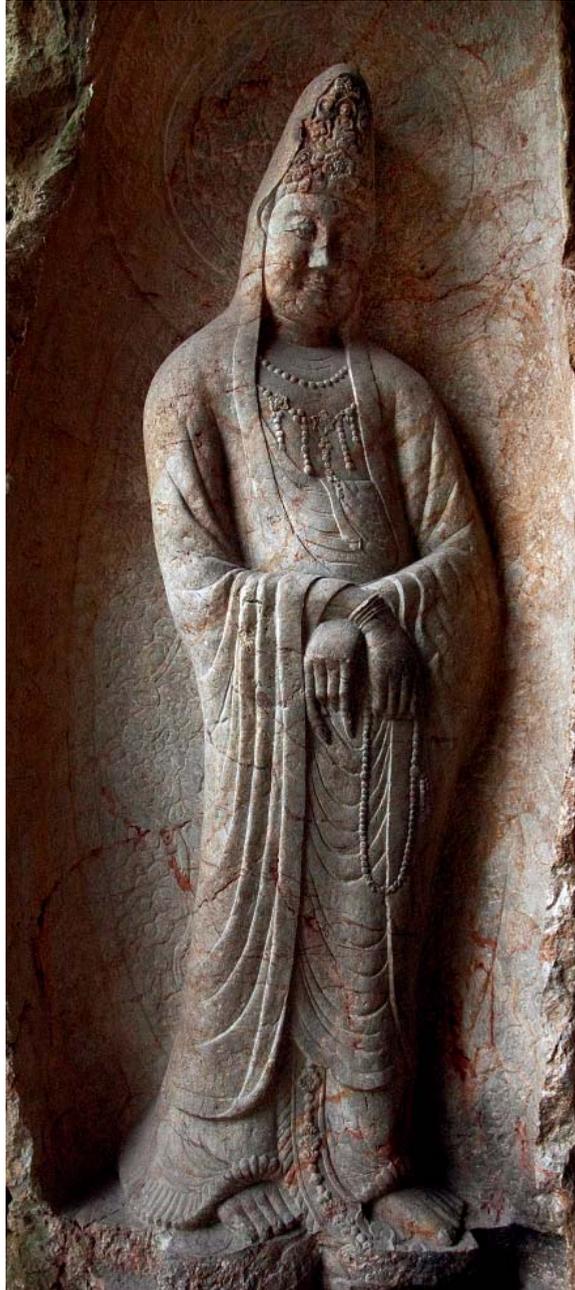
- Welter, Albert. 2006. *Monks, Rulers and Literati. The Political Ascendancy of Chan Buddhism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . 2011. *Yongming Yanshou's Conception of Chan in the Zongjing Lu. A Special Transmission within the Scriptures*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . 2008. *The Linji lu and the Creation of Chan Orthodoxy. The Development of Chan's Records of Sayings Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wong, Dorothy C. 2007. "Guanyin Images in medieval China, 5th-8th Centuries". In William Magee and Yi-hsun Huang (eds.). *Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara (Guanyin) and Modern Society. Proceedings of the Fifth Chung-Hwa International Conference on Buddhism*. Taipei: Dharma Drum Publishing Corp.: 255-302.
- Yü, Chün-fang. 2001. *Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokiteśvara*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- . 1992. "P'u-t'o shan: Pilgrimage and the Creation of the Chinese Potalaka". In Naquin, Yü 1992: 190-245.
- Zhejiangsheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 浙江省文物考古研究所. 2002. "Hangzhou Leifeng ta Wudai digong fajue jianbao" 杭州雷峰塔五代地宮發掘簡報 ("Brief Report on the Excavation of the Five Dynasties earthly Chamber of Hangzhou's Leifeng Pagoda"). *Wenwu* 文物 5: 4-32.
- Zürcher, Erik. 1959. *The Buddhist Conquest of China. The Spread and Adaptation of Buddhism in early Medieval China*. (3rd edition 2007). Leiden: Brill.

Broeskamp 1



Guanyin sculpture, Ciyun cave, Hangzhou, height 2.72m (photo B. Broeskamp 1997)

Broeskamp 2



White-robed Guanyin sculpture, 1.85m in height, Yanxia cave, Hangzhou, niche 2.30m x 0.88m (photo Lakshmi Filomena Broeskamp 2012).

Broeskamp 3



Two White-robed Guanyin clay statues, 38cm in height, Ruiguang Pagoda,
after Suzhou Museum 2006, p. 186.

Broeskamp 4



Guanyin sculpture, 2m in height, Yanxia cave, Hangzhou, niche 2.78m x 1.14m (photo Lakshmi Filomena Broeskamp 2012).

Broeskamp 5



Avalokiteśvara panel dated 1022 CE, 58cm in height, above the entrance to the Qingling cave, Feilafeng, Hangzhou (photo Lakshmi Filomena Broeskamp 2012).

Broeskamp 6



Detail of plate 2, White-robed Guanyin sculpture, Yanxia cave, Hangzhou
(photo Lakshmi Filomena Broeskamp 2012).

Broeskamp 7



Ajanta cave 1, wall painting, scene of the Mahājanaka Jātaka, © Benoy K. Behl.

Broeskamp 8



Mahāparinirvāṇa stele, schist, 53 cm in height, Gandhāra, 2nd-3rd CE, © Victoria and Albert Museum, London



Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, scroll painting, colour on ramie, from Murtoq, tenth-eleventh century, 59 x 95 cm, MJK III 8559, © Museum für Asiatische Kunst, Kunstsammlung Süd-, Südost- und Zentralasien, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.

Broeskamp 10



White-robed Guanyin, colour on silk, from Dunhuang, tenth century, 52cm x 55.2 cm, Palace Museum collection, Beijing; after Yu Hui (ed.) 2005, p. 268.

Broeskamp 11



Guanyin shrine, sandalwood, Yunyan pagoda, Suzhou, tenth century, 6.3cm x 19.3 cm; after Suzhou Museum (ed.) 2006, p. 55.

Lumbini International Research Institute

P.O. Box 39, Bhairahawa, Dist. Rupandehi
NEPAL

