Songzi Guanyin and Koyasu Kannon: Revisiting the Feminization of Avalokiteśvara in China and Japan

by

Ying Huang

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Department of East Asian Studies

University of Alberta

Abstract

Avalokiteśvara, initially imagined as a male deity in India, began to transition into a female deity during the early period of the Song dynasty (960-1279) in China. Guanyin 觀音, Avalokiteśvara's name in Chinese, received great popularity as the "Goddess of Mercy" in China. Influenced by both White-robed Guanyin and Water-moon Guanyin, Songzi 送子 (Child-giving) Guanyin, a form of Avalokiteśvara, is venerated as a female deity in Chinese popular religion,[1] and widespread faith in Child-giving Guanyin is supported by indigenous sutras, miracle tales, myths, and legends.

My research indicates that Child-giving Guanyin usually replaced other deities in popular religion that were traditionally associated with fertility. As such, after the cult of Child-giving Guanyin was established during the Song dynasty, Guanyin typically maintained the feminine characteristics of a goddess and, later, influenced the image of Maria Kannon マリア観音 in Japan.

Conversely, Koyasu 子安 (Child-bearing) Kannon, a Japanese manifestation of Guanyin, coexists with other deities from Buddhism, Shinto, and Christianity. This phenomena can be explained by the Japanese religious concept of harmony in diversity (*ta no wa* 多の和), which recognizes the ability of individual religious practitioners to have faith in deities from different religious traditions concurrently. I suggest that Child-bearing Kannon did not undergo as thorough a transformation in gender presentation as did Child-giving Guanyin in China because of the strong acceptance of diversity and multiplicities in religious practices in Japan. Thus, Child-

[1] In this thesis, popular religion includes some elements of Buddhism and Daoism, but it is different from the traditional religions and it is linked to the daily life of lay person and their ordinary worship.

bearing Kannon's gender has elements of ambiguity. Influenced by the doctrine of *honji suijaku* 本地垂迹 ("original ground and trace manifestation"), Nyoirin 如意輪 (Wish-fulfilling) Kannon appears to have recognizably female characteristics, which is believed to have only occurred in Japan for that form of Avalokiteśvara, while Jūichimen 十一面 (Eleven-faced) Kannon should be understood to be a local manifestation of Amaterasu 天照 (commonly referred to as the "Sun Goddess") and Empress Kōmyō 光明 (701-760).

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Introduction

Guanyin 觀音 (Jp. Kannon, Sk. Avalokiteśvara), which means "perceiver of sounds," or Guanshiyin 觀世音 (Jp. Kanzeon), which means "perceiver of the world's sounds," is the Chinese name for Avalokiteśvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion popularly known as the "Goddess of Mercy." This bodhisattva grants requests to the masses and helps those who are suffering; therefore, Avalokiteśvara, who is enshrined in the hearts of practitioners, has attracted a large number of followers and has been the inspiration for numerous poems and religious images in East Asia.

A famous Chinese proverb states, "Every household shows devotion to the Buddha Amita 阿彌陀 (Sk. Amitābha or Amitāyus), and every household reveres Guanyin."[2] As such, it is evident that the cult of Guanyin plays a significant role in Buddhist practice and faith in China. Furthermore, other countries with deep historical and cultural ties to China, such as Japan, Korea, and Vietnam, also treat Avalokiteśvara as a model of wisdom and compassion. The bodhisattva is further identified as the "Goddess of Mercy" due to her extreme kindness and compassion.

Avalokiteśvara was initially imagined as a male deity in India,[3] and at first, this bodhisattva was also considered to be a male deity in China, as is demonstrated in the tenth-century paintings from the Dunhuang Grottoes 敦煌石窟 (Dunhuang caves,

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[2] The Chinese expression is "*jiajia Guanshiyin, huhu emituo* 家家觀世音，戶戶阿彌陀."

[3] In this thesis, I am using "deity" as a general term for gods, goddesses, buddhas, bodhisattvas, kami, and other divine figures. At times, however, I am retaining the terms "goddess" to reflect popular characterizations of Guanyin (Jp. Kannon) in her feminine forms and of other female deities.

Gansu 甘肅 province), clearly depicting him with a mustache.[4] Iyanaga Nobumi 彌永信美 cites an image of Water-moon Guanyin (Jp. Suigetsu Kannon 水月観音) from the Dunhuang Grottoes, dated circa the end of the ninth century, to illustrate that at least during this period, the bodhisattva Guanyin had the masculine traits of a beard and mustache. Water-moon Guanyin appeared as an incarnation of the Thousand-armed Guanyin (Jp. Senju Kannon 千手観音) during the Tang dynasty (618-907).[5] Matsumoto Eiichi 松本栄一 investigated the images of Water-moon Guanyin and considered them to be the precursor to the figure of the White-robed Guanyin (Ch. Baiyi Guanyin 白衣觀音, Jp. Byakue Kannon 白衣観音, Sk. Pāndaravāsinī),[6] whose popularity grew before gradually transitioning into the figure of the Child-giving Guanyin (Ch. Songzi Guanyin 送子觀音)[7] during and after the Song dynasty (960-1279).[8]

Regarding the shift in the bodhisattva's gender presentation from the masculine to the feminine in China, Yü Chünfang 于君芳 argues that from the time Guanyin was introduced into China until the end of the Tang dynasty, the bodhisattva was considered to be a male deity. It was not until the period of the early Song dynasty, around the eleventh century, that some practitioners regarded Guanyin as a goddess, and female characteristics became evident in her sculptures. During the Yuan dynasty (1206-1368), this bodhisattva probably completed her transformation into a goddess.[9]

[4] Yü 2012, 2.
[5] Iyanaga 2002, 316-317.
[6] Matsumoto 1926, 207.
[7] From here, Child-giving Guanyin refers to Songzi Guanyin.
[8] Yü 2001, 235.
[9] Yü 2012, 17.

As mentioned above, it is said that Buddhism was introduced into China during the Han dynasty (206 B.C.- 220 A.D.). White-robed Guanyin was transformed into the Child-giving Guanyin, allowing for the cult of the "White-robed Guanyin as Child-giving Guanyin" to eventually be established during the Ming dynasty (1368-1664). The transformation that Avalokiteśvara first changed gender from the masculine Avalokiteśvara to the feminine Guanyin is believed to have originated in China.[10] On the other hand, however, possibly as early as the mid-ninth century, Nyoirin Kannon (Ch. Ruyilun Guanyin 如意輪觀音), who is identified both as one of the many esoteric forms of Kannon and as one of the Six Kannon (Jp. Roku Kannon 六観音), starts to have obvious female characteristics only in Japan.[11]

Accordingly, China is not the only country where Guanyin is regarded as a female deity, as there are also other feminine forms of the bodhisattva in Japan, such as Jibo Kannon 慈母観音 (Compassionate Mother Kannon) or Maria Kannon マリア観音 (Virgin Mary Kannon). However, in comparison to China, the sexual transformation of Avalokiteśvara from a male to a female deity was not as thorough, and masculine depictions of the bodhisattva can still be seen in Japanese Buddhism.

Such gender transformations and ambiguities notwithstanding, Avalokiteśvara, in all his (or her) forms, is universally understood to be the embodiment of compassion and wisdom, although different cultures have conceived of the role or position of this bodhisattva in varying ways. In China, as well as Japan, Korea, and Vietnam (all of which have been strongly influenced by Chinese Buddhism), she is popularly regarded as a goddess of mercy. However, in India, Tibet, Sri Lanka, and Southeast Asia, the bodhisattva is closely related to royalty, as the rulers are

[10] Yü 2012, 2.
[11] Aptilon 2011, 895. Also see the classic study Stein 1986, 17-80.

considered Buddhist deities. For example, Jayavarman VII (1181-1218), the King of Cambodia, was regarded as the embodiment of Avalokiteśvara.[12] In Japan, there is also the cult of Shōtoku Taishi 聖徳太子 ("Prince of Sagely Virtue"[13] or Prince Shōtoku; 574-622), who is considered the embodiment of the bodhisattva Kannon in Shinran's 親鸞 (1173-1263) True Pure Land school. It is interesting to note that this legend did not exist during Prince Shōtoku's lifetime but rather was established by the influence of the restoration thought (Jp. *fukko shisō* 復古思想) during the Kamakura period (1185-1333).[14] Thus this did not happen during the reign of Prince Shōtoku, and the possibility of Japanese rulers being seen as the symbol of royalty was not as high in ancient Japan as it was in India. As such, it is clear that the specific ways in which Avalokiteśvara is conceptualized across time and space are geographically and culturally dependent.

In examining the Chinese transformation of Buddhism, Yü observed that,

> "I prefer "transformation" or "domestication" to describe the phenomenon. This term is particularly fitting in the case of Avalokiteśvara, for this bodhisattva underwent many transformations by taking on different identities, assuming different appearances in art, and giving rise to different practices and rituals in some Asian countries aside from China. In the process, the bodhisattva became domesticated to serve the interests and needs of the host countries that adopted him/her……The particular choices made by the host cultural traditions resulted in the bodhisattva's domestication."[15]

[12] Yü 2012, 13-14.
[13] Quinter 2014, 153.
[14] Kubo 1956,42.
[15] Yü 2001, 6.

Tsukamoto Zenryu 塚本善隆 (1898-1980), Glen Dudbridge, and R. A. Stein all studied the feminization of Guanyin in China. They believe that the feminization of Kannon in Japanese Buddhism was merely an extenuation of Guanyin's feminization in China.[16] Consequently, not much importance has been attached to the feminization of Kannon in Japan in its own right. Furthermore, it is essential to understand that the inevitable fusion of both the iconography and popular understandings of Guanyin with Shinto and local forms of Christianity produced images of Guanyin with uniquely Japanese characteristics.

In comparison with the term "domestication" proposed by Yü, the term "cultural localization and adaptation" is more suitable to describe the dissemination of the cult of Guanyin from China to Japan. As reminded by Sherry D. Fowler, what we see today in Japan is not always, or even usually, what once was.[17] For, when the cult spread to Japan, it was assimilated into local religious practices and began to develop alongside Japanese culture independent from China's continuing cultural influence on Japan. In broad terms, such trends toward independent Japanese culture resulted in Japanese Buddhists gradually developing an original national culture (Jp. *Kokufū Bunka* 国風文化) that was distinct from the cultural milieu of the Tang dynasty in China (Jp. *Tofū Bunka* 唐風文化).

The cult of Guanyin also adapted to regional differences within Japan, which is an important component of my "localization" thesis. Take, for example, the figure of Guanyin as a Child-giving deity. According to Ōfuji Yuki 大藤ゆき, artistic depictions of Koyasu Kannon 子安観音 (Child-bearing Kannon) are most often displayed in shrines located in the west of Japan, while those depicting Child-

[16] Tsukamoto 1955; Dudbridge 1978; Stein 1986.
[17] Gerhart 2019, 256.

protecting Earth-store Bodhisattva (Jp. Koyasu Jizō 子安地蔵) are most often located on roadsides and in the east of Japan.[18] Thus even within Japan, the eastern and western regions show differences in the acceptance of foreign cultures. Therefore, my use of the term "localization" not only represents the cultural adaptation of religious traditions when they were introduced to Japan (or another country) from outside, but also represents initiatives and adaptations of those traditions to the local environment and the needs of local people *within* the country.

Furthermore, Fowler's analysis of regional differences in the treatment of the Six Kannon in Kyoto 関東 area and in Kyushu 九州 is a useful example to support my "localization" argument. Images and origin stories of Six Kannon in Kyushu were matched with indigenous beliefs and local legends. Fowler argues that the cult of Six Kannon, which was related to the Kirishima Rokusho Gongen 霧島六所権現 (six kami or six *gongen* ["manifestations"] of the Six Shrines on Kirishima),[19] was influenced by beliefs generated at the center and the practices in the mainland.[20] Fowler also concludes that the strategy used to match Six Kannon with six kami or six *gongen* was "a driving force in Kyushu religion."[21]

In addition, Maria Kannon serves as another excellent example of "religious localization" in Japanese Buddhism, for analysis of her iconography and mythology can be used to help explain transformations in Chinese Buddhism across Japan. For instance, during the seventeenth century, some regions (such as Nagasaki 長崎) saw the Child-giving Guanyin appear in the form of "Maria Kannon," demonstrating the variability in local interpretations of the same deity. This phenomenon of religious

[18] Yamaori 1991, 676a; Kitō 2013, 100.
[19] Fowler 2016, 57.
[20] Saka 2018, 454.
[21] Fowler 2016, 11.

localization, or regional variation in the conceptualization of the deity, also applies to shifting conceptualizations of Avalokiteśvara in China. After Avalokiteśvara was introduced into China from India, images of Avalokiteśvara adapted to Daoism and Confucianism and produced Child-giving Guanyin, which retained the easy-delivery, child-giving, and child-protecting functions of Guizimu 鬼子母[22] while also demonstrating characteristics of women in the Song dynasty. Although Hārītī was originally an Iranic deity and a monstrous image who devoured little children, she became "a guardian goddess of fertility and childbirth" after receiving mercy from the Buddha.[23] These various examples help to highlight the point that Chinese religions hesitated on how to integrate native cultural traditions with foreign ones. Moreover, they remind us that religious localization is not only about the simple fact of a deity being adapted to geographically and culturally specific practices but is also dependent upon the *extent* to which this happens.

Methodology

Kannon's feminine depictions in Japan were not solely influenced by Chinese Guanyin belief. Just as Confucianism and Daoism contributed to the rise of Guanyin belief in China, native Shinto kami cults greatly influenced belief in Kannon in Japan.[24] Although temples had been established at shrines before, now shrines could be built in temples as well. Kami cults and Buddhism merged, and the combination was institutionalized in such a way that both shrine-temples (Jp. *jingūji* 神宮寺, also

[22] Guizimu (Jp. Kishimojin 鬼子母神, Sk. Hārītī) in Chinese literally means "Mother of Demons," but the deity is sometimes referred to as the "Goddess of Children."
[23] Turnbull 2015, 251-254.
[24] Teeuwen and Scheid 2002.

jinganji 神願寺) and temple-shrines (Jp. *jisha* 寺社) have existed.[25] Kuroda Toshio 黒田俊雄 (1926-1993), a Japanese historian, argues that kami and shrines played a cardinal role within the dominant exoteric-esoteric (Jp. *kenmitsu* 顕密) Buddhist system in medieval period to centralize Buddhist authority in Japan.[26] In Japan, belief in the child-giving Kannon is known as Koyasu Kannon (Child-bearing Kannon) or Jibo Kannon (Compassionate Mother Kannon). This practice of praying to Child-bearing Kannon forms part of the system of belief in Koyasu-gami (子安神 or 子易神), referring to deities who are child-giving and who promise safe delivery and successful child rearing. Such Koyasu-gami were first recorded as *Minonokuni Koyasu-gami* 美濃国児安神 in *Nihon Sandai Jitsuroku* 日本三代実録 (The True History of Three Reigns of Japan, ca.901). Koyasu-gami include Koyasu Kannon (Child-bearing Kannon), Jizō (Earth-store bodhisattva), and Kishimojin.[27]

Vital to the methodology of my study is understanding the well-known pre-modern concept of *honji suijaku* 本地垂迹 (Ch. *bendi chuiji,* "original ground and trace manifestation"), which originated in Chinese Buddhism but came to greatly influence Japanese religious traditions. In Japan, the term "original ground" refers to the various Buddhist deities believed to serve as sources for their "trace manifestations," or provisional forms, as local deities presumably native to Japan. "Original," however, does not have to be a one-to-one association with the "traces," and it can include Buddhist deities from India, China, Korea, and Japan itself.[28] For instance, both the buddha Dainichi 大日 (Sk. Mahavairocana) and Eleven-faced

[25] Rambelli and Teeuwen 2003, 14.
[26] Kuroda 1996, 374-75.
[27] JapanKnowledge Lib 2016. "子安神 (Koyasu-gami)." Accessed April 10, 2019. https://japanknowledge.com
[28] Rambelli and Teeuwen 2003, 1.

Kannon (Jp. Jūichimen Kannon 十一面觀音, Sk. Ekādaśamukha Avalokiteśvara) have been seen as the original Buddhist deity for Amaterasu Ōmikami 天照大神 (also known as Tenshō Daijin or the Sun Goddess). The phrase *shinbutsu shūgō* 神仏習合 ("the amalgamation of kami and buddhas"), which was based on the Buddhist doctrine of *honji suijiaku*, is used to depict the existence of this syncretic phenomenon. As such, it is evident that kami cults and Buddhism are deeply intertwined within religious constructions in Japan. Additionally, a syncretism between Buddhism and Christianity is also present in Japan; Maria Kannon is imagined as a local representation of the Virgin Mary, a Christian saint and the mother of Jesus.

I will base the textual aspects of my study primarily on scriptures and historical documents, namely Buddhist chronicles, dynastic histories, myths, legends, and miracle tales. Written texts, especially authoritative scriptures and miracle tales, and artistic images, such as paintings and statues of the Child-giving Guanyin, are of great importance to this study. Examples include the miracle tales for how and why Child-giving Guanyin came to be revered. Further, I will draw on artistic representations of Guanyin to highlight and unpack the variations in how the deity is depicted across time and space, with a particular focus on how Guanyin's gender presentation shifted to the feminine and my comparisons of varied gender presentations of Guanyin in China and Japan. I will also draw upon contemporary literary and art historical materials in addition to the Buddhological and historical sources mentioned above.

Chapter 1 will investigate the origin of Child-giving Guanyin in China by drawing upon a review of scholarly literature and primary sources relating to Guanyin. Since White-robed Guanyin is sometimes venerated as the deity associated with fertility and childbirth, I will discuss the connections between White-robed

Guanyin and Child-giving Guanyin. Furthermore, I will show that Daoism and Confucianism have strong influences on the formation of and widespread faith in Child-giving Guanyin.

In Chapter 2, I will divide my analysis of the origin of Child-giving Guanyin into three categories; namely, I will unpack the literary origins of Child-giving Guanyin, investigate the role that miracle tales played in the creation of her cult, and examine her origins through the study of Guanyin statues. In addition, three classical Buddhist scriptures that are essential for Child-giving Guanyin belief will be discussed. These three Buddhist scriptures promoted the establishment of the Child-giving Guanyin cult and facilitated its spread by practitioners. The first such important text is the *Guanshiyin Bodhisattva's Great Dhārani Sūtra of the Buddha's Essence* (Ch. *Fo ding xin Guanshiyin Pusa da tuoluoni jing* 佛頂心觀世音菩薩大陀羅尼經),[29] which was published in 1539, during the Ming dynasty. It encourages practitioners to preach the *Dhārani Sūtra of Buddha's Essence* as a way to minimize or stave off universal problems such as disease, danger, and hunger. The scripture also places particular emphasis on safe and effective birthing practices for women (see Figure 1.1 and Figure 1.2), which I will discuss in more detail to show how successful childbirth is an integral part of folk belief in Guanyin.

The second fundamental Buddhist scripture to Child-giving Guanyin belief is the *Dhāraṇī Sūtra of Five Mudrās of the Great Compassionate White-robed One* (Ch. *Baiyi dabei Guanyin wu yin tuoluoni jing* 白衣大悲觀音五印陀羅尼經). Yü argues that in this indigenous Chinese scripture, the White-robed Guanyin was transformed into the Child-giving Guanyin, allowing for the cult of the "White-robed Guanyin as

[29] Yü 2001, 93, 606.

Child-giving Guanyin" to eventually be established during the Ming dynasty.[30] This transformation is evidenced in the woodcut illustration of Guanyin on the frontispiece of this scripture, wherein the White-robed Guanyin is depicted as the goddess of labor in the form of a mother holding a baby boy on her knee.

The third scripture corresponds to the "Universal Gateway" chapter (Ch. *Pumenpin* 普門品, Jp. *Fumonbon*) of the *Lotus Sūtra* (Ch. *Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮花經, Jp. *Hokke-kyō*). This Universal Gateway chapter, which was commonly referred to as the *Guanyin Sūtra*, introduces the child-giving function of Guanyin, or the belief in the practice of praying to her for a son or a daughter.[31] I will draw upon this source to show how faith in the power of the Child-Giving Guanyin spread beyond the confines of specific religions to eventually be understood as a utilitarian folk belief that has been widely accepted by the Chinese people. Unlike when chanting dhāraṇīs in esoteric sutras, practitioners do not need to carry out complicated rituals, such as purification, fasting, and fire sacrifice. Rather, they need only recite the associated prayer, which was seen as a fair way to obtain practical benefits. As such, the ideas contained within the Universal Gateway chapter were welcomed by the public and deployed in the promotion of the cult of Child-giving Guanyin.[32]

In chapter 3, I will examine how the figure of Child-bearing Kannon was introduced into Japan and unpack the significance of the development of Child-bearing Kannon in Japanese religion. I will accomplish this by analyzing how Shinto customs and traditional kami practices fused with Buddhist traditions ("the amalgamation of kami and buddhas"), a process that was prevalent during medieval times in Japan. Then, moving to the Edo period (1603-1867), this chapter will discuss

[30] Yü 2001, 257-258.
[31] Yü 2001, 113.
[32] Yü 2001, 117-119.

how Child-giving Guanyin beliefs were incorporated into local religious systems and will analyze the process of the feminization of Child-bearing Kannon in Japan.

In addition to the influence of Guanyin's feminization from China, this chapter explores the integration of Guanyin imagery with that from local kami cults to produce images of Kannon with Japanese characteristics. The famous Japanese writer and cultural anthropologist Endō Shūsaku 遠藤周作 (1923-1996) once commented that Japanese Christianity is an ethnically specific and native Japanese religion unique for its syncretism with various elements of Buddhist traditions and kami belief. He also argued that Hidden Christians practiced in secret during the Edo period. Hidden Christians have accordingly addressed Kannon as Maria Kannon since the sixteenth century.[33] Statues of Child-giving Guanyin, which were made from white porcelain and introduced from the Fujian 福建 province of China, sometimes had a Christian cross hidden inside, or the crosses were placed in another inconspicuous location.[34] I will thus argue that the cult of Hidden Christians is a Christian popular religion, as it mediates Christianity through Buddhist, Shinto *kami*, and other popular folk beliefs.

In chapter 4, I will review the fundamental argument of my thesis that Japanese Child-bearing Kannon did not undergo a sexual transformation as complete as Chinese Child-giving Guanyin and conclude by discussing several differences between them. In this chapter, I will analyze influential native deities in Japanese mythology and explain why Kannon's shift in gender presentation was not as substantial as Guanyin's in China. Myths and legends related to the feminization of Kannon will be discussed to illustrate how Nyoirin Kannon is a specific Japanese Buddhist deity with female characteristics. I will also explore specific cases of

[33] Endō 1985, 7.
[34] Zhang 2012, 177.

gender ambiguity for Compassionate Mother Kannon as well as the femininity of Maria Kannon, which was influenced by the Chinese white porcelain Guanyin figures.

Chapter One: The Historical Development of Child-giving Guanyin in China

Guanyin has been the focus of many studies in recent years. This research into the cult of Guanyin has developed beyond the scope of data collection, methods of narration, and interpretations of classic scriptures such as the "Universal Gateway Chapter." Important texts in this new body of research include *Zhongguo wenxue zhong de Weimo yu Guanyin* 中國文學中的維摩與觀音 (*Vimalakirtī and Guanyin in Chinese Literature*) by Sun Changwu 孫昌武, *Guanyin Pusa* 觀音菩薩 (*Guanyin Bodhisattva*) by Wen Jinyu 温金玉, *Guanyin: Shensheng yu shisu* 觀音: 神聖與世俗 (*Guanyin: the Sacred and the Secular*) by Xing Li 邢莉, "*Guanyin: the Chinese Transformation of Avalokiteśvara*" by long-time Guanyin scholar Yü Chünfang, and *Kannon Henyōtan* 観音変容譚 (*The Metamorphosis of Avalokiteśvara*) by Iyanaga Nobumi. This chapter will classify the advancements in this new research into three categories. First are literary studies of Guanyin, such as in the book by Sun Changwu and *Guanyin belief and Buddhist literature* by Jiang Chanteng 江燦騰; second is the study of miracle tales of Guanyin, as seen in the text *Guanyin Xinyang de Chuanru yu Liuxing* 觀音信仰的傳入與流行 (The Introduction and Popularity of the Guanyin Cult) by Yang Zengwen 楊曾文 as well as *Guanyin Lingyan Gushi* 觀音靈驗故事 (Guanyin Miracle Stories) by Yü; and third is the study of artistic depictions of Guanyin, such as statues, led by such scholars as Sun Xiushen 孫修身 and Zheng Bingqian 鄭秉謙.

This new wave of research into Guanyin-related literature includes operas, novels, and miracle stories; however, relatively little attention has been given to

Child-giving Guanyin. Yü's book, *Kuan-yin: the Chinese transformation of Avalokiteśvara*, however, is more comprehensive than other studies in that she analyzes the relationship between White-robed Guanyin and Child-giving Guanyin. Yü suggests that some indigenous Chinese scriptures depict White-robed Guanyin as an efficacious child-giving deity. Since Yü's focus is on the sinicization of Avalokiteśvara, her work does not adequately address the dissemination of belief in Child-giving Guanyin across East Asia. Furthermore, research into Guanyin imagery in China, particularly statues, is hindered by the loss of material artifacts as a result of poor preservation techniques at critical historical sites, especially due to the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution.

Consequently, this thesis will fill in the gaps by combining both trans-cultural dissemination and localized transformations in China and Japan to investigate how the belief in Child-giving Guanyin took root in Japan. This chapter will focus on the following questions: How did belief in the Child-giving Guanyin come into being in China? What is the relationship between Child-giving Guanyin, Water-moon Guanyin (Ch. Shuiyue Guanyin 水月觀音), and White-robed Guanyin? How did Buddhism and popular religion influence the conceptualization of Guanyin in China in the origin of Child-giving Guanyin?

The Origin of Child-giving Guanyin

Based on analysis of cultural relics, Yang Yande 楊炎德 and Wang Zeqing 王澤慶 estimate that the earliest statue made of Child-giving Guanyin was created in the year 603 during the Sui dynasty (581-618). The Guanyin statue includes two figures of little boys, which is what led some scholars to consider the Guanyin statue to be a portrayal of Child-giving Guanyin. This statue is now housed in the Rongxian 荣县

Museum in the Chinese province of Shanxi 山西.[35] The statue stands approximately 27 centimeters tall and depicts a bearded Guanyin holding a white vase in his left hand, upon which a naked little boy stands, and in his right hand a long-stem lotus flower, upon which another little boy sits calmly. The statue is meant to convey the idea of "bearing children continuously," (Ch. *lian sheng gui zi* 连生贵子) as the words for "lotus" (Ch. *lian* 莲) and "continuously" (Ch. *lian* 连) are pronounced the same way in Chinese.

From this statue, it is clear that Guanyin's function as a child-giving deity was reified in the sixth or seventh century. The earliest dated Water-moon Guanyin, which influenced the female images of White-robed Guanyin and Child-giving Guanyin, was painted in 943 and found in Dunhuang 敦煌.[36] In the 10th century, the belief in child-giving deities was under the influence of faith in Hāritī, the so-called "Goddess of Children," instead of White-robed Guanyin. Hāritī, a minor Hindu goddess, eventually became a protector of children after being converted by the Buddha. This change can be confirmed from Iyanaga's point of view by looking at images of Hāritī (Figure 1.5). Hāritī was regarded as a deity for child-giving and healing during the Wei-Jin, Southern, and Northern Dynasties periods (220-589).[37] Foucher points out that Child-giving Guanyin is a variant of Guizimu in China.[38]

Zhou Qiuliang 周秋良 argues that although this Guanyin image embodies a distinct function of child-giving, it cannot be called a Child-giving Guanyin because she does not have a headdress that a typical Child-giving Guanyin would have. The headdress Zhou mentioned likely referred to the white-clothed head cover, which is

[35] Yang 1981; Wang 1981, 47; Zhou 2014, 215.
[36] Yü 2001, 234.
[37] Hsieh 2009, 109.
[38] Hsieh 2009, 129.

similar to the headgear a White-robed Guanyin wears. Such iconography did not appear until the Song dynasty and thus cannot be seen in the Sui dynasty. Zhou and Hackin[39] share the same view as Yü that White-robed Guanyin and Child-giving Guanyin are two different names for the same deity.[40]

As mentioned above, scholars hold different opinions on the origins of the Child-giving Guanyin. Kenneth Ch'en cites the view of H. Maspero, a French Sinologist, to explain that the famous female Child-giving Guanyin derives from the White-robed Guanyin, which was introduced from the Tibetan area in the eighth century. Then, the original meaning of White-robed Guanyin may have been misinterpreted by popular religion in China. Yü, citing Ch'en, points out that White-robed Guanyin belongs to the Womb Realm (Ch. Taizangjie 胎藏界, Jp. *taizōkai*, Sk. Garbhadhātu) mandala in esoteric Buddhism, and suggests that this led Chinese popular religion to take the words 'womb world' too literally and convert White-robed Guanyin to Child-giving Guanyin.[41] Thus, Ch'en thinks that Child-giving Guanyin was a new figure, which first developed in the 10th century.[42] Moreover, Rolf A. Stein criticizes Kenneth Ch'en's viewpoint by stating that White-robed Guanyin should not be confused with the White Tārā, a female Buddhist deity that originates from Hinduism dressing in a white robe.[43] Because both of them are dressed in white and are female Bodhisattvas, they are easily confused.

In contrast, Yü considers them to be the same deity with two different names and convincingly argues that White-robed Guanyin is one of the Chinese embodiments of Avalokiteśvara, who underwent a transformation around the tenth

[39] Hackin 1994, 349-51.
[40] Yü 2001, 250.
[41] Yü 2001, 249.
[42] Yü 2001, 249; Ch'en 1964, 341-342.
[43] Cited in Yü 2001, 249.

century and eventually transformed into an actual and dearly loved Chinese female divinity by the sixteenth century. White-robed Guanyin is a completely Chinese creation, and Yü defined her as the earliest feminine form of Guanyin in China.[44]

Compared with White-robed Guanyin, Child-giving Guanyin appeared in the late Song dynasty. Iyanaga points out that the Child-giving Guanyin who carries an infant is one of the representations of White-robed Guanyin and that she sometimes appears along with the Youth Sudhana (Ch. Shancai tongzi 善財童子, Jp. Zenzai Dōji) and the Dragon Girl (Ch. Longnü 龍女) (Figure 1.7 and Figure 1.8). Sudhana, most famously from the *Flower Garland Sutra* (Jp. *Kegon kyō* 華厳経), is the youth guided on the path to enlightenment by the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī (Ch. Wenshu pusa 文殊菩薩), and he learns from Maitreya (Ch. Mile 彌勒 about the practice of the bodhisattva path.[45] The Dragon Girl from the *Lotus Sutra* transformed into a male and attained Perfect Enlightenment, which indicated that it is possible for women to achieve Buddhahood.[46]

Child-giving Guanyin highlights the child-bestowing function and becomes a reformation of White-robed Guanyin by adding elements related to fertility, such as images of children (usually boys) or, more specifically, the Youth Sudhana and the Dragon Girl. However, the idea that Child-giving Guanyin and White-robed Guanyin are the same deity is not convincing. Child-giving Guanyin is a tremendous female deity in popular religious belief. She magnified the child-granting function of White-robed Guanyin and merged with the female divinities of Daoism and other popular religions. There are many Child-giving divinities in popular religions, which will be

[44] Yü 2001, 223-224, 245.
[45] Cleary 1993, 30.
[46] Levering 1982, 22-23.

discussed later, the existence of whom forms the mass foundation for faith in Child-giving Guanyin. With the spread of Buddhism, the popularity of Guanyin became more significant than that of other popular religious traditions scattered around China.

On the other hand, there are more opportunities for people to learn and pay attention to other Guanyin images because of the popularity of Child-giving Guanyin. So even if the White-robed Guanyin does not hold a child, that does not prevent people from praying for the child-giving blessings of the bodhisattva. For example, the image of the bodhisattva in the temple of Mount Putuo 普陀山 (Figure 1.8) is not a Guanyin holding a child, but a Thousand-Armed and Thousand-Eyed Guanyin (Ch. Qianshou qianyan Guanyin 千手千眼觀音) with the Youth Sudhana and the Dragon Girl standing one on each side and thus still serves as a symbol of fertility.

The Connections between Water-moon Guanyin and White-robed Guanyin

Images of Water-moon Guanyin were influenced by the literary interpretations of *shenzhu baiyi* 身著白衣 ("the deity clad in a white robe") recorded in the *Collection of Miscellaneous Dhāraṇīs* (Ch. *Tuoluoni zaji* 陀羅尼雜集, T 1336) around the tenth century.[47] Furthermore, feminine features started to emerge in the White-robed Guanyin's images. For instance, Muxi 牧溪 (1210-1269), a Chinese Chan Buddhist monk, painted the famous *Guanyin, Monkeys and Crane* (Ch. *Guanyin yuan he tu* 觀音猿鶴圖), which is now held by the temple Daitokuji 大德寺 (Figure 1.3) in Kyoto. Different from the standard painting style of the esoteric image in

[47] Iyanaga 2002, 317.

Dunhuang, Muxi's painting is more freestyle with smooth lines, and the Bodhisattva gradually shows some female or neutral characteristics.[48]

It is worth noting that in contemporary Japan, there is also a very famous portrait of a White-robed Guanyin (Figure 1.4), painted by Kanō Motonobu 狩野元信 (1476-1559) in the Muromachi 室町 period (1336-1573). Although the painting's dating is later than Muxi's painting, the bodhisattva in the picture maintains a distinct male characteristic, a mustache. In response to this phenomenon, Iyanaga thinks that even in the 16th century, this type of White-robed Guanyin does not necessarily show femininity in Japan.[49]

Scholars' views on the relationship between Water-moon Guanyin and White-robed Guanyin are largely consistent. Matsumoto considers the Water-moon Guanyin to be the basis of the White-robed Guanyin.[50] Then, White-robed Guanyin became more and more popular and gradually changed into Child-giving Guanyin after the Song dynasty (960-1279).[51] Similarly, Iyanaga views the Water-moon Guanyin in the Tang dynasty (618-907) as the prototype of Child-bearing Kannon in Japan. In the tenth century, Water-moon Guanyin was transformed into the White-robed Guanyin.[52] Zhuang Bohe 莊伯和 also argues that the White-robed Guanyin was transformed from the Water-moon Guanyin, which was popular in the Tang dynasty,[53] while Lan Yingru 藍瑩如 suggests that in both China and Japan, Water-moon Guanyin and White-robed Guanyin are mostly mixed.[54]

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[48] Iyanaga 2002, 308.
[49] Iyanaga 2002, 318.
[50] Matsumoto 1926, 207.
[51] Yü 2001, 235.
[52] Iyanaga 2002, 319.
[53] Zhuang 1990, 174.
[54] Lan 2009, 88.

The preceding analysis suggests that in the process of transforming from White-robed Guanyin into Child-giving Guanyin, the difference in the feminization of White-robed Guanyin in China directly led to the feminization of the Child-giving Guanyin. However, Child-giving Guanyin is a symbol of motherhood and an exclusively feminine deity in China, while some of the Child-bearing Kannon images in Japan still maintain the masculine characteristics of the mustache (Figure 1.4, Figure 1.6).

The Influence from Popular Religion on the Formation of Child-giving Guanyin

Before the introduction of Buddhism, there were Daoism and Confucianism in China. Buddhism merged with local religion after it was introduced into China, and brought forth a deity with local features. Take Child-giving Guanyin as an example; before the female Child-giving Guanyin appeared, there already existed many deities associated with fertility, pregnancy, and childbirth in China.[55] Some child-giving deities are female, such as Sanxiao Niangniang 三霄娘娘 ("Goddess of Three Clouds"), Bixia Yuanjun 碧霞元君 ("Goddess of Azure Cloud"), Zisun Niangniang 子孙娘娘 ("Goddess of fertility"), and Tianfei Niangniang 天妃娘娘 ("Goddess of Heaven"), while the most prominent masculine deities are the Child-giving Maitreya (Ch. Songzi Mile 送子彌勒) and the Daoist God Zhang Xian (Ch. Songzi Zhangxian 送子張仙).[56] Goddess of Three Clouds is from *Fengshen Yanyi* 封神演义 ("The Investiture of the Deities"), and she is in charge of birth and reincarnation in the

[55] Yin 2014, 80-133.
[56] Yin 2014, 104-105.

world.[57] Goddess of Azure Cloud is from oral folklore in the Taishan 泰山 area and is more popular in the northern part of China. It is said that she could be a woman with multiple children and that she was able to protect young children.[58] For instance, in the Yuanjundian 元君殿 ("House of Goddess") of the Baiyunguan 白雲觀 ("White Cloud Temple") in Beijing, a statue of Goddess of Azure Cloud is placed together with the Child-giving Goddess and Cuisheng Niangniang 催生娘娘 ("Goddess of Giving-birth"). For the common people, she is a patron saint of women and children. The Goddess of Fertility is usually worshipped in groups. For example, there are nine Goddesses of Fertility in the Dongyue 東岳寺 Temple in Beijing. In the Jinhuamiao 金花廟 ("Golden Flower Temple") in Guangzhou 廣州, Lady Golden Flower (also known as "Goddess of Fertility") is worshiped together with Zhang Xian; Hua Tuo 華佗 (141-203), a famous doctor; Yuelao 月老 ("the God who unites persons in marriage"); and other birth-related deities.[59]

It thus can be seen that before the appearance of Child-giving Guanyin, Daoism already had female child-giving deities and that they had developed a deep root among the masses. After the introduction of Buddhism to China and its fusion with existing deity images, a Child-giving Guanyin developed with salvific features and a basis in popular belief. In the Song dynasty, image of Child-giving Guanyin gradually turned into an image of a Song woman, which was closer to people's daily life and easier for followers to accept.

[57] Yin 2014, 106-107.
[58] Yin 2014, 110.
[59] Beijing Baiyunguan Weibo 北京白雲觀微博, https: /www.weibo.com. Accessed on January 15, 2019.

After the introduction of Buddhism to China, Child-giving Maitreya was created for people to worship to cater to the public's need. This heavy monk takes charge of a mighty *renzhongdai* 人种袋 ("human seed bag") which gives children to people. He thus becomes a Child-giving Deity in the world and also came to be known as Budai Heshang 布袋和尚 ("The Monk Holding a Cloth Bag").[60] There are statues and pictures of "Boys play with Maitreya" among the general people, which show lovely and healthy boys, crawling up and down on Maitreya and playing with him. The common people believe that devotion to this kind of Maitreya will fulfill their desire for a son. However, most of these images are enshrined in homes.[61] Child-giving Maitreya and Child-giving Guanyin are both new images produced by the integration of Buddhism and Chinese local traditions. In contrast to the belief that people can be reborn in Maitreya's Pure Land, the common people were more interested in functional and practical aspects of Maitreya faith.

Maitreya had gone through a process of feminization based on the image of Empress Wu Zetian 武則天 (690-705); in short, an image of the Buddha was modeled according to Empress Wu's appearance. Empress Wu not only identified herself as the reincarnation of Maitreya but also asked the people to devote themselves to this cult.[62] However, some images also show that Empress Wu's features have merged with Guanyin.[63] Although in the *Lotus Sūtra,*[64] Guanyin is said to have "thirty-three manifestations" (Ch. *sanshisan shen* 三十三身),[65] by the Tang period, it was widely believed that Guanyin could take on more than thirty-three manifestations, which

[60] Yin 2014, 105
[61] Shaolin 2015
[62] Wang 1991, 292.
[63] Karetzky 2002, 117, 141.
[64] *The Lotus Sutra*. T vol. 9, no. 263.
[65] Ho 2014, 16.

included local women who were considered to be incarnations of Guanyin because of their great acts of compassion.[66] In this context, the Child-giving Guanyin can be regarded as a transformation beyond the thirty-three forms.

The Uniqueness of the Feminine Child-giving Guanyin in China

Guanyin's depiction as a female deity is intrinsically linked to the secularization of Buddhism in China.[67] In India, many parts of Southeast Asia, and the Tibetan area, as well as in China before the Tang dynasty, Guanyin was depicted as a handsome and solemn young male god. However, by the early Song dynasty (960-1279), the popular conceptualization of Guanyin's gender began to shift. By the Yuan dynasty, Guanyin probably had transformed into a female deity with Chinese features.

Chinese deities have birthdays, families, occupations, titles, personalities, and authority, as humans do.[68] For example, one may pray to the Child-giving Guanyin for a son, the Thousand-eyed and Thousand-armed Guanyin for safety and prosperity, the White-robed Guanyin holding a bottle of pure water for health, the Medicine Buddha (Ch. Yaoshi rulaifo 藥師如來佛, Sk. Bhaiṣajyaguru) for health and longevity, Maitreya for peace and forgiveness, Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva for wisdom, Amitabha Buddha for rebirth in the Pure Land, and Emperor Wenchang (Ch. Wenchang dijun 文昌帝君) for an official career. This phenomenon of praying to a specific god for a specific outcome is a common practice in praying to bodhisattvas for help.[69]

Moreover, deities in China have multiple and often concurrent manifestations

[66] Karetzky 2002, 125.
[67] Zhu 2016, 67; Yü 2001, 294.
[68] Pas 1991, 130.
[69] Sun and Yang 2015, 137.

that have largely come about through popular mythology and legend.[70] Bodhisattvas in China have birthdays and consecrated places of Buddhist practice (Ch. *daochang* 道場, Jp. *dōjō*, Sk. *bodhimaṇḍa*). They are imagined as having birthdays because they are seen as cultural figures. In Chinese Buddhism Guanyin's sacred place of worship is often located at the top of a mountain, as on Mount Putuo 普陀山 (also known as Luojia 珞珈 Mountain) in the Zhoushan Islands 舟山群島 region of Zhejiang 浙江 Province.[71] There is also a second, smaller temple dedicated to Guanyin on Mount Putuo. Guanyin's "birthday" is the 19th of February when following the lunar calendar.

In addition to praying to a Guanyin deity on this day, solemn ceremonies are also held to venerate Guanyin on the 19th of June (Ch. *chengdaori* 成道日, "Anniversary of Guanyin's Enlightenment") and the 19th of September of the Chinese lunar calendar (Ch. *chujiari* 出家日, "Guanyin's Leaving Home Day"). Disciples of Guanyin go on a pilgrimage and recite Buddhist scriptures on Mount Putuo.[72] Because all manifestations of Guanyin, such as Child-giving Guanyin, are venerated on these days, these three days are considered to be the most effective days for praying to these deities for children.[73] Child-giving Guanyin is a uniquely Chinese creation of Guanyin, and in the following section, I will outline the critical reasons for her special status in popular culture.

Guanyin is not the only deity with child-giving powers in Chinese folk belief. Of the many others, however, most are also female deities, as the female image is more in line with the images of a mother. It is common practice for followers of Buddhism

[70] Yü 2001, 294-95.
[71] Yü 2001, 295.
[72] Luo 2016, 119.
[73] Yin 2014, 123.

to hang paintings of male or female deities in their homes as part of their rituals of prayer. Female Buddhist followers may have more readily identified with female deities and, as such, hung images of child-giving goddesses, as opposed to male deities, in their home.

Also important to understand is that the cult surrounding Child-giving Guanyin is an essential branch of Chinese belief systems. People have prayed to her since the Song dynasty, and the geographic reach of her cult is significant, as it extended across much of China and spread to Japan after the Song dynasty.[74] As I mentioned earlier, because there was an established practice of praying to a god for a child, it was already customary to pray to a child-giving god specifically. For example, Child-giving Maitreya can be compared with Earth-store Bodhisattva (Ch. Dizang, Jp. Jizō, Sk. Kṣitigarbha) in Japanese culture. There were also many prominent female child-giving deities in popular religion, as well as several masculine ones, the most prominent being Child-giving Maitreya and the Daoist God Zhang Xian.[75]

In the process of Child-giving Guanyin's formation, images of Child-giving Guanyin absorbed the characteristics of many other female deities, in particular, many of the other child-giving ones mentioned above. Child-giving Guanyin is usually depicted as a woman who is either seated or standing and who is dressed in a white garment while holding a child in her arms. Guanyin's image shows a syncretic fusion with the Daoist Princess of the Flowery Clouds (Ch. Yaoji 瑤姬), daughter of the Grandmother of the West (Ch. Xiwangmu 西王母) and the Grandfather of the Eastern Peak (Ch. Dongwangfu 東王父).[76] Although Child-giving Guanyin herself is not a

[74] Miwa 1935, 22.
[75] Yin 2014, 104-105.
[76] Irwin 1990, 21.

mother, it does not prevent her from becoming the patroness of a child, and she is said to have the power to watch over women during their pregnancies and care for them during childbirth. Both Hāritī and Virgin Mary, who were mentioned earlier, are different from Child-giving Guanyin; they are mothers and have children of their own. Hāritī is said to have five hundred children, and the Virgin Mary has her son, Jesus.

Furthermore, the rise and popularization of Nanhai Guanyin 南海觀音 (Avalokiteśvara of the Southern Sea) promoted the development of belief in Child-giving Guanyin. Hiratsuka Unichi 平塚運一 (1895-1997) was a Japanese print-maker. One of his paintings focuses on images of Guanyin from the Ming dynasty that is found on Mount Putuo.[77] This painting is somewhat similar to the image of Figure 1.1, wherein both of them depict Nanhai Child-giving Guanyin in a similar style. Holding a baby boy, Guanyin is depicted sitting on a rock in the middle of the sea with the outline of the moon in a near halo behind her head. This iconography is similar to the feature of Water-moon Guanyin; she is depicted in front of a bamboo forest with a parrot flying in the upper right corner of the sky overhead and a vase with willow branches in it to her right. Bamboo, a parrot, and a vase with willow branches are all elements also found on the frontispiece of the *Dhāraṇī Sūtra of Five Mudrās of the Great Compassionate White-robed One* (Figure 2.4).

It is clear that Water-moon Guanyin is depicted in a manner that combines the iconography of Nanhai Guanyin, White-robed Guanyin, and Child-giving Guanyin, three main feminine images apparent during and after the Song dynasty.[78] Different from the depiction of White-robed Guanyin in Figure 2.4, Nanhai Guanyin is seen in

[77] Miwa 1935, 26-27.
[78] Yü 2001, 95.

both Figures 1.1, and 3.3 draped in white robes from the head down. Moreover, there is an epigraph stating either *Nanhai Putuoshan* 南海普陀山 (meaning "Mount Putuo in the Southern Sea") or *Nanhai Putuoshan lishi* 南海普陀山立石 (meaning "standing stone on Mount Putuo in the Southern Sea") on the picture, which suggests that the Bodhisattva pictured is, in fact, Nanhai Guanyin. According to Miwa Zennosuke 三輪善之助, the method in which Nanhai Guanyin's cloth was painted in Figure 3.1 is different from the method most common during the Tang dynasty, which further supports his argument that popular belief in Nanhai Child-giving Guanyin did not come about until the Song dynasty, and was not common during the Tang dynasty.[79]

With the development and popularization of Nanhai Guanyin belief, more and more practitioners came to Mount Putuo, which resulted in the growth of the cult of Child-giving Guanyin. To this day, Mount Putuo is still considered a holy place where one can pray for children and successful childbirth (Figures 3.23.3 and 3.4). Artistic representations of Nanhai Child-giving Guanyin include statues made of bronze, stone, and white porcelain, as well as wood carvings and paintings. A large number of pilgrims have ascended Mount Putuo to pray for the blessing and protection of Nanhai Guanyin.

Another way in which belief in Child-giving Guanyin has become entrenched in Han Chinese folk belief is through the separation of the deity from its Buddhist origins. The secularization of Child-giving Guanyin is closely linked with Confucianism in China. Prayer rituals surrounding pregnancy and childbirth, or reproductive worship, play a vital role in traditional Han Chinese culture and these practices have functioned to strengthen the role Child-giving Guanyin plays in

[79] Miwa 1935, 27.

society. This intense need led to the creation of an independent image of Avalokiteśvara as a female deity.

Consequently, many families would pray to Child-giving Guanyin not only for a successful pregnancy and childbirth, but for their child to be born a boy. This phenomenon reified this deity's position not only within Buddhism, in what is now present-day China, but also in wider popular folk belief in the region, as her position in society was also reinforced by Confucian ethics and Daoist culture. The Confucian ethics of loyalty and filial piety strongly encouraged individuals to have a large number of offspring in order to guarantee the successful extension of their family's clan. This idea of encouraging fertility reifies the function as well as the figure of the Child-giving Guanyin in popular culture outside of Buddhism.

However, although Child-giving Guanyin is usually depicted with a child in her arms, images presented in Buddhist monasteries are traditional images such as White-robed Guanyin. Yü points out that even today, Chinese Buddhist monasteries consecrate images of Guanyin according to the iconographic types that were established in the Tang dynasty. Feminine images, such as White-robed Guanyin or Fish-basket Guanyin (Ch. Yülan Guanyin 魚籃觀音), are rarely seen in Chinese monasteries. Iconic images of Guanyin in the monasteries are masculine or gender-neutral in appearance.[80]

[80] Yü 2001, 6.

Chapter Two: Classical Buddhist Scriptures and Miracle Tales for the Cult of Child-giving Guanyin

Some classical Buddhist scriptures attribute the authority of child-giving power to White-robed Guanyin, such as the *Guanshiyin Bodhisattva's Great Dhārani Sūtra of the Buddha's Essence*, the *Dhāraṇī Sūtra of Five Mudrās of the Great Compassionate White-robed One* (Ch. *Baiyi dabei Guanyin wuyin tuoluoni jing* 白衣大悲觀音五印陀羅尼經), and the *Lotus Sūtra* (Ch. *Fahua jing* 法華經, Jp. *Hokke-kyō*).[81]

This chapter aims to reveal the textual sources for the Child-giving Guanyin cult through the analysis of three classical Buddhist scriptures and miracle tales by the gentry class. The following issues will be discussed in this chapter: How did Chinese indigenous scriptures influence the formation of Child-giving Guanyin cult? How do miracle stories concretely present the enlightenment of Child-giving Guanyin? And how did they accelerate the localization of Guanyin?

Guanyin belief in China is present in both popular religion and popular belief. The former refers to the systematic, and somewhat heretical, Guanyin belief in secret folk traditions while the latter refers to common Guanyin belief that tends to be more unsystematic, secular, utilitarian, and concise.[82] As a consequence, Child-giving Guanyin belief largely belongs to the category of "popular belief" (Ch. *minjian chongbai* 民間崇拜), based on the function of "praying for a child."

According to Xie Zhibin 謝誌斌, this widespread belief in Guanyin by both Buddhists and non-Buddhists, of which the child-giving power of Guanyin was a part,

[81] Ch'en 1972, 341-342.
[82] Xie 2017, 90.

purportedly made up for the lack of such a powerful god with compassion in traditional Chinese culture.[83] Similarly, Hu Shi 胡适 (1891-1962) proposes in *Moheluo* 魔合羅 ("Clay Sculpture Dolls") that the Child-giving Guanyin evolved from Guizimu, a divine mother deity protecting children, rather than the Guanyin cultic system.[84] As Guizimu has child-giving power, she was venerated in Chinese folk society, particularly during the period before the Song dynasty.

The *Lotus Sūtra*: The Universal Gateway Chapter

There are three extant Chinese translations of the *Lotus Sūtra*. First, in 286, Dharmarakṣa (229-306) (Ch. Zhufahu 竺法護) translated the *Sūtra of the Lotus of the Correct Law* (Ch. *Zheng fa hua jing* 正法華經, Jp. *Shōhokke-kyō*).[85] The Child-giving Guanyin, with secular features, is a popular utilitarian belief that became accepted by the Chinese people after having been introduced in the *Lotus Sūtra.* Second, the *Sūtra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Law* (Ch. *Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經, Jp. *Myōhō renge kyō*)[86] was re-translated by the Buddhist scholar Kumārajīva (Ch. Jiumoluoshi 鳩摩羅什, 344-413) in 406.[87] The "Universal Gateway" chapter from his version is generally referred to as the "*Guanyin Sūtra*."[88] Third, in 601, Jñānagupta and Dharmagupta translated a revised version of Kumārajīva's text, which was named the *Sūtra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Law with an Additional Chapter* (Ch.

[83] Xie 2017, 90.
[84] Hu 2013, 518.
[85] *The Lotus Sutra*. T vol. 9, no. 263.
[86] *The Lotus Sutra*. T vol. 9, no. 262.
[87] Ho 2014, 14.
[88] Yü 2001, 114.

Tian pin miaofa lianhua jing 添品妙法蓮華經, Jp. *Tenpon myōhō renge kyō*).[89] During the Western Jin dynasty (266–316), Guanyin belief dominated and systematically spread throughout China. This new belief system was reflected in the *Lotus Sūtra*.

According to the *Sūtra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Law*, the child-giving function of Guanyin is written as follows,

> "若有女人，設欲求男，禮拜供養觀世音菩薩，便生福德智慧之男。設欲求女，便生端正有相之女，宿植德本，眾人愛敬。無盡意！觀世音菩薩有如是力。若有眾生恭敬禮拜觀世音菩薩，福不唐捐。"[90]

> "If any woman wanting to have a baby boy pays homage and makes offerings to Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, she will bear a baby boy endowed with good merit and wisdom. If she wants to have a baby girl, she will bear a beautiful and handsome baby girl who has planted roots of good merit and will have a love of sentient beings. O Akṣayamati! Such is the transcendent powers of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara that if any sentient being reverently respects him, the merit they achieve will never be in vain."[91]

Unlike for the chanting of dhāraṇīs in esoteric sūtras, practitioners do not need to carry out complicated rituals, such as purification, fasting, and fire sacrifice, but only need to make an invocation to obtain practical benefits. Therefore, the "Universal

[89] *The Lotus Sutra*. T vol. 9, no. 264.
[90] CBETA Electronic Buddhist scriptures. "法華經." Accessed April 10, 2019. http://tripitaka.cbeta.org
[91] Kubo and Yuyama, trans., 2007, 296.

Gateway" chapter was welcomed by the public and promoted the further development of the Child-giving Guanyin cult.[92]

The *Dhārani Sūtra of Buddha's Essence*

Another relevant text is the *Dhārani Sūtra of Buddha's Essence*, which was published in 1440 during the Ming dynasty.[93] As is well known, birth, aging, illness, and death are significant concerns within Buddhism. During ancient times, the absence of modern medical knowledge and practices made childbirth a dangerous process for mothers. Buddhism sought to address these risks by centering care and assistance for new mothers in religious terms. In esoteric Buddhism, the recitation of mantras and spells (Sk. *dhārani*) is used in the treatment of diseases and in helping people who are suffering. This attention to the problems surrounding childbirth is evident in such classical Buddhist scriptures as the handwritten edition of the *Dhārani Sūtra of Buddha's Essence*, which demonstrates that successful childbirth is an essential aspect of popular belief in Guanyin.

This collection of scripture also goes by the names *Fo shuo gao wang Guanshiyin jing ganying chu xiang* 佛說高王觀世音經感應出相 and *Fo ding xin jing* 佛頂心經. There are three volumes: "*Guanshiyin Bodhisattva's Great Dhārani Sūtra of the Buddha's Essence*,"[94] "*Guanshiyin Bodhisattva's Great Dhārani Sūtra Saving One from Disasters and Leading to Divine Manifestations Issuing from the Buddha's*

[92] Yü 2001, 117-119.
[93] Yü 2001, 133.
[94] Yü 2001, 93. Ch. *Fo ding xin Guanshiyin Pusa da tuoluoni jing* 佛頂心觀世音菩薩大陀羅尼經.

Essence"[95] and "*Guanshiyin Bodhisattva's Great Dhārani Sūtra, A Recipe for Curing Diseases and Safeguarding Childbirth Issuing from the Buddha's Essence.*"[96] This scripture likely appeared in the Tang dynasty and has been quite popular since at least the 11th century.[97]

The scripture includes a section on "Disease Treatment and Labor Inducement Methods," which details how to solve labor problems through swallowing water with a paper which has a dhārani and "secret character seal" written in vermilion ink on it. It is said that engaging with this sutra would help stave off universal problems, such as danger, hunger, and disease for the practitioner. Furthermore, Volume two contains a record for a charmed amulet meant to protect mothers during childbirth.[98]

The function of the dhārani and the amulet is to pray for safe birth for the mother and the baby. The scripture also places particular emphasis on safe and effective birthing practices for women. According to the sutra, at the time of delivery, it was believed that if a woman is plagued by demons who are causing her great pain, she was to immediately have someone write a dhārani and "secret character seal" in vermilion ink. She was then to swallow the paper with incense water; the belief was that she would give birth to a wise boy or a beautiful girl right away.[99]

It is entirely plausible that the phrase "give birth to a clever boy or a beautiful girl" (Ch. *chanxia zhihui zhi nan, youxiang zhi nü* 產下智慧之男，有相之女) used

[95] Yü 2001, 93. Ch. *Fo ding xin Guanshiyin Pusa liaobing jiuchan fang da tuoluoni jing* 佛頂心觀世音菩薩療病救產方大陀羅尼經.
[96] Yü 2001, 93. Ch. Fo ding xin *Guanshiyin Pusa jiunan shenyan da tuoluoni jing* 佛頂心觀世音菩薩救難神驗大陀羅尼經.
[97] Yü 2001, 131.
[98] Yü 2001, 133. See Li 2013; Ma 2013 for Chinese part.
[99] Yü 2001.

in this scripture is based on the "Universally Gateway" chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra:* "she will bear a baby boy endowed with good merit and wisdom... she will bear a beautiful and handsome baby girl."[100] The emergence of this sutra related to rescuing people from labor difficulties proved that people were seeking strong care from Buddhism for women and children. Both the delivery and raising of children were extensive social problems in ancient times. These mantras became popular after the 11th century and spread particularly widely in the Ming dynasty. In addition, Shi Weixiang 史葦湘 has found that in Dunhuang murals, Guanyin has a distinct characteristic: with the change in time periods, images of Guanyin changed from a maiden (Northern Wei and Northern Zhou dynasty, 420-589) to a young girl (Sui and Tang dynasties, 581- 907), then to a woman in the Song dynasty and Yuan dynasty.[101]

The *Dhāraṇī Sūtra of Five Mudrās of the Great Compassionate White-robed One*

The second fundamental Buddhist scripture for the Child-giving Guanyin cult is the *Dhāraṇī Sūtra of Five Mudrās of the Great Compassionate White-robed One*, which is known in short as the "*White Robe Sūtra.*" In the late Ming Dynasty, the handwritten edition was penned by Dong Qichang 董其昌 (1555-1636), a Chinese scholar and calligrapher best known for his trendy landscape paintings. In his postscript to the scripture, Dong Qichang wrote,

"施求嗣者轉誦，以神咒功德，生福德智慧之男，紹隆佛法，無有窮

[100] Ch. *bian sheng fudezhihui zhi nan ...bian sheng duanzheng youxiang zhi nü* 便生福德智慧之男…便生端正有相之女.
[101] Shi 1989, 12.

盡。”[102]

If the devotees recite [this], then, through the meritorious power of the divine spell, they will give birth to blessed and wise baby boys and spread the buddha-dharma limitlessly.

In the *White Robe Sūtra*, White-robed Guanyin is depicted as the goddess of labor in the form of a mother holding a baby in her arms or on her knee. This is evidenced in the woodcut illustration of Guanyin on the frontispiece of this scripture, wherein the White-robed Guanyin is depicted as a mother holding a baby boy on her knee.

As mentioned before, this variation of the White-robed Guanyin is also known as the Child-giving Guanyin. Since the 17th century, white porcelain statues depicting Child-giving Guanyin have been collected by people living in the Dehua 德化 area of Fujian province. This kind of porcelain Guanyin is represented as a female deity holding a child in her arms and “is invoked by barren women who are desirous of children.”[103] The white porcelain Guanyin figures discovered in Japan were mostly exported from the Fujian region, and some were venerated in Christian worship as Maria Kannon during the Edo period (Figure 1.7).

Due to the lack of evidence from traditional indigenous scriptures and statues, relatively little attention had been paid to the Child-giving Guanyin, who is usually regarded as a representative of popular religious culture.[104] However, Yü points out that Child-giving Guanyin was venerated not only by uncultured women but also by Confucian intellectuals. Also, regarding the bodhisattva as Child-giving Guanyin is not just a widespread phenomenon among the common people, as it has a robust

[102] Yü 2001, 257-258.
[103] Zhang 2011, 185.
[104] Yü 2009, 153.

classical scriptural basis.[105] Furthermore, since the Song dynasty, both scholars and artists have understood White-robed Guanyin as an integral figure within the canon of "Zen painting." As such, some Japanese Buddhist temples have collected White-robed Guanyin statues as part of their Zen painting collections. For example, the "White-robed Guanyin" painted by Muxi of the Southern Song dynasty is on display in the Kyoto temple Daitokuji 大德寺 (Figure 1. 3).

Later, the myth surrounding the benefits of praying to the white-robed, child-giving Guanyin spread because the gentry class recited indigenous scriptures before giving birth. The White-robed Guanyin is the earliest image of the Indian Avalokiteśvara as a female in China. The cult of White-robed Guanyin started in the 10th century, and the birth of the *White Robe Sūtra* shows the widespread popularity of White-robed Guanyin. In the *White Robe Sūtra*, Guanyin is understood as predominantly the goddess of childbirth before all else. Many scholars wrote stories about the birth of their babies or the babies of their friends in the appendix of copies of the scripture, which helped spread the practice widely in popular religion. The first such story found in one of the many versions of the *White-robe Sūtra* is generally believed to be from the Tang dynasty, which also explains how the scripture came into being.

"唐衡陽一士人。年高無子。祈嗣靡所不至。忽遇老僧。持白衣觀音經授之。曰。佛說此經有能授持。隨心所願。獲福無量。若欲求子。即生智慧之男。有白衣重包之異。於是夫婦竭誠誦滿一藏。數年遂生三

[105] Yü 2001, 34.

子。果有白衣重包。衡陽太守親睹其事。重為印施。亦以祈嗣。不逾年生一子。”[106]

To paraphrase, the story is about an aged scholar, who was living in Hengyang during the Tang dynasty and had fruitlessly prayed to Guanyin for a son for many years. He and his wife piously recited the *White Robe Sūtra* over five thousand times and in the next several years, his wife gave birth to three sons. Upon hearing this news, the Minister of Hengyang had the scripture printed for him and recited it repeatedly in prayer, also to have his wife successfully give birth to a son within the year. There are at least two ways to pray for children, reciting the scriptures and printing and spreading the sutra. In this story, all the babies were born clothed in white robes (Ch. *baiyi chong bao* 白衣重包), which is associated with the name of White-robed Guanyin.

The Spread of Miracle Stories and Veneration of Statues of Child-giving Guanyin by the Gentry Class

Both the literati and ordinary women showed devotion to this fertility goddess.[107] From the following stories, it can be speculated that Guanyin's child-giving functions were largely recorded and disseminated through the gentry class.

（1）Story one:

[106] CBETA Electronic Buddhist scriptures. "觀音經持驗記." Accessed April 10, 2019. http://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw
[107] Ho 2014, 113.

“武英殿中書舍人謝從寧，廣陽人，五世單傳。萬曆己卯（1579）同妻高氏禮持，自刊經印施。至壬午 (1582) 生子谷, 乙酉 (1585) 生子染, 丙戌 (1586) 生子稷及穎，皆白衣重包。”[108]

Xie Congning, an official in Wuying Palace, was born in Guangyang and for each of five generations, only one son had been born in his family. Starting in 1579, he and his wife began reciting the printed scriptures. In 1582, they had their first son, and in 1585, their second son was born. In 1586, two more two sons were born. All the sons were white-clothed at birth.

（2）Story two:

“恭順侯吳繼爵年五十無子，萬曆壬午(1582)有以此經授候，候每晨虔誦五十三遍，次年十月廿四日得一子，白衣重包，名之曰仁壽。刻經印施。”[109]

Marquis Wu Jijue, who reached his 50s without fathering a son, was given the scripture and recited it 53 times every morning. The next year, a white-clothed baby boy was born to his wife, and he named it Renshou. He later engraved and printed the scripture and offered it [to other practitioners].

（3）Story three:

“湖廣麻城縣成家畈張太名，妻王氏，妾繆氏，無嗣。於嘉靖乙卯（1555）四月一日許誦此經，丙辰（1556）八月七日生一子，白衣重包。

[108] Yü 1998, 121.
[109] Yü 1998, 122.

復刊施七百卷，誦一藏（即 5048 次）酬應。”[110]

Zhang Taiming, from Macheng County in the Huguang area, had a wife and a concubine but no children. In 1555, he began to recite the scripture. The next year, a white-clothed baby was born to his wife. He then printed 700 copies of the scripture and recited it 5,048 times to repay Guanyin for her help.

（4）Story four:

“左庶子趙用賢，常熟人。妻陳氏誦此經甚虔。萬曆丙戌（1586）七月十六日生一女，白衣如雪覆頭面及胸背，產嫗揭去，乃見眉目。庶子固多男，而此女獨有白衣之驗，故記之。”[111]

Zhao Yongxian, an official from the Changshu area, had a wife who was very devoted to reciting the scripture. In 1586, she gave birth to a baby girl, who was covered by a white cloth. Only when the cloth was removed could the face of the girl be seen. Zhao had some boys, but this girl was the only one that was white-clothed at birth.

In order to meet the people’s demands for having children, images of Child-giving Guanyin had formed instead of the White-robed Guanyin. Child-giving Guanyin is not a different deity from the White-robed Guanyin, but a substantiation of the latter’s child-giving function. This can explain why people at that time could revere either Child-giving Guanyin or White-robed Guanyin. Families that had a strong desire for a baby could be devoted to the Child-giving Guanyin.

[110] Yü 1998, 122.
[111] Yü 1998, 122.

Praying for Children

Praying to Guanyin for help with childbirth or for help having a son was a popular practice seen to be effective. A variety of different methods, behaviors, and customs surrounding this ritual came about. Some people believed they would give birth to a boy if they prayed to a statue of Guanyin, donated money to the bodhisattva, or recited the scriptures associated with this deity.

This idea of praying to images of Guanyin is present in the *Collection of the Benevolence of Guanyin* (Ch. *Guanyin ci lin ji* 觀音慈林集, dated to 1668), where there is a story which states,

（5）Story five:

"何隆五十無嗣，乃奉千手千眼大悲像，朝夕虔禮……夢大士授紅兒，連舉三子。"[112]

Helong was fifty years old and had no kids. Then, he began to worship an image of Thousand-armed and Thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara day and night at home. Later, he dreamed of receiving a baby from the bodhisattva, and finally, he received three sons in a row.

Similarly, the ritual of donating money to the bodhisattva so as to bring about the successful birth of a child is also evident in this collection:

（6）Story six:

"弟子莊寧妻吳氏百六娘共施淨財三十六貫文就東谷庵燭長明無盡燈一

[112] Zhou 2012, 14.

椀供養觀音菩薩功德祝獻自身行年本命元辰乞求花男子，早遂心願。”[113]

A couple named Zhuangning and Wushi donated some money to burn an ever-lasting lamp in front of the bodhisattva in Dogu Temple and prayed for a baby. They eventually had a baby.

However, the most common rituals involve reciting passages from scripture, and, consequently, there is much folklore surrounding the effectiveness of this conduct. There are some miracle stories in the *Inspiration Stories of Guanyin* (Ch. *Guanyin Lingyan Ji* 觀音靈驗記) that I will reference below:

（7）Story seven:

“章藻年近七十，無子，禮大士，夢座前印香盤一子字，旋親生男。”[114]

A man named Zhang Zao had no children at the age of seventy, but when he venerated Guanyin piously and dreamed of seeing the word for “son” on an incense tray, he soon received a baby boy.

（8）Story eight:

“清初譚憲卿，家饒無子，他以五千金興大悲懺壇，禮懺四十九日，妾即生子，胞衣白，妻乃發心捐千金建白衣閣，未幾，亦生子，胞衣如初。”[115]

[113] Zhou 2012, 15.
[114] Xin 2000, 336.
[115] Xin 2000, 336.

In the early Qing dynasty (1636-1912), there was a man named Tan Xianqing who was rich but had no children. However, after donating a large sum of money to build an altar and venerating a statue of Guanyin for 49 days, his concubine eventually gave birth to a baby boy, who was covered by white afterbirth. When his wife heard of this, she also donated money to build a White-robe Pavilion before soon also giving birth to a baby boy herself.

From the above excerpts, it is clear that in the process of praying to Child-giving Guanyin for children, people formed personal connections with Guanyin through these various rituals. Through both textual records and oral traditions of these customs, these purported experiences then further promoted the spread of belief in Child-giving Guanyin. In other words, the personal experiences recorded in the miracle stories introduced people to and taught them about Child-giving Guanyin. These stories were also deployed in proving the truthfulness of the descriptions of Guanyin's power in the sutras. Some practitioners reproduced gold bodies of statues or donated money to create statues in order to express heartfelt thanks to the Child-giving Guanyin for bestowing babies. Thus, the experiences that presumably led to creating the miracle stories often led to the creation of statues.

At the same time, however, the veneration of images of Guanyin can also promote the kinds of experience recorded in the miracle stories.[116] As an old saying goes, *xin cheng ze lin* 心誠則靈 ("if you believe in it then it is true"), and practitioners often prostrate themselves in front of images of Guanyin and repetitively chant the holy name of Guanyin in order to show their faith in Guanyin. They likely

[116] Yü 2001, 151-152.

believe that miracles can occur easily based on prior knowledge of miracle stories of Guanyin.

Chapter Three: The Feminization of Child-bearing Kannon in Japan

Scholars such as Tsukamoto Zenryū, Glen Dudbridge, and R.A. Stein consider the cult of Kannon in Japan to be an extension of the feminization of Guanyin in China. Consequently, relatively little significance has been attached to the feminization of Kannon in Japan.[117] The feminization of Kannon cannot be fully separated from the feminization of Chinese Guanyin. Significant similarities appeared between the two countries during the processes of feminization which can be attributed to the fusion of foreign and local religious traditions. Before the introduction of Buddhism to the respective countries, Daoism and Confucianism were prominent in China while kami cults were most prominent in Japan. Buddhism amalgamated with local kami after it arrived in Japan.

Tsukamoto points out that, unlike in Japan, the figure of Guanyin in China is a beautiful young goddess, always compassionate. He thus argues that, compared with the feminization of Guanyin in modern China, the feminization of Kannon has been ambiguous.[118] Iyanaga shares Tsukamoto's views on the feminization of Kannon, also calling it "ambiguous" in his argument. He explains that Kannon has been widely venerated by both the upper and lower classes in Japanese society since the Nara period (710-794). In the early modern period (Jp. *kinsei* 近世), the Saigoku Kannon Pilgrimage (Jp. *Saigoku sanjūsansho meguri* 西国三十三所巡り), a pilgrimage to thirty-three temples throughout the Kansai 関西 region of Japan, led to the expansion of the cult of Kannon. These official thirty-three Buddhist temples, including Hasedera 長谷寺, Kiyomizudera 清水寺, Miidera 三井寺, Rokuharamitsuji 六波蜜

[117] Iyanaga 2002, 563.
[118] Tsukamoto 1955, 263.

寺, and Ishiyamadera 石山寺, are some of Japan's oldest and most widely known temples, and they were also considered to be sacred places (Jp. *reijō* 霊場) connected with the bodhisattva Kannon. In the early modern period, Kannon's gender presentation was ambiguous. It was not until the twentieth century that Kannon fully transformed into a feminine deity.[119] Maria Kannon was venerated among the Christian communities in certain areas such as Nagasaki in Japan during the Edo period, when Christianity was persecuted.

Unlike the Japanese Kannon, the female characteristics of Avalokiteśvara were clearly evident in China after the process of localization. Guanyin transformed from a masculine deity to a feminine one with the image of a lady in the Song dynasty. However, to investigate more clearly the feminization of Avalokiteśvara in Japan, this chapter will explore the differing localization processes in that country. In particular, I will attempt to address the ways Japanese goddesses have influenced the feminization of Kannon and why the feminization of Kannon is ambiguous in Japan, with a focus on Child-bearing Kannon.

Child-bearing Kannon and Child-bearing Pagodas

In Japan, Child-giving Avalokiteśvara was known as Koyasu Kannon (Child-bearing Kannon)[120] or Jibo Kannon (Compassionate Mother Kannon). The belief in Child-bearing Kannon formed part of the larger belief in Koyasu-gami, which was first recorded as Minonokuni Koyasu-gami (Child-rearing kami in Mino Country) in

[119] Satō 2000; Iyanaga 2002, 311-314.
[120] From here, Child-bearing Kannon refers to Koyasu Kannon.

Nihon Sandai Jitsuroku (The True History of Three Reigns of Japan, ca. 901).[121] Child-bearing Kannon is said to have the power to grant children and facilitate easy delivery, while Kosodate Kannon 子育て観音 (Child-rearing Kannon) was believed to be responsible for guarding the process of growth after birth.[122] However, Koyasu Kannon was endowed with the function of granting children, safe childbirth, and healthy growth and was mainly enshrined in temples of the Tendai, Shingon, and Pure Land schools.[123]

Child-protecting Deities can be divided into two categories: Shinto Deities and Buddhist Deities. The first category includes Koyasu shrines 子安神社, and the second includes Child-bearing Kannon and Child-protecting (Koyasu) Jizō.[124] Koyasu shrines were dedicated to the fertility goddess Konohana Sakuya Hime 木花開耶姫, who was the wife of Ninigi no Mikoto 邇邇芸命, the grandson of Amaterasu. Child-bearing Kannon and Child-protecting Jizō images are distributed geographically around the country, although this distribution is not even. Child-bearing Kannon, iconographically represented as a female deity holding an infant, is most commonly believed to have been influenced by the Chinese Child-giving Guanyin and is venerated most strongly in western Japan.

In comparison, belief in Child-protecting Jizō is most popular in eastern Japan.[125] Furthermore, there are differences in the placements of the altars to these deities. According to Ōfuji Yuki 大藤ゆき, statues of Child-bearing Kannon are most often found within shrines dedicated to her, whereas statues of Child-protecting Jizō are

[121] Clark 2007.
[122] Sugawara and Metropolitan Museum of Art 1996, 119.
[123] Miwa 1935, 19.
[124] Clark 2007.
[125] Sugawara and Metropolitan Museum of Art 1996, 119.

usually placed on the side of roads, again, mostly in eastern Japan.[126]

In addition to shrines dedicated to Kannon, Child-bearing pagodas (Jp. *koyasu-no-tō* 子安塔) are also characteristic of Kannon's cult in Japan. The most famous three-storied pagodas are in the Kyoto temples Taizanji 泰産寺 and Kiyomizudera 清水寺. Child-bearing Kannon, who is depicted as a Thousand-armed Kannon, is enshrined inside the Child-bearing pagoda of the temple Kiyomizudera. Since *taizan* 泰産 contains the meaning of *anzan* 安産 (easy delivery), Taizanji became a temple where many practitioners prayed to Child-bearing Kannon.

Certainly, images of Child-giving Guanyin and Child-bearing Kannon are not always consistent, as the bodhisattva is sometimes portrayed with a baby in her arms and sometimes not. In China, the child is usually placed in Child-giving Guanyin's lap or arms, and the baby is facing outwards. In comparison, Miwa highlights that most images of Child-bearing Kannon in Japan show the bodhisattva holding the child in front of her chest with two arms (Figure 3.1 and 3.2). Presumably, these mimic the Chinese white-porcelain Guanyin figurines (Figure 1.7) or white-robed statues.[127] However, there are exceptions, such as the Child-bearing Kannon in the temple Tōfukuji 東福寺 in the Tsurumi 鶴見 area in Yokohama 横浜, which is a Six-armed Nyoirin Kannon (Wish-fulfilling Kannon) hugging a child with two of her arms (Figure 3.3).[128] For comparison, Yü argues that the cult of White-robed Guanyin as Child-giving Guanyin seems to have been securely established in China during the years of 1400 to 1600.[129]

[126] Moto-Sanchez 2016, 314.
[127] Iyanaga 2002, 322.
[128] Miwa 1935, 37.
[129] Yü 2012, 263.

There were centuries between the formation of White-robed Guanyin and the prevalence of Child-giving Guanyin. In Japan, the cult of Child-bearing Kannon became popular from the Muromachi period (1336-1573) to the Edo period.[130] By comparing the timelines, the cult of Child-giving Guanyin in China has a high possibility to be earlier than Japan's, but the impact from China on Japan at that time may not have been significant. The cults in both countries became popular around the 15th century, and Japan also has native Child-bearing goddesses. Thus, I think that the Japanese Child-bearing Kannon also developed independently before the White-porcelain Guanyin was imported to Japan.

Later, due to the influence of the white-porcelain Guanyin figures, images of Japanese Kannon changed, and the establishment of Maria Kannon with uniquely Japanese characteristics came about. As Yanagita Kunio 柳田国男 aptly suggests, the desire for easy childbirth and praying for the health of one's children are basic wishes that pre-existed the traditional kami cults, which eventually merged with Buddhist-specific beliefs. In this sense, there is a parallel relationship between the Japanese Child-bearing Kannon cult and the Chinese Child-giving Guanyin cult. [131] However, Yanagita then classifies the cult of Child-bearing Kannon with the traditional cult of stone deities (Jp. *Ishigami* 石神), which he called a purely Japanese belief.[132] Here, however, I take a contrary viewpoint. Although there are some deities in traditional Japanese culture whose domain includes safe childbirth and healthy childhoods, it is not possible to categorize Child-bearing Kannon simply into a "traditional Japanese" category. Before Buddhism was introduced into China and Japan, there were already many child-giving deities, but they were scattered all over the two countries and did

[130] Iyanaga 2002, 322.
[131] Iyanaga 2002, 323-324.
[132] Iyanaga 2002, 323-324.

not form into a god of significant national influence. As such, through Buddhism's integration with local cultural religions, Child-giving Guanyin and Child-bearing Kannon came about in their respective countries.

Faith in Japanese female deities

Before Buddhism was introduced into Japan, a female deity named Konohana Sakuya Hime existed in Shinto. Konohana Sakuya Hime is a kami that appears in Japanese mythology. In *Kojiki* 古事記 (*The Records of Ancient Matters*), her name in characters is 木花之佐久夜毘売. In *Nihonshoki* 日本書紀 (*Chronicles of Japan*), it is written as 木花開耶姫. Her role as a deity that is believed to ease delivery comes about in part due to popular mythology found in *The Records of Ancient Matters*. According to this text, she married Ninigi no Mikoto, the grandson of Amaterasu, and shortly after her marriage noticed she was pregnant. To prove that she was innocent and remove her husband's doubt about the father of her child, she put herself at stake. If her husband were indeed the father of her child, then all of her children would be born healthy. When all three of her children, Hoakari 火照命, Hosuseri no Mikoto 火須勢理命, and Hoori no Mikoto 火遠理命, appeared safely, she was named as a child-protecting deity, Koyasu-gami, and her cult came to be associated with safe childbirth.[133] In the famous Child-protecting Shrine in Hachioji-shi 八王子市 in Tokyo, the deity being worshipped is Konohana Sakuya Hime. Her "original ground" bodhisattva is Jūichimen Kannon (Eleven-faced Kannon), for whom Empress Kōmyō (Jp. *Kōmyō-kōgō* 光明皇后, 701-760), the wife of Emperor Shōmu 聖武 (701–756),

[133] Gottardo 2013, 127-128.

is recognized as an incarnation.[134] In addition to Konohana Sakuya Hime, Child-protecting Shrines are dedicated to her sister Iwanaga Hime 磐長姫. Their statues most typically depict a deity holding an infant in their arms, similar to Child-bearing Kannon.[135]

Moreover, the culture of goddess faith in Japan also included such figures as Amaterasu (the so-called "Sun Goddess"), Empress Jingū 神功 (170-269), Kichijō Tennyo 吉祥天女 (Auspicious Heavenly Goddess) in esoteric Buddhism, and Kishimojin ("Mother of Demons"). In Japanese mythology, Amaterasu dominates the other kami and also is the imperial kami of the Japanese royal family (Jp. Kōsojin 皇祖神). Although Amaterasu is typically regarded as a female kami and the ancestor of the emperor, who was privileged by the rulers of the Meiji period (1868-1912), Shinto gradually absorbed many ideas from Confucian and Buddhist doctrine, and in the medieval period, Amaterasu was largely treated as masculine and an incarnation of the cosmic buddha Dainichi.[136]

In the Gōdanshō 江談抄, a collection of folktales from the Heian period, Minamoto no Toshiaki 源俊明 (1044-1114) mentions that "it is said that Amaterasu is the transformation of Kannon." Toshiaki considers Amaterasu and Kannon Bodhisattva to be the same deity.[137] *Shinbutsu dōtai setsu* 神仏同体説 (the "theory of kami and buddhas sharing the same body") is a theory widely held by Japanese scholars that helps explain this phenomenon, which links Amaterasu with Kannon and the bodhisattva's variations, including the Eleven-faced Kannon, Futama Kannon (二

[134] Iyanaga 2002, 322-323.
[135] Miwa 1935, 42-49.
[136] Josephson 2012, 101.
[137] Iyanaga 2002, 564.

間観音),[138] and Wish-fulfilling Kannon (Nyoirin Kannon).[139] This theory is another derivative of Japan's process of "the amalgamation of kami and buddhas," which is expressed through connections between Buddhist deities and local kami cults. Another example of the connection is that the original Buddhist deity (Jp. *honji butsu* 本地仏) for the fertility goddess Konohana Sakuya Hime in the Koyasu shrine at Hachiōji 八王子 in Tokyo was the Eleven-faced Kannon.[140]

Iyanaga mentioned that in ancient times, Empress Kōmyō was considered to be the embodiment of Eleven-faced Kannon, and imagery depicting Kannon as feminine has existed since the Heian period. In the late medieval period, Child-bearing Kannon was also portrayed holding a child in her arms.[141] Empress Kōmyō also had a Child-bearing pagoda constructed in temple Taizanji. It was said that Empress Kōmyō had given birth to a daughter after praying for a baby and that she built the three-storied Pagoda to express her gratitude to the Eleven-faced Kannon.[142]

Nyoirin Kannon as a Female Deity

Nyoirin Kannon, one of the Six Kannon in esoteric Buddhism, originated in India and became popular in China during the Tang dynasty.[143] From the eighth century onward, the Nyoirin Kannon cult was transmitted to Japan. However, it was only in Japan, not China, that Nyoirin Kannon was treated as feminine. There are several miracle tales about her gender transformation that support this, such as the

[138] The buddha of private devotion (*nenjibutsu* 念持佛) by emperors.
[139] Andreeva 2013, 638.
[140] Iyanaga 2002, 322.
[141] Iyanaga 2002, 311-314. Tanaka Takako 田中貴子 also considers Empress Kōmyō to be the incarnation of Eleven-faced Kannon (Tanaka 2005).
[142] Iyanaga 2002, 249-250; Kitō 2013, 101.
[143] On the cult of Six Kannon, see in particular Fowler 2016.

"jewel woman" (Jp. *gyokujo* 玉女, Ch. *yunü*) motif that was present during medieval Japan.[144] *Yunü* means "a female Daoist immortal" in general classical Chinese usage.[145] Aptilon cites a famous passage of the *Kakuzen shō* 覺禪鈔 (Compendium of Kakuzen), compiled around 1182 by Kakuzen 覺禪 (1143-ca. 1213), which identifies Nyoirin Kannon as a female deity who transformed into a "jewel woman" and led the sovereign to paradise.[146] Importantly, this miracle tale influenced the well-known dream attributed to Shinran 親鸞 (1173-1263), said to have taken place around 1201, in which Kannon also appears in the form of a "jewel woman" and becomes his consort in order to lead him to rebirth in the Pure Land.[147] In both tales, Nyoirin Kannon becomes a woman and her mission is to lead practitioners (sovereigns or monks) to attain enlightenment.

In these miracle tales, feminine pronouns are used to refer to Nyoirin Kannon and she is imagined in roles typically associated with femininity, such as those of wife, concubine, or mother.[148] By the Muromachi period (1336-1573), Nyoirin Kannon also came to be the deity most popularly associated with fertility and childbirth.[149] Fremerman argues that the feminization of Nyoirin Kannon in Japan came about through syncretic mixing with indigenous deities or kami.[150] *Honji suijaku* (original ground and trace manifestation) also allowed local kami cults to be protected under the shelter of Buddhism and, compared with bodhisattvas, the

[144] Fremerman 2008, 24.
[145] Amstutz 2012, 230.
[146] Aptilon 2011, 893. Also see Amstutz 2012, 230, 232.
[147] Fremerman 2008, 1.
[148] Fremerman 2008, 4.
[149] Aptilon 2011, 895-896.
[150] Fremerman 2008, 5.

"original ground" kami had "the deepest, most powerful esoteric truth."[151] This helps explain why when Nyoirin Kannon stands as the "original ground" of Koyasu-gami (Child-giving kami), the sun goddess Amaterasu, or Inari Ōkami 稲荷大神 (also O'inari, Japanese kami of foxes);[152] her feminization is likely affected by the gender of these female deities. Therefore, as shown in figure 3.3, Kannon's posture is graceful and charming, and she is depicted with typically female characteristics. Moreover, there is a statue of Six-armed Nyorin Kannon at the temple Nichirenji 日蓮寺 at Mount Gankōzan 岩高山 wherein she is depicted breastfeeding a baby. She is seen as a form of Kannon venerated through the formula "Homage to the Breastfeeding Bodhisattva Kanzeon" (*Namu shinyū Kanzeon Bosatsu* 南無施乳觀世音菩薩),[153] which is widely understood as a form of Child-giving Kannon with Japanese characteristics. In China, it is rare to find images of Guanyin where she is shown breastfeeding babies. However, as seen in images of Kishimojin (Figure 1.5), similarities between Nyoirin Kannon as Child-giving Kannon and Kishimojin are clear. Therefore, the image of Nyoirin Kannon as a deity associated with fertility and childbirth in Japan is likely to have received influence from the Indian deity Hāritī (Jp. Kishimojin), while also being affected by the Koyasu-gami cult.

Maria Kannon and Hidden Christians' belief

There are significant similarities in iconography between statues of the Child-giving Guanyin and the Virgin Mary: Child-giving Guanyin is holding an infant boy,

[151] Fremerman 2008, 61.
[152] Fremerman 2008, 142. The kami Inari usually appears in a female form named the "Holy Woman avatar" (Jp. *Seijo Gongen* 聖女権現).
[153] Miwa 1935, 38.

and the Virgin Mary is holding the baby Christ. One important function of these apparent similarities is that it facilitated Japanese Christians' practicing in secret without arousing much suspicion during the Edo period. Takita Kōya 田北耕也 divides Hidden Christians' belief (Jp. *Kakure Kirishitan* 隠れキリシタン) into two categories of practicing type.

First, the belief in *nandogami* 納戸神 or *nandosama* 納戸様 (meaning "Closet Deities"*)* refers to the central focus of religious practice for the hidden Christians in the Hirato 平戸 and Ikitsuki 生月 areas.[154] Second, the *Higurichō* 日繰り帳 belief (meaning "the General Roman Catholic Calendar") was the central focus of religious practice for people living in Nagasaki, Kurosaki 黒崎, and the Gotō Islands 五島. By following the Catholic calendar, the leaders who held a day count ("ecclesiastical calendar") and a prayer book (Jp. *Orasho* オラショ) decided the annual holidays, led prayer sessions, and handed down the doctrinal teachings. Based on the above two forms of difference, the Mary Kannon cult is more in line with the characteristics of the second classification, the General Roman Catholic Calendar belief.[155]

Because Christianity was a forbidden religion during the Edo period, belief in Maria Kannon can be treated as a form of popular religion that is associated with the domestication of Christianity and Chinese Buddhism. In essence, followers of the Maria Kannon belief system were Christians who borrowed Buddhist images from China.

[154] Takita 1954.
[155] Takita 1954.

Summary: Gender Ambiguity in Japan

According to indigenous Chinese scriptures, the cult of Child-giving Guanyin in China led to the creation of a new deity: that of White-robed Guanyin holding a baby boy in her arms. In Japan, by comparison, the iconography of Child-bearing Kannon often relies on Indian Buddhist forms integrated with local kami cults.

In China, after the syncretic fusion of the cult of Child-giving Guanyin with popular religion, the rise in influence of Confucianism regarding the concept of bearing and raising children, and the popularization of the *Lotus Sūtra*, the religious beliefs of Chinese people became more oriented to practical outcomes.

However, before Buddhism's introduction into Japan, female child-giving deities already existed. Their supposed function was of ensuring easy childbirth and the continuing health of one's children, such as the fertility goddess Konohana Sakuya Hime. After Buddhism's introduction to Japan, these female deities merged with Buddhist ones through the process of the amalgamation of kami and buddhas, which inextricably linked the local kami cults with Buddhism more broadly. The theory of "the amalgamation of kami and buddhas" that was prominent from the middle of the Heian period had robust features of kami cults, which further accelerated the localization process of Buddhism in Japan. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, the Eleven-faced Kannon has been considered the original Buddhist divinity for both Amaterasu and for Empress Kōmyō as a deified figure.

Chapter Four: Kannon and Ambiguous Sexual Transformation

Why did Avalokiteśvara not undergo as thorough a gender transformation in Japan as in China? According to Yü's analysis, several underlying conditions contributed to the feminization of Guanyin in China, including "indigenous sutras, miracle tales, myths, and legends of divine monks as incarnations."[156] These diverse conditions all contributed to the "domestication" process of the bodhisattva, as Yü puts it (or, as I prefer, the "localization" of the bodhisattva). Moreover, if there had been very influential and popular female Buddhist deities in China before Guanyin appeared, it might not have been possible for Avalokiteśvara to become a female deity in China. In this chapter, I will analyze visual images to explore the reasons why Kannon's shift in gender presentation was not as substantial as Guanyin's in China. The primary purpose of my analysis will be to answer whether the Japanese Kannon is equivalent to a female deity or the images suggest both masculine and feminine features. I will also show that the specific cases of Compassionate Mother Kannon and Maria Kannon indicate an entirely feminine deity.

Influential Native Goddesses in Japanese Mythology

The gradual decrease in the roles of female deities in China left a vacuum in the realm of religion that Guanyin's rise in popularity was temporarily able to fill. Yü believes that China is the only country where Avalokiteśvara underwent a complete sexual transformation.[157] Before the appearance of Child-giving Guanyin in popular religious belief in China, there were already male and female deities believed to have

[156] Yü 2001, 223.
[157] Yü 2001, 407-411.

child-giving properties in Daoism as well as popular religion. However, none of them reached the status of a national deity. After the introduction of Buddhism to China and its eventual fusion with existing images of deities, a Child-giving Guanyin developed who offered the promise of salvation and had a diverse social base of practitioners. In the Song dynasty, images of Child-giving Guanyin gradually shifted into an image of an ordinary Song woman, whose imagery was more familiar to people and more accessible as someone they could pray to. Conversely, in India and Tibet, Avalokiteśvara did not undergo a shift in his gender representation.[158]

However, Japan has many native female deities, such as Amaterasu Ōmikami (the kami of creation and death), Izanami 伊邪那美 (the kami of revelry), Ame-no-Uzume-no-mikoto 天宇受賣命 (also rendered as 天鈿女命, the kami of mirth), and Konohana Sakuya Hime (the kami of fertility). These kami were all present in Japanese mythology in ancient times. Amaterasu, for example, is so well-known that she was considered to be the mythical ancestor of Japan. Furthermore, later, during the period of *shinbutsu shūgō* (the amalgamation of kami and buddhas), Amaterasu was regarded as the incarnation of the buddha Dainichi in Japan.

In addition to Amaterasus, Izanami, the kami most closely associated with motherhood in Japanese mythology, is said to have created the Japanese kami with her brother, Izanagi 伊邪那岐. Ame-no-Uzume-no-mikoto is considered to be the original kami of Japanese dance. In addition, there is the fertility kami Konohana Sakuya Hime, and her sister Iwanaga Hime, both of whom became Child-protecting deities believed to have the power to ensure safe childbirth.[159] These examples show

[158] Yü 2001, 413.
[159] Gottardo 2012, 127-128.

that female deities have been venerated and prayed to in Shinto beliefs since ancient times.

As I mentioned in chapter 3, Koyasu-gami or Koyasu-sama 子安様 refers to the Shintō kami for pregnancy, easy childbirth, and child health and development. Although the cult of Child-bearing Kannon supplanted the cult of Koyasu-gami, even in modern times, Shintō shrines dedicated to Koyasu-sama remain, such as Asama shrines 浅間神社, the most popular ones, which still number over one thousand across Japan. Two of the most well-known Asama shrines are the head shrines standing at both the foot and the summit of Mount Fuji 富士山. There are many deities associated with child-giving functions, and this phenomena shows the diversity of child-giving belief in Japan. Examples include Eleven-faced Kannon, Wish-fulfilling Kannon, Koyasu Kannon (Child-bearing Kannon), Jibo Kannon (Compassionate Mother Kannon), Maria Kannon, Byakue Kannon (White-robed Kannon), Kishimojin (Figure 4.1 and 4.2), and others.

Furthermore, since it is possible for there to be many deities in the same Child-giving cult, including both male and female ones, Child-bearing Kannon does not have to be feminized as the only one. The difference between Japanese Child-bearing Kannon and the Chinese Child-giving Guanyin is that Child-giving Guanyin is so influential that she often replaced other deities who were prayed to for childbirth-related concerns rather than co-existing with them. As an independent deity, the gender of Child-giving Guanyin would not be as indeterminate as Child-bearing Kannon would be in Japan.

These conceptualizations of deities coexisting peacefully can be attributed to the concept of "harmony in diversity" (*ta no wa* 多の和) that I outlined earlier, and which Emi Mase-Hasegawa uses to explain the harmony between different religions. When

Prince Shōtoku, who is credited with creating the Seventeen Article Constitution 十七条憲法 (Jp. *Jyūnana jō kenpō*),[160] tried to establish Asuka Buddhism, an imported religion, as the official state religion, this concept of harmony (*wa* 和) was also attributed to him. In his attempts to avoid religious conflict, he was said to have called upon the people to respect Shinto, Buddhism, and Confucianism as the three treasures of Japan society. Such recognition of possible multiplicities in faith, as well as the generally respectful attitude to religious traditions founded abroad, in particular Buddhism, attributed to Shōtoku promoted the acceptance of Buddhism in Japan and influenced the co-existence of Shinto and Buddhism.[161]

Although much of what has been attributed to Prince Shōtoku has been disputed by modern scholars, such as Kume Kunitake 久米邦武 and Tsuda Sōkichi 津田左右吉, who have claimed that the basic records in the *Nihon shoki* were creative fiction,[162] the attribution of the Seventeen Article Constitution and other works and practices to Shōtoku in the generations after his death still strongly influenced Japanese culture.

The Male-dominated Nature of Japanese Religion

Although Amaterasu Ōmikami is typically treated as a female kami, she also shows ambiguous gender characteristics in the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki.* Amaterasu Ōmikami dresses as a man and carries weapons, which are associated with masculinity, when she meets her younger brother Susanoo no Mikoto 須佐之男命, a

[160] Yoshida 2003, 4.
[161] Mase-Hasegawa 2016, 176.
[162] Yoshida 2003, 4.

god of Ne no kuni 根の国 (Root Country).[163] Moreover, shrines dedicated to Amaterasu in Yamato 大和, Yamashiro 山城, Tamba 丹波, and Settsu 摂津 are also dedicated to male sun deities.[164] These shrines also suggest that the deity's gender is ambiguous.

Child-bearing Kannon and Compassionate Mother Kannon also underwent the process of kami-buddha amalgamation, and their "local trace" kami (Jp. *suijakushin* 垂迹神) were considered to be the female deities of Koyasu-gami. Since the local manifestation was already female, it is important for the bodhisattva to maintain its original appearance in people's minds as the "original source" Buddhist deity. Initially, the concept and practice of *shinbutsu shūgō* combined kami cults and Buddhism to reconfigure a belief system with Japanese characteristics, but it is fundamental that each part, including the "local trace" and "original source," maintains its own identity. However, in China, Child-giving Guanyin is known largely through Chinese legends (such as the legends about the princess Miaoshan 秒善), novels, art, plays, and miracles.[165] In people's minds, Guanyin is not a male deity from India, but a goddess developed from China's own national mythology and legends.

Myths and Legends Related to the Feminization of Kannon

Iyanaga argues that there are no comparable myths and legends in Japan to the well-known Miaoshan and Fish-basket Kannon legends in China, which recount the

[163] Akima 1993, 153.
[164] Matsumae 1978, 3.
[165] Reed 1992, 176.

origin of the feminization of Guanyin.[166] However, as Iyanaga also shows, there are still legends associated with the feminine characteristics of Kannon in Japan. For example, there is a legend involving Taichō 泰澄 (682-767) and Kannon in *Honcho Shinsen Den* 本朝神仙伝 (Lives of Japanese Immortals), written by Ōe No Masafusa 大江匡房 (1041-1111) in the late Heian period. The legend as found in this compilation is considered to be one of the first dated Japanese sources linking Kannon directly with a goddess figure.[167]

> "泰澄は賀州の人となり。世に越しの小大徳と謂ふ。（中略）また諸の神社に向ひて、その本覚を問へり。稲荷の社にして数日念誦するに、夢に一の女あり。帳の中より出でて告げて曰く、本体観世音、常在補陀落、為度衆生故、示現大明神といへり。"[168]

> "Taichō came from the province of Kaga [modern Ishikawa prefecture]. People of the world called him the Little Daitoku (Great-Virtue) of Koshi because he was blessed with numerous divine manifestations. […] After this, he went around visiting various shrines and inquiring into their deities' original nature as enlightened beings [*hongaku* 本覚]. Chanting and reciting prayers over several days at the Inari [rice or fox deity] sanctuary, he had a dream during which he saw a woman come forth from behind a curtain. She told him: 'In my original body I am Kannon and as such reside permanently

[166] Iyanaga 2002, 563.
[167] Iyanaga 2002, 564.
[168] Cited in Iyanaga 2002, 564.

in Fudaraku. To save all living beings, however, I show myself also as this spirit of great illumination.'"[169]

The deity depicted in Inari shrine is female, and later, due to the rise of *honji suijaku*, the Koyasu Daimyōjin 子安大明神 (Figure 4.3) was thought to be an embodiment of Kannon that appeared to help the Japanese people.[170] Thus, this female deity also appears in the body of the male Kannon.

Aptilon cites a famous passage there which identifies Nyoirin Kannon as a female deity who transformed into a "jewel woman" and led the sovereign to the Western Pure Land.[171] This miracle tale had a strong influence on the well-known dream attributed to Shinran, in which Kannon became his consort in the form of "jewel woman" and helped him to rebirth in the Pure Land.[172] In both tales, Nyoirin Kannon becomes a woman and her mission is to lead the practitioner (whether a sovereign or a monk) to rebirth in the Pure Land.

The Gender Ambiguity of Compassionate Mother Kannon

Kanō Hōgai 狩野芳崖 (1828-1888), a Japanese painter well-known for contributing to the foundation of the modern Japanese Zen style of painting, completed his important work, *Merciful Mother Kannon* (Jp. *Hibo Kannon* 悲母観音), in 1888 (figure 1.5). This painting shows that the popular Chinese Buddhist

[169] Translation from Kleine and Kohn 1999, 152-153.
[170] Nakamura 2009, 73-89.
[171] Aptilon 2011, 893.
[172] Fremerman 2008, 1. Also see Amstutz 2012 for a detailed study of accounts of Shinran's dream.

conceptualization of the White-robed Guanyin as Child-giving Guanyin had spread to Japan and influenced Japanese Buddhism by this time. In this work, Guanyin, although depicted as male and with a mustache, is dressed in white and a baby, depicted inside a bubble in the lower part of the painting, is being sprayed with holy water by Guanyin, presumably to assist with its birth. Chelsea Foxwell, in her study of the work, uses the male pronoun "he" to describe the bodhisattva,[173] which she calls the traditional pronoun designation. In *Merciful Mother Kannon*, Kanō depicts an infant squatting in a spherical bubble while looking up at Kannon. In the early 20th century, Japanese scholars began to think that the image of Kannon in this painting had been influenced by the inclusion of the Youth Sudhana (Ch. Shancai tongzi 善財童子, Jp. Zenzai-dōji) in icons of Guanyin from China.[174] In *Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara* (Figure 4.4), the Youth Sudhana is visiting Kannon, who is portrayed as a seated, mustached Avalokiteśvara, clearly highlighting the masculinity of the Bodhisattva of Mercy. However (following Foxwell), the *Merciful Mother Kannon* shows both masculine and feminine features.

Classic Buddhist sutras such as the *Lotus Sūtra* and *Flower Garland Sūtra* (Jp. *Kegon kyō*) portray Avalokiteśvara as a princely and masculine figure. However, images, myths and legends, and miracle tales in East Asia often portray Avalokiteśvara as female,[175] as discussed in Chapter 1 here. As we have also seen, in China, Guanyin was portrayed as a female bodhittsava in many miracle stories and images. Importantly, these stories and images reached Japan and did influence images of Kannon. However, although this resulted in the addition of some feminine features to Kannon's appearance, it is essential to note that such Chinese influence did *not*

[173] Foxwell 2010, 328.
[174] Foxwell 2010, 329.
[175] Foxwell 2010, 330.

result in a complete shift to a feminine gender presentation. Independently, both male and female traits often appear in the same depiction of Kannon (as seen, for example, in Figure 1.6). Masculine features include the mustache, beard, and flat chest, while features typical of feminine deities include rounded shoulders, long hair, and plump forearms.[176] In the images of Compassionate Mother Kannon, the noticeable addition of breasts also indicate femininity. The simultaneous inclusion of both typically masculine and typically feminine traits in the same images display the gender ambiguity that I mentioned earlier.

As such, comparing images of the Child-giving Guanyin and Compassionate Mother Kannon or Child-bearing Kannon is helpful because it highlights a uniformity in how Chinese Guanyin is portrayed in contrast to the variability of Japanese Kannon imagery. The Child-giving Guanyin is often pictured in white robes with a little boy seated on her lap, and the young boy is sometimes holding a scripture (Figure 4.5 and 4.6) or a lotus flower in his hand. Comparatively, there is significantly less cohesion in images of Compassionate Mother Kannon in Japan. For example, Kinshōji 金昌寺 in Saitama 埼玉 Prefecture is the fourth of thirty-four Kannon pilgrimage sites. At the early time of Kannon pilgrimage, the Chichibu 秩父 Kannon pilgrimage had thirty-three sites, imitating the Saigoku Thirty-three Kannon pilgrimage and the Bandō 板東 Thirty-three Kannon pilgrimage. The Chichibu Kannon pilgrimage changed to thirty-four Kannon pilgrimage sites in the early 1800s. From then on, these Kannon pilgrimage routes have been collectively known as *Nihon Hyaku Kannon* 日本百観音 (the one hundred Kannon temples in Japan).[177]

[176] Foxwell 2010, 330.
[177] Gump 2005, 141.

In front of the Kannon Hall, there is a statue of Compassionate Mother Kannon made of stone wherein she is holding a child in her arms, exposing her breasts, and nursing the child while gazing at it. This statue is based on an Ukiyoe 浮世絵 (pictures of the floating world) image that was commissioned by Yoshino Hanzaeimon 吉野屋半左衛門 upon the death of his wife and young son. Yoshino Hanzaeimon had prayed before an image at Kinshōji for his wife to become pregnant with a son, and so upon their deaths, he had a painting of them commissioned to honor their memory. Since the stone statue in front of Kannon Hall is based on this image, it differs significantly from Chinese depictions of Child-giving Guanyin.

It is common for images of Child-bearing Kannon to depict her nursing a baby, just as she is portrayed in the stone statue at Kinshōji. These stone statues of the Compassionate Mother Kannon or Child-bearing Kannon are also commonly found along roadsides in Japan, as statues of Jizō often are. In comparison, statues of Kannon enshrined in Buddhist temples typically display more traditional depictions of Kannon, such as Eleven-faced Kannon or Wish-fulfilling Kannon, who both can serve as the original Buddhist deity, or the "original ground," for the Child-bearing kami.

Kannon as neither Virginal nor Maternal

Joseph Mannard argues that the essential differences between Maria Kannon and Child-bearing Kannon lie in ideas of maternity and virginity.[178] The Virgin Mary (Mother of Jesus) is considered as both maternal and virginal, while Child-bearing Kannon is imagined neither concretely as virginal nor maternal. In part, this is because Child-bearing Kannon is not always portrayed as female. Furthermore, even though she is most often depicted with a child on her lap, Child-bearing Kannon does

[178] Mannard 1986, 318.

not give birth to the child. On the contrary, the Virgin Mary gave birth to her child. Paul McCarthy argues that Kannon's feminine appearance does not negate the inherent difference between Kannon, who has been transformed, and the Virgin Mary, and also highlights how the gender of bodhisattvas is not emphasized.[179]

Takemura Satoru 竹村覚 believes that the conflation between the Virgin Mary and Kannon may have started much earlier than with the suppression of Christianity in Japan.[180] However, it is well-known that during the Edo period, most frequently in the Nagasaki area, the persecution of Christians was common and widespread.[181] In order to keep their faith hidden and religious practice alive, Christians often prayed to Maria Kannon or "Mary in Buddhist Guise"[182] —who was purposefully depicted similarly to the Buddhist deity Kannon—as a substitute for the Virgin Mary. During this time of anti-Christian rhetoric and persecution, these secretive methods fooled government agents and helped Japanese Christians carry out their religious activities in secret.

Except for Nyoirin Kannon, who appears to have taken on recognized female characteristics, and Maria Kannon, who has the same figure as Chinese white Porcelain Guanyin, it is hard to say that Japanese Kannon is equivalent to a goddess or other female deity.

[179] McCarthy 1982, 2-3.
[180] Takemura 1964, 102-103.
[181] Whelan 1996, 10.
[182] Reis-Habito 1996, 51.

Conclusion

It is clear that, outside of monastic contexts, Guanyin came to be considered solely a female deity in China, of which White-robed Guanyin, Water-moon Guanyin, and Child-giving Guanyin are some of the most popular manifestations. Guanyin's role in supporting childbirth is well documented by many indigenous scriptures, most importantly in the "Universal Gateway" chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*. Moreover, it is in part through miracle tales such as these, as well as myths, legends, and artistic depictions, that faith in Child-giving Guanyin became widespread. The imagery associated with Child-giving Guanyin is inspired by depictions of other child-granting deities in Buddhism as well as Daoism. For example, depictions of Guizimu, a Buddhist deity, impacted Guanyin imagery greatly. Daoist deities such as Niangniang, Sanxiao Niangniang ("Goddess of Three Clouds"), and Bixia Yuanjun ("Goddess of Azure Cloud) also greatly influenced Child-giving Guanyin imagery. Although Child-giving Maitreya is also venerated as a prominent, masculine child-granting deity in China, the breadth and scope of his popularity cannot compare with that of Child-giving Guanyin.

As I have explained above, Avalokiteśvara's transformation from a male deity into a female deity was not as thorough in Japan as it was in China, with masculine depictions of Kannon still common in Japanese Buddhism. This is in part due to the different processes of localization that took place as belief in Guanyin and Kannon grew in each respective country. As belief in Guanyin spread through both China and Japan, the imagery and legends associated with the bodhisattva underwent different processes of localization. In China, Child-giving Guanyin first rose to popularity during the Song dynasty before gradually taking her place as the most widely-

accepted and revered deity with child-giving functions in Chinese popular religion. This is one notable difference between her and Japan's Child-bearing Kannon: Child-giving Guanyin's influence was so great that she often *replaced* other deities whose purview related to fertility or childbirth. By contrast, the co-existence of multiple deities with similar functions is much more common in Japan, and it is in part such co-existence that contributes to the greater gender ambiguity of Child-bearing Kannon in Japan. I also argue that this multiplicity of child-giving deities in Japanese society causes Child-bearing Kannon to lack a certain specificity, dominance, and widespread acceptance that Child-giving Guanyin in China benefits from.

Furthermore, in comparison to the singularity of Child-giving Guanyin in China, there are many kinds of child-granting deities or goddesses in Japan: Koyasu Kannon, Kosodate Kannon, Koyasu Jizō, and Kishimojin in Buddhism; Koyasu-gami within the kami cults or "Shinto"; and Maria Kannon in Japanese Christianity. The latter is a relatively recent conceptualization of Kannon that was influenced by the white porcelain figures of Guanyin from Fujian province. These deities coexist with each other peacefully within Japanese society in part due to the religious concept of "harmony in diversity," which is an approach to faith that also allowed for Japanese people to adopt Buddhism without replacing and rejecting the kami cults in Shinto. It is such acceptance of plurality that allows a diversity of religions to co-exist in Japan.

Moreover, the doctrine of *honji suijaku* ("original ground and trace manifestation") further accelerated the processes of localization that Buddhism underwent in Japan and also helped to produce certain Buddhist deities with Japanese characteristics. For instance, Nyoirin Kannon, who was originally conceived as a male deity in Buddhism, became represented with some characteristics typical of other female deities in Japan. This phenomenon of gender ambiguity does not only

apply to Nyoirin Kannon, however, and Eleven-faced Kannon is commonly depicted to be the "local trace" of Amaterasu and of Empress Kōmyō. Additionally, since Child-giving Guanyin was conceptualized entirely as a female deity when she was introduced to Japan and, similarly, the femininity of the Virgin Mary in Christianity was unquestioned, Maria Kannon was conceived as a wholly feminine version of Kannon in Japan. However, because the spread of the cult of Maria Kannon was limited in scope, it was hard-pressed to challenge the dominance of the traditional Child-bearing cult of Kannon in Japanese society. Thus, most images of Child-bearing Kannon in Japan still retain masculine characteristics typical of Indian Buddhist portrayals of Avalokiteśvara.

Figures

Figure 1.1. Nanhai Putuo Mountain Guanyin, Putuo Mountain, Zhejiang province.[183]

[183] Miwa 1935, vi.

Figure 1.2. Child-giving Guanyin or White-Robed Mahasattva Guanyin.[184]

[184] Iyanaga 2002, 311, and Miwa 1935, vii.

Figure 1.3. *Guanyin, Crane, and Gibbons*, by Muxi, 13th century, Daitokuji, Kyoto, Japan. Designated National Treasure.[185]

[185] Iyanaga 2002, 311.

Figure 1.4. *White-robed Guanyin*. Muromachi period (1336-1573). The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (artwork in the public domain).[186]

[186] Iyanaga 2002, 317.

Figure 1.5. *Guizimu*. Jiaohe Ancient City 交河古城遺址, Xinjiang. Collection of German Turpan Expedition team.[187]

[187] Miwa 1935, 6.

Figure 1.6. *Merciful Mother Kannon*, dated 1888, by Kanō Hōgai. The Tokyo University of the Arts (artwork in the public domain).[188]

[188] http://www.mainichi-art.co.jp; accessed on April 15, 2019.

Figure 1.7. A Dehua porcelain *Guanyin bringing child* statue, interpreted to be *Maria Kannon* in connection with Christian worship. Nantoyōsō Collection, Japan.[189]

[189] https://en.wikipedia.org. "Dehua porcelain"; accessed on April 15, 2019.

Figure 1.8. Guanyin with the Youth Sudhana and the Dragon girl, taken at Guanyin Hall of Huiji Temple on the Mount of Foding 佛頂, Mount Putuo, Zhejiang Province, China.[190]

[190] This photo was taken by Huang Meihong on January 10, 2019.

Figure 1.9. Nanhai Guanyin.[191]

[191] Miwa 1935, 26-27.

Figure 1.10. Nanhai Child-giving Guanyin in Huiji 慧濟 Temple on Mount Putuo.[192]

[192] This photo was taken by Huang Meihong on January 10, 2019.

Figure 1.11. Nanhai Child-giving Guanyin in Fayu 法雨 Temple on Mount Putuo.[193]

[193] This photo was taken by Huang Meihong on February 5, 2019.

Figure 1.12. Nanhai Child-giving Guanyin in Nanhai Guanyin Temple on Mount Putuo.[194]

[194] This photo was taken by Huang Meihong on February 5, 2019.

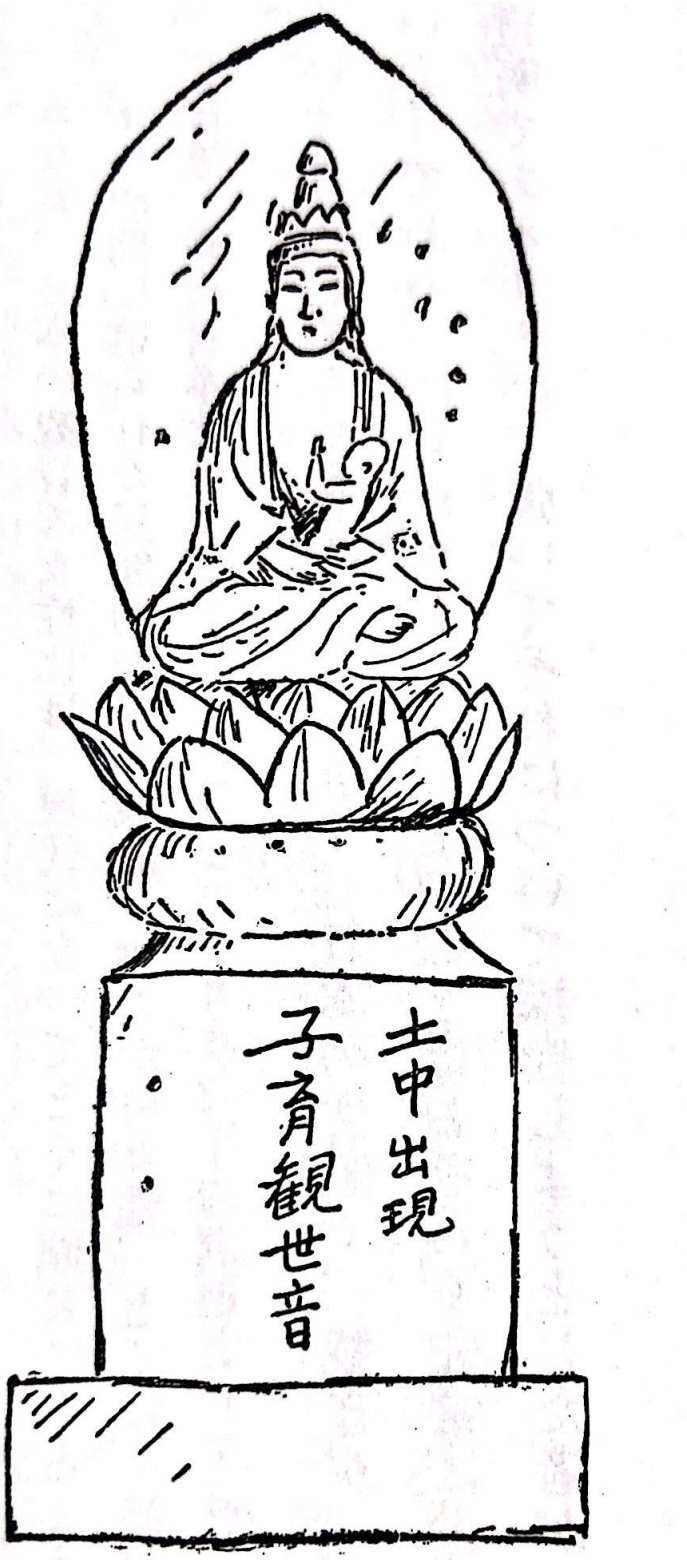

Figure 3.1 Kosodate Kanzeon in Seihōji 西方寺, Tokyo.[195]

[195] Miwa 1935, 32.

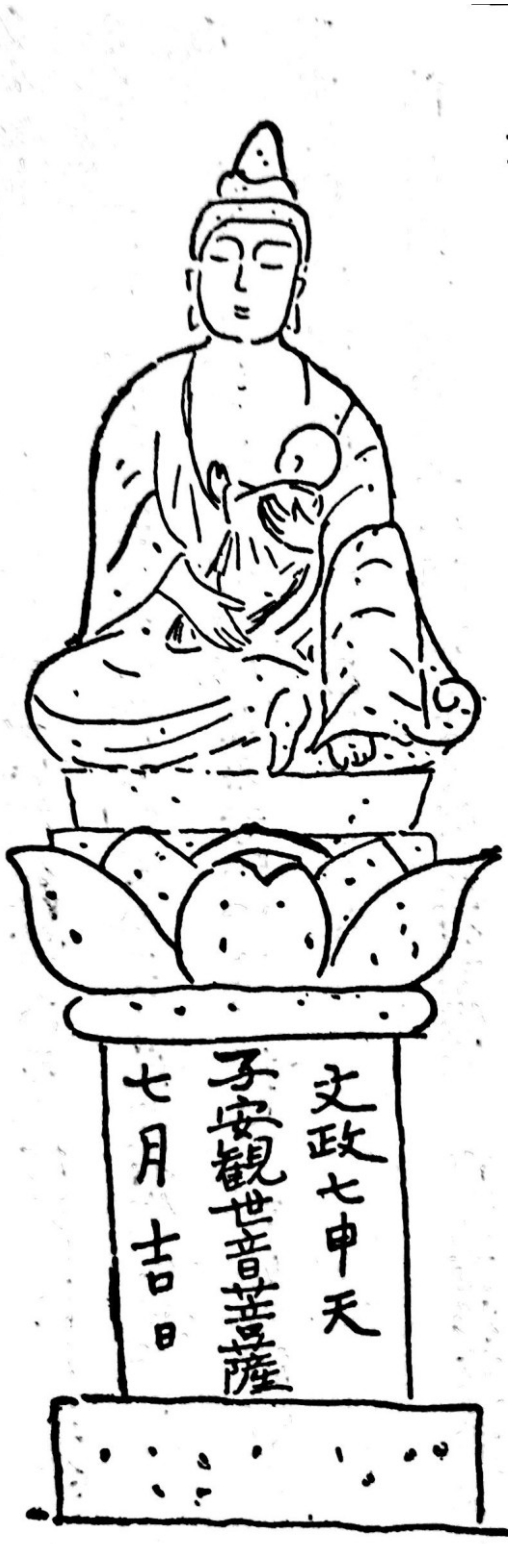

Figure 3.2 Kosodate Kanzeon in Manganji 満願寺, Chiba.[196]

[196] Miwa 1935, 31.

Figure 3.3. Koyasu Kannon in Tōfukuji, Yokohama.[197]

[197] Miwa 1935, 37.

Figure 4.1. Kishimojin, Chiba.[198]

[198] Miwa 1935, 86.

Figure 4.2. Kishimojin, Shingenji 真源寺, Tokyo.[199]

[199] Miwa 1935, 82.

Figure 4.3. Koyasu Daimyōjin in Koyasu Shrine, Tokyo.[200]

[200] Miwa 1935, 46.

Figure 4.4. *Water-Moon Avalokitesvara*, 14th century, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., (artwork in the public domain).[201]

[201] Foxwell 2010, 329.

Figure 4.5. Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara as the Bestower of Sons (Songzi Guanyin), dated to the ate Ming (1368–1644) or Qing (1644–1911) dynasty. The Metropolitan Museum of Art (artwork in the public domain).[202]

[202] https://www.metmuseum.org; accessed on April 10, 2019.

Figure 4.6. Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara as the Bestower of Sons (Songzi Guanyin), dated to the late Ming (1368–1644) or Qing (1644–1911) dynasty. The Metropolitan Museum of Art (artwork in the public domain)[203]

[203] https://www.metmuseum.org; accessed on April 10, 2019.

Appendix: Timeline

Dynasty	**Time**	**Guanyin in China**
Han dynasty	206 B.C.- 220 A.D.	Buddhism was introduced into China.
Tang dynasty	618 -907	Until the end of Tang dynasty, Guanyin was still perceived as a masculine deity.
Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms	907-979	
Song dynasty	960-1279	By the early Song dynasty, the popular conceptualization of Guanyin's gender began to shift.
Yuan dynasty	1279-1368	Guanyin probably reached her complete feminine transformation.
Ming dyansty	1368-1664	White-robed Guanyin was transformed into the Child-giving Guanyin, allowing for the cult of the "White-robed Guanyin as Child-giving Guanyin" to eventually be established during the Ming dynasty.

Abbreviations

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SAT Daizōkyō Text Database (SAT 大正新脩大蔵経テキストデータベース). 2018 version. University of Tokyo. http://21dzk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT.

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