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The Study of the Art of Guanshiyin Bodhisattva Statue Sculpting in Ancient Chinese Books and Engraved Plates——Taking the Tang, Song, and Yuan dynasties as examples

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Abstract:
This article explores the origins of Guanshiyin Bodhisattva in early Buddhist art in India, conducting detailed analyses of Guanshiyin Bodhisattva statues from Gandhara and Mathura during the Kushan period, the Gupta period, the Post-Gupta period, and the Pala dynasty. It also categorizes and studies the images of Guanshiyin Bodhisattva in early Buddhist art in Tibet. Additionally, it examines the development of Guanshiyin Bodhisattva images in different early historical periods of the Tang, Song, Five Dynasties, Western Xia, and early Yuan dynasties through ancient Books and Engraved Plates.

Keywords:
Ancient Books and Engraved Plates, Guanshiyin Bodhisattva, Statue Sculpting

1.The origins of the image of Guanshiyin Bodhisattva in early Buddhist art

Buddhist art originated in India, and Chinese Buddhist art is greatly influenced by Indian Buddhist art. It is necessary to understand the early Indian Buddhist art and serve as the basis for research. The word "Guanyin" is the Sanskrit term for Avalokitesvara, where "Ava" meaning "downwards","look" meaning"to see, to gaze","loka" meaning" space, universe, world "," svara "meaning" supreme ruler, master ", Collectively, it conveys the meaning of "the savior who, with compassion and mercy, looks down upon all beings and illuminates everything." In Tibetan, it is known as "Chenrezig," while in Chinese, it is called Guanyin, Guangshiyin, and other variations, all of which encapsulate the idea of "observing the world with one's eyes." This has led to the belief in Guanyin, primarily involving the praise or contemplation of Guanyin's name as a means to alleviate the suffering of all sentient beings.

1.1 The origin of the image of Guanshiyin Bodhisattva in early Indian Buddhist art

In "Indian Buddhist Iconography," Bhattacharyya states, "The concept of Guanshiyin Bodhisattva was first introduced by the Mahasanghika sect of Buddhism as early as the 3rd century BCE, around the time of Emperor Ashoka. The characteristics of Guanshiyin Bodhisattva are recorded in the 'Scripture of Great Events,'

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where she is referred to as the 'Lord' whose duty is to observe and teach beings how to attain everlasting happiness." This is considered the earliest description of the form of Guanshiyin Bodhisattva. In the 2nd century CE , Mahayana Buddhist thought gradually developed in India, and belief in Guanshiyin Bodhisattva became increasingly prominent within the Buddhist system, and gradually evolved into an important divine figure. In archaeological excavations in 1961, a set of incomplete statues of the Western Pure Land Trinity was discovered in northwestern India. Among them, Guanshiyin Bodhisattva is located on the left side of Amitabha Buddha. The statues are inscribed with a clear date of creation, namely the 2nd century CE , providing valuable physical evidence for studying Buddhist art and culture of that time. In the scriptures of the "Avalokitesvara-Guzakarazdavyuha," the image of Guanshiyin Bodhisattva is described in detail, emphasizing the solemn vows she has taken. In this pledge, the Bodhisattva resolves not to enter Nirvana until all beings have attained the wisdom of Bodhi and achieved perfect enlightenment.

Guanshiyin Bodhisattva is the most represented and preserved Bodhisattva in the Indian Buddhist statue system.Indian sculptures of Guanshiyin Bodhisattva are primarily concentrated in the Kushan Dynasty period from the 1st century BC to the 3rd century AD, the Gupta period from the 4th to the 6th centuries AD, the Post-Gupta period from the 6th to the 7th centuries AD, and the Pala Dynasty period from the 8th to the 12th centuries AD.During this period,both the Mathura and Gandhara styles of sculpture emerged simultaneously. Although the standard forms for various Bodhisattva sculptures had not yet been established, it has played a guiding role for the development of Bodhisattva statues in later generations.

The image of Guanyin initially emerged as one of the attendant bodhisattvas of the Buddha. Later, as people's faith in Guanyin Bodhisattva deepened, she gradually became a standalone deity worshipped by the people. There are two forms of Guanyin Bodhisattva statue in Mathura: one is presented as one of the attendant bodhisattvas of the Buddha and the other appears as an independent bodhisattva image.The statues of Guanyin in Mathura come in two forms: one appears as one of the attendant bodhisattvas of the Buddha in the configuration of one Buddha and two bodhisattvas; the other appears as an independent bodhisattva image. In the statues of Mathura, Guanyin wears a gorgeous long dress with many folds, rough lines, and the face tends to the Southwest Asian race.Her hair is piled up high, forming a large bun with a crown, and there is a seated Buddha image on the crown. Her face appears dignified and benevolent. Her right hand forms the Abhaya Mudra, according to the dictionary, means "granting the virtue of non-action, dispelling fear and terror, and symbolizing the granting of peace and fearlessness to all sentient beings. When performing this mudra, the right hand is raised, with the five fingers extended and the palm facing outward." Her left hand hangs down, holding a vase.

In Gandhara art, the Guanyin often appears as an independent statue, embodying the image of a god with distinct significance. The sculptural characteristics are first reflected in appearance. Influenced by Greek and Roman styles, the facial features of Guanyin in the Gandhara region resemble those of a middle-aged European man. They stand with a muscular and robust physique, baring their upper bodies and adorned with a beard. Wearing the long dress with prominent folds, they wear crowns decorated with images of Buddha decoration. Their right hands are raised in the gesture of Abhaya Mudra, holding lotuses, and their ornaments are generally quite luxurious, often manifested in earrings, necklaces, armlets, bracelets, and girdles, among others. The image of the Bodhisattva in half-lotus meditation pose, with a crown adorned with a buddha and a cloth, the

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right hand in a contemplative gesture, and the left hand holding a lotus, has also become a distinctive feature of Gandhara Guanyin statues.

The Gupta style emerged after the Gandhara art and was recognized as the authentic indigenous Buddhist art of India, which had a profound influence on the development of the later Indian Buddhist art. The Gupta style can be seen as a turning point in people's aesthetic perception of Guanyin images. By absorbing the Indian indigenous classical aesthetic style of Mathura during its evolution, the Gupta style of Guanyin images became elegant, luxurious, and voluptuous, which lasted for several centuries. In terms of the facial expression and physical appearance of Guanyin images, the Gupta style inherited the Indian features of Mathura sculptures, featuring elongated eyebrows are slender and raised in an inverted splayed shape, eyelids slightly lowered in a contemplative pose, a straight nose, a thick lower lip, elongated rectangular-shaped earlobes, three folds visible on the neck, broad shoulders, a narrow waist, muscular build, and graceful, fluid body curves. During the heyday of Gupta art, Guanyin no longer wore a jeweled crown but instead adorned a bun adorned with gems or other headpieces. This characteristic is also frequently seen in later Indian Buddhist art. In terms of the overall impression of the sculptures, Gupta art integrated and refined multiple styles, adopting a gentle, delicate, and fluid form. The clothing inherited the "wet-clothes" style of Mathura, clinging to the body and vaguely outlining its contours, often accompanied by a circular halo. The Buddhist sculptures of Gupta art demonstrate a high degree of maturity in terms of outline, structure, and expressive technique. Its emergence not only set a benchmark for the development of Indian Buddhist art but also profoundly influenced the development of Buddhist art in China and other countries.

The statues of Guanyin Bodhisattva in the Post-Gupta period continued the style of the Gupta era. Their sculptural art primarily absorbed the Indian-style influences from Mathura and the Amaravati region of the Deccan Plateau, while also integrating elements of Gandhara art. It mainly manifested in the emphasis on depicting the dynamic and graceful movements of the figures. In the art of the Post-Gupta period, there began to emerge representations of Guanyin's transcendent divine power. Firstly, there was the four-armed Guanyin, followed by the eleven-faced Guanyin, and later developing into the image of the thousand-handed and thousand-eyed Guanyin. During the Pala Dynasty, this form of expression achieved its fullest, richest, and most refined development. The Pala Dynasty was a period of complex expressions in Buddhist art, during which a wide variety of Bodhisattva images were created. Their styles inherited the classical artistic norms of the Gupta period, but the body proportions tended to be more elongated. The eyebrows were connected like a bow, and the poses and movements of the figures were more delicate, no longer possessing the robust style. They strived to pursue a slender and elegant form to exhibit refinement and beauty, with abundant ornaments on the clothing. The statues of Buddha and Bodhisattvas were mostly upright , hard and powerful.

As an important part of Indian culture, the belief of Indian Guanyin and the various artistic works of the resulting Guanyin statue spread to Central Asia, China and Southeast Asia, and other regions, together with the Indian civilization, and had a profound and long-lasting influence on the Buddhist art in these regions.

1.2 The Bodhisattva Guanyin in Early Tibetan Buddhist Art.

Buddhism was introduced to Tibetan in the 5th and 6th centuries AD, and the Guanyin (Avalokitesvara) belief has also developed into an important part of the belief system of Tibetan Buddhism. After the develop-

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ment of the pre-hong and post-hong periods, Buddhism gradually formed a unique Tibetan Buddhist artistic tradition with local characteristics in the process of contact with bon religion. Guanyin Bodhisattva is one of the most widely worshipped deities in Tibetan Buddhist imagery in China, with "Lotus Hand" and "Six-faced Ming Wang" being the most typical manifestations of Guanyin.According to "The Red Annals" published by the Tibet People's Publishing House in 1988, legend has it that the origin of the Tibetan people came from the union of a monkey transformed by Guanyin Bodhisattva and a rakshasi transformed by Tara. According to "The Chronicle of Tibetan Kings," it is said that the Guanyin Bodhisattva once made a great wish in practice:"Wherever Buddhism has not yet reached, even in the difficult-to-tame snowy regions, I vow to transform and enlighten all sentient beings!" Due to Guanyin's vow, the snowy region became the land he chose to enlighten, and thus Guanyin became the protector of Tibet. To fulfill this great vow, the Bodhisattva known as the Lotus-Hand Guanyin, who is the incarnation of Amitabha Buddha and acts as his representative in the human world, was sent by the Buddha himself to Tibet to transform and enlighten all beings. When Buddhism became popular in Tibetan, Indian Tantric Buddhism had already matured as a school. Monks who transmitted the Dharma introduced the popular form of Guanyin worship from Tantric Buddhism into Tibetan regions. In order to tame the wild and untamed beings in this borderland, the Lotus-Hand Guanyin Bodhisattva manifested in a form with one face and four arms: the two main arms were folded in meditation with the palms together in the gesture of royal ease, the rear right hand held a rosary, and the rear left hand held a white lotus flower that bloomed beside the ear. With the skin of a benevolent animal draped over his left shoulder, his body was as white as snow, adorned with various jewels, and the Buddha Amitabha manifested at the center of his crown as a crown ornament. With the blessing of the Buddha, he proclaimed the Six-Syllable Mantra in this form of the "Six-Syllable Guanyin." Therefore, the Bodhisattva who is the incarnation of Amitabha, manifested in the four-armed form of the Lotus-Hand Guanyin, was specifically for the purpose of taming this land that had not been well-tamed by the Buddhas of the past, future, and present. According to the revelation of Amitabha Buddha, the Lotus-Hand Guanyin became the principal deity of Tibet, and his manifested four-armed form became one of the two incarnations specifically protecting Tibet. Believers can be saved by the Six-Syllable Mantra and attain rebirth in the Pure Land, where they will meet the Buddha Amitabha face to face.

Guanyin Bodhisattva has become a deity in the hearts of Tibetans, specifically sent to save the snowy region. As the incarnation for action, he manifests as influential leaders in the real world. For example, the 7th-century Tibetan king Songtsen Gampo was believed to be the incarnation of Guanyin, specially sent to govern the snowy region. Therefore, faith in him spread throughout Tibet.

2.A Study of the Image of Guanyin Bodhisattva in Early Ancient Books and Literature Prints

2.1 The Image of Guanyin Bodhisattva in Tang Dynasty prints

Because of block printing originated during the Sui and Tang dynasties, the Tang Dynasty represents the initial stage of Chinese printmaking history. Only a dozen or so Tang Dynasty prints have survived to this day, all of which are Buddhist-themed. The reasons for this are twofold: Firstly, the Tang Dynasty is distant in history, making it difficult to find surviving copies, and paper prints have reached their preservation lim-

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it, so few retained. Fortunately, some have been preserved in Dunhuang and a few secret tomb chambers. Secondly, Emperor Wuzong of Tang destroyed the Buddha, leading to the destruction of a large number of woodblock-printed Buddhist scriptures. "The Dharani Sutra and Mantra" is a representative sutra and mantra of the existing single-sheet prints from the Tang and Five Dynasties periods. The layout of these prints combines text and illustrations,Painting the altar city with Bodhisattvas as the center, with the sutra, mantra, and decorative patterns mostly presented in square shapes, and occasionally in circular ones. These prints were produced throughout the entire Tang Dynasty and the Five Dynasties, often with the Bodhisattva at the center, surrounded by square or circular scripts of the sutra and mantra. The majority of these mantras are in Sanskrit. The fact that there are more of these sutra and mantra prints than the frontispieces and illustrations of the same era suggests that such prints were very popular among the common people during the Tang Dynasty.





Figure 1.The Thousand-Turn Dharani for Eliminating Sins of the Holy Guanzin Bodhisattva

Figure 2.The Merciful and Compassionate Guanyin Bodhisattva Who Saves from Suffering

"The Thousand-Turn Dharani for Eliminating Sins of the Holy Guanzin Bodhisattva" (Figure 1) is a single-sheet woodblock print from the late Tang Dynasty, surrounded by double borders. It was discovered in Dunhuang in 1900.Printed in ink on paper, with an image on the right and text on the left, the right side features Guanyin Bodhisattva encircled by a single line. She wears a crown adorned with a Buddha, a diagonal sash, and a chest ornament. Her arms are adorned with armlets and bracelets, and her hands are crossed in the gesture of meditation, known as the "inner bound fist." She sits in the lotus position on a lotus throne, with a single ring of light around her head and three rings of backlight, surrounded by a circle of flame patterns. Guanyin Bodhisattva has a kind and serene face, with her eyes gazing downwards. Surrounding her are three layers of Sanskrit script, and at the four corners are Bodhisattva seeds composed of Sanskrit characters and lotus buds. Two more layers of Sanskrit form a square frame around the image. On the left side, there are three lines of Chinese text expressing vows or aspirations. Additionally, a composite print was also discovered. Besides the central "Thousand-Turn Dharani for Eliminating Sins of the Holy Guanyin Bodhisattva," 11 vertical rectangular panels with mantras and illustrations were neatly and symmetrically stamped on both sides and the bottom. The mantras are also arranged with Chinese characters on the left and Sanskrit on the

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right. The Chinese text reads, "I invoke the Thousand-Turn Bodhisattva, wishing for all to be resolved peacefully and kindly." On the right, preceding the Sanskrit mantra, there are six additional Chinese characters that read, "Dhāraṇī for Relief from Childbirth Difficulties."





Figure 3. The Merciful and Compassionate Guanyin Bodhisattva Who Saves from Suffering The later Jin Dynasty began four years of engraving

Figure 4.Mandala of the Thousand-Armed and Thousand-Eyed Guanyin Bodhisattva

The Five Dynasties-Ten Kingdoms period was a turbulent, divided, and chaotic era in Chinese history. However, there were significant advancements in engraving printing during this time. The existing prints from the Five Dynasties period have two major centers: Dunhuang and Zhejiang. "The Merciful and Compassionate Guanyin Bodhisattva Who Saves from Suffering" is a single-sheet engraving printing in a rectangular shape, surrounded by continuously symmetrical vajra clubs and symmetrical scroll patterns at the top and bottom. The image of Guanyin Bodhisattva is standing, barefoot on a lotus throne, wearing a treasure crown adorned with jewels, and holding a vase in her left hand while raising her right hand to twist a willow branch. Her backlight forms a flame shape. The woodblock print of "The Merciful and Compassionate Guanyin Bodhisattva Who Saves from Suffering" from the fourth year of the Kaiyun era of the Later Jin Dynasty (Figure 3) features an arrangement with an image above and text below, which is the most typical format of Buddhist woodcuts from the Five Dynasties period unearthed in Dunhuang. In the rectangular frame of the image, Guanyin Bodhisattva stands on a lotus platform, holding a purification vase in her right hand and twisting a lotus flower in her left. She wears a treasure crown adorned with a Buddha, with a canopy atop her head. A long scarf drifts on both sides, passing around her arms and back. She wears a necklace adorned with jewels and armlets. To the left of the Bodhisattva is the inscription "The Merciful and Compassionate Guanyin Bodhisattva Who Saves from Suffering," and to the right is "Made by Cao Yuanzhong, the Military Governor and Inspector-in-Chief of the Guiyi Army."

The single-sheet engraving printing "Mandala of the Thousand-Armed and Thousand-Eyed Guanyin Bodhisattva" (Figure 4), now housed in the National Library of China, was discovered in Dunhuang in 1900. The

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border features a shaded engraving of a transformed vajra club pattern, with a Dharma wheel at each of the four corners. In the center of the image, within a circular flame aura, sits the main deity, the Thousand-Armed and Thousand-Eyed Guanyin Bodhisattva, in the lotus position on a lotus throne. She wears a crown adorned with a Buddha, and has a double-ring halo. Countless arms radiate outward in a circular formation, each holding various Buddhist implements, treasures, lotus flowers, and other items, while the remaining hands each contain an eye, arranged in layers. The lower left corner of the Bodhisattva is incomplete. Above, in the center, a Buddha is seated on a lotus throne, with two disciples listening to his teachings, and ten Buddhas descending from the clouds. The Buddha above Guanyin sits on a lotus throne, with his right shoulder exposed and his left shoulder covered by a kasaya, forming the gesture of teaching. The two disciples sit cross-legged on either side. Surrounding the flame aura are offering Bodhisattvas, and below them are musical dancers. Next to the dancers are two yakshas amidst flame patterns, with their hair raised, eyes wide open, and a commanding presence. In the lower corners are two seated Heavenly Kings. On the right side of the image, it is inscribed "Disciple Bianzhaoxin," and on the left, "Engraved, Printed, and Offered." The clever combination of shaded and relief engraving creates a clear and distinct hierarchy of images, with a structured and coherent composition.

2.2 The Image of Guanyin Bodhisattva in Song Dynasty prints

During the Song Dynasty, Which the country was reunified, Buddhist prints, building on centuries of accumulation from the Tang Dynasty and the Five Dynasties, saw significant developments in variety, quantity, and themes. The carvings became more refined, featuring clever compositions, smooth lines, intricate yet orderly designs. They no longer simply reproduced Buddhist scriptures but also began to meticulously depict the scenes within the stories, with the size of the prints also increasing. The Buddhist prints left over from the Song Dynasty can be categorized into three types: the Tripitaka, illustrations for separately carved Buddhist scriptures, and standalone carved Buddhist paintings. The Tripitaka also known as "All Scriptures," is a large collection of scriptures that compiles the Mahayana and Hinayana sutras, vinayas, shastras, and biographies of saints and sages translated from India and the Western Regions.

"The Image of Guanyin Bodhisattva" (Figure 5) is a standalone carved print from the 17th year of the Jiading era in the Southern Song Dynasty. The image is 14.8 centimeters high, with damaged inscriptions on both sides. In the center, Guanyin Bodhisattva sits on a lotus throne atop a rocky platform, with one hand holding her cheek and the other supporting herself on a rock. Her other hands hold various treasures such as a wish-granting gem, prayer beads, a dharma wheel, and a lotus branch. Below, there are carved strange rocks, dense trees, sweet springs, and waterfalls. Due to Guanyin holding the wish-granting gem and the dharma wheel, she is known as Cintamanicakra Guanyin Bodhisattva. Cintamanicakra Guanyin Bodhisattva alleviates the suffering of all sentient beings and fulfills their wishes. Her image can have two, four, six, eight, ten, or twelve arms. The two-armed Cintamanicakra Guanyin Bodhisattva is typical of the half-lotus meditation pose, similar to Zhou Fang's "Water-Moon Guanyin" style. This Cintamanicakra image, with its two main arms in meditation and holding a flower, is retained in the later-derived six-armed form. This image became popular in Han Chinese regions during the Tang Dynasty.

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Figure 5.The Image of Guanyin Bodhisattva



Figure 6. The Universal Gateway Chapter of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara

The Southern Song Dynasty's engraved

Among the surviving Buddhist prints from the Song Dynasty, the single-engraved frontispieces and illustrations from Buddhist scriptures are the most numerous, representing the highest achievement of Buddhist printing in the Song Dynasty. The "Lotus Sutra" is one of the most widely published scriptures, with the Northern Song Dynasty's edition of the "Lotus Sutra: The Universal Gateway Chapter of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara" featuring a layout of illustrations above text. The engravings are simple but somewhat crude, making it the earliest Buddhist scripture presented in a graphic novel format with both text and illustrations. The Southern Song Dynasty's engraved edition of "The Universal Gateway Chapter of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara" (Figure 6) shows Avalokiteshvara wearing a long robe, holding a willow branch in his right hand, with a circular halo behind his head, standing on a cloud. This scripture illustrates that if people

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encounter difficulties or misfortunes, they can recite the name of Guanyin Bodhisattva, who will grant them fearlessness and relieve them from suffering. The prints are engraved based on the scriptural content, with each set of four five-character verses accompanied by an illustration that vividly depicts the verses.

2.3 The Image of Guanyin Bodhisattva in Western Xia and early Yuan Dynasty Prints

The Xixia Dynasty, established by the Tangut people, flourished for over two hundred years, creating a splendid civilization with a unique national culture while also being influenced by Central Plains civilization. It integrated both Han and Tibetan Buddhist cultures and absorbed foreign cultural arts. In the 20th century, a large number of Xixia documents were discovered at the sites of Dunhuang in Gansu Province and Heishuicheng site in Inner Mongolia, with Buddhist scriptures accounting for a significant proportion. Due to its strategic location as a transportation hub connecting the Central Plains with the western regions and beyond the Great Wall, Xixia was deeply influenced by foreign cultures, Tibetan culture, and Central Plains culture. The surviving woodblock prints of scriptures skillfully fused the native and foreign artistic styles, forming a unique style with distinctive designs. The "Lotus Sutra" engraved during the third year of the Renqing era of Emperor Renzong of Xixia features illustrations of Buddhist teachings and sutra transformation stories, with a reasonable layout and exquisite engraving. Although it may not be as gorgeous as the Song Dynasty's engraved edition of the same scripture, its lines are vigorous and atmospheric.



Figure 7."Lotus Sutra: The Universal Gateway Chapter of the Guanyin Bodhisattva" unearthed in Dunhuang



Figure 8."Lotus Sutra: The Universal Gateway Chapter of the Guanyin Bodhisattva" translated by Kumarajiva

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The "Lotus Sutra: The Universal Gateway Chapter of the Guanyin Bodhisattva" unearthed in Dunhuang (Figure 7) often depicts individual manifestations of Avalokiteshvara and scenes of rescuing people from difficulties, or features Guanyin as the main deity. The frontispiece spans two pages and the full width of the column. In the image, amid swirling waters that fill the entire composition, a large moon disc supported by swirling clouds rises. Guanyin Bodhisattva sits cross-legged on the moon disc, with a circular halo behind his head. She wears a lotus-shaped Buddha crown, and her hair flows freely over his shoulders. She drapes a scarf diagonally across his upper body, wears necklaces around his neck, bracelets on his wrists, and a long cloth that falls from his shoulders. One end of the cloth wraps around his left arm and hangs down, while the other end falls straight down from his shoulder, curves back, and hangs down. She wears a long skirt, sits with his feet folded, and her head slightly tilted to the right. Her face is oval-shaped, upper body is slightly tilted, left arm hangs down at her side, and her right arm rests naturally on right knee. Her right hand holds a Buddhist gem, and posture is relaxed and natural, with a serene and tranquil expression. Below each illustration, there is a diagrammatic explanation of the corresponding scripture.The lower three-fourths of the column are regular script scriptures, and the font is neat and standardized.

The version of the "Lotus Sutra: The Universal Gateway Chapter of the Guanyin Bodhisattva" translated by Kumarajiva, discovered at the Heishuicheng site (Figure 8), features a frontispiece illustrating the Water-Moon Avalokiteshvara, followed by the scripture text. The layout is in the format of illustrations above text, with the upper quarter of the page depicting sutra transformation stories based on the scripture content, while the lower three-quarters contain the scripture text. The frontispiece of this scroll is very similar to the one unearthed near the Buddhist stupas at the Mogao Caves in Dunhuang, but there are differences in the flying celestial beings and offering figures in the upper left and lower left corners. In the former, both are enclosed within an irregular, shaded, and black-outlined figure, while in the latter, they are surrounded by clouds.

The "Lotus Sutra: The Twenty-Fifth Chapter of the Universal Gateway of the Guanyin Bodhisattva" unearthed from the Heishuicheng site (Figure 9) is a folding scroll. The frontispiece spans four folds, with double borders on the top and bottom and a single border on the left, totaling twenty-one folds. Each fold contains six lines with eighteen characters per line. The first fold of the frontispiece depicts Guanyin Bodhisattva sitting on a rock, gazing intently, with a mustache on his upper lip, her right foot resting on the rock, and left foot crossed. A circular halo surrounds her head, and a vase with willow branches sits on a stone platform to the right. The following three are the stories of changes in the scriptures, which say that when people are killed, they can get rid of all kinds of difficulties and misfortunes by chanting the name of Guanyin Bodhisattva.The composition is ingenious, with well-arranged lines and beautiful, natural imagery.

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Figure 9.Lotus Sutra: The Twenty-Fifth Chapter of the Universal Gateway of the Guanyin Bodhisattva" unearthed from the Heishuicheng site



Figure 10. Qisha Tripitaka

The woodblock prints of the Yuan Dynasty saw significant advancements compared to those of the Song Dynasty, with richer themes and more refined carving techniques. They inherited the prosperity of the Song Dynasty and paved the way for the flourishing of the Ming Dynasty, occupying an important position in the history of woodblock printing. During the Yuan Dynasty, Buddhism flourished, and the rulers revered and believed in Tibetan Buddhism. In the reign of Kublai Khan, the fifth patriarch of the Sakya sect of Tibetan Buddhism, Phags-pa was honored as the Imperial Preceptor, providing an environment for the publication of Buddhist woodblock prints. The Yuan Dynasty absorbed the unique Nepalese-Tibetan image style of Xixia Buddhist prints and spread it to all parts of the country through Buddhist scriptures in various languages. The most typical examples are the illustrated woodblock prints found in the Tangut script "Tripitaka," the Chinese "Qisha Tripitaka," and the combined Chinese and Phags-pa script "Puning Tripitaka." Not only did these woodblock prints influence each other, but they also show a clear inheritance relationship with Tibetan Buddhist woodblock prints of the Qing Dynasty.

"Qisha Tripitaka," named after the Qisha Holy Monastery in Pingjiang Prefecture where it was carved, is a privately carved Buddhist canon that was initiated in the Southern Song Dynasty, completed in the Yuan Dynasty, and still supplemented in the Ming Dynasty. However, most of its versions were carved and printed in Hangzhou's Dawanshou during the Dade period of the Yuan Dynasty under the auspices of Guan Zhuba, the monk recorder of Songjiang Prefecture. The two sutras in the same volume of "Qisha Tripitaka" are "The

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Dharani Sutra for Eliminating All Obstacles Caused by Lightning and Seeking Whatever One Wishes" and "The Buddha's Sutra on the Most Supreme Lamp-Like Buddha Dharani." The illustration depicts Shakyamuni Buddha expounding the Dharma to Guanyin Bodhisattva (Figure 10). It is folded in the style of an accordion book, with double borders on all sides. The composition adopts the Han-style landscape and pavilion format, with a full layout and fine carving. Guanyin Bodhisattva sits on a square base and a double-layered lotus throne, adorned with jewelry and armlets. Her eyebrows and eyes are delicately rendered, and her hands are in the gesture of meditation with a peach-shaped flame halo behind her head and body.

The woodblock print of "The Great Compassion Repentance Ritual" (Figure 11) from the Dade period of the Yuan Dynasty is in scroll format, with double borders on the top and bottom. The first woodblock print depicts the Buddha expounding the Dharma, while the second depicts Guanyin Bodhisattva with Thousand Hands and Thousand Eyes sitting in a circular halo. The Bodhisattva with Thousand Hands and Thousand Eyes is a manifestation that integrates the Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya, and Nirmanakaya of Guanyin, benefiting and bringing joy to all sentient beings, fulfilling all their wishes according to their needs. According to Esoteric Buddhism, "The Bodhisattva with Thousand Hands is the most revered in the Guanyin section, representing the fruit of enlightenment." The "thousand" signifies infinity and perfection, with "thousand hands" symbolizing the boundless compassion and "thousand eyes" representing perfect and unobstructed wisdom. The title page adopts a layout with the text on the left and illustrations on the right. The Bodhisattva is depicted with a high bun adorned with a precious crown, with beaded strings hanging from both sides of the crown, draped in a scarf, wearing jewelry and armlets, and seated on a lotus throne.

The woodblock print of "The Universal Gate Chapter of the Bodhisattva Guanyin" from the Yuan Dynasty, collected by the Japanese bald-headed monk Youxiang, is an illustration of Guanyin's responses to devotees' prayers. It cleverly employs a combination of intaglio and relief carving techniques. The upper half of the image uses large areas of ink to depict a stormy scene with wind, rain, thunder, and lightning, while the Bodhisattva is carved in relief, sitting in a circular halo with hands folded in meditation, creating a strong contrast between black and white. On the right side, it reads, "Clouds, thunder, drums, and lightning strike, hail and torrential rain fall. By invoking the power of Guanyin Bodhisattva, they will dissipate in due time." This sutra was widely published in later generations, and many variations of Guan Yin's transformations were based on this illustration.



Figure 11.The Great Compassion Repentance Ritual

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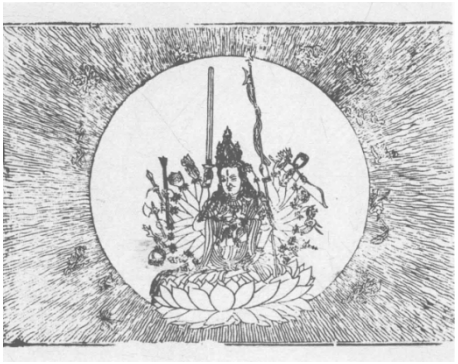


Figure 12.The Universal Gate Chapter of the Bodhisattva Guanyin, collected by the Japanese bald-headed monk Youxiang

"Buddha top heart Guanyin Bodhisattva Dharani Sutra" (Figure 13) is presented in an accordion-style book with single borders on the top and bottom. The frontispiece spans two folds, depicting Guanyin Bodhisattva seated on a rock in the sea, with her right hand resting on the rock and her head lowered, gazing downwards. The scene exudes tranquility and harmony. The frontispiece features a layout with illustrations above and text below, where the illustrations are carved based on stories derived from the sutra. A vase, as a representative item held by Guanyin, is placed on the rock seat, the child of Sudhana, stands with palms folded, looking up at Guanyin. The background includes elements such as the rock seat, willow trees, flowing water, and drifting clouds.



Figure 13.Buddha top heart Guanyin Bodhisattva Dharani Sutra



Figure 14.Buddha said Guanyin Bodhisattva save suffering sutra

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"Buddha said Guanyin Bodhisattva save suffering sutra" (Figure 14), also known as the "High King Guanyin Sutra," is presented in an accordion-style book. The frontispiece depicts Guanyin Bodhisattva seated in a circular halo above the sea, wearing a shoulder-covering robe with a hood, a style originating from the meditation robes of Buddhist monks during the Southern and Northern Dynasties. This "hooded cassock" that covers the head and shoulders became a common attire for Guanyin in the Tang Dynasty and later spread to the Bashu region and northern ethnic minority areas. In the image, a vase is placed on a rock platform floating in the circular halo, Sudhana standing below with palms folded in worship.

The late Yuan Dynasty woodblock print of "Magic lotus Sutra. Guanyin Bodhisattva Pu men products" (Figure 15) is also in an accordion-style book with a single border on the bottom. Both the frontispiece and the beginning of the text are incomplete. It features a total of 36 illustrations depicting the transformations of Guanyin and miraculous scenes of her saving people from suffering. This sutra uses a comic strip format to illustrate the Buddhist scriptures, with the prints occupying half of the book's pages. The artistic styles vary, and the scenes change richly, employing the scattered perspective composition technique of Chinese painting and a combination of intaglio and relief carving techniques to finely depict the expressions of the characters.



Figure 15.Guanyin Bodhisattva Pu men products

During the Yuan Dynasty, woodblock printing technology was highly developed. Not only were there woodblock print books published in Uighur Mongolian, Phags-pa script, Tibetan, Tangut, and other languages, but there were also a large number of books in Chinese. At this time, religious woodblock prints saw considerable development in both form and subject matter, with illustrations, single-page woodblock prints, and comic strip-style woodblock prints all emerging. This laid the groundwork for the accumulation of rich experience in woodblock printing during the Ming Dynasty and Qing Dynasty.

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