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ARTICLES

The Representation of the Vietnamese Guanyin in Relation with Asian Arts*

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Ⅰ. Introduction

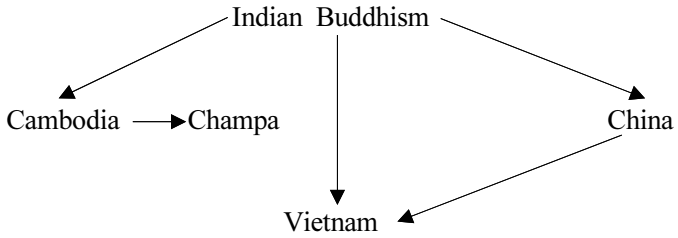
Religious syncretism is a widespread characteristic of Asia in general and Southeast Asia in particular. This feature is clearly reflected not only in the doctrines but also in the plastic arts. The Vietnamese Guanyin, especially Guanyin (Avalokiteshvara) with thousand arms and eyes, can be considered as the evident proof of the amalgamation of different mythological identities and influences from various sources. Representations of deities with many arms, eyes and heads--not only Avalokiteshvara or Lokiteshvara--are relatively familiar in the divine pantheon of countries that have been directly or indirectly influenced by Chinese and Indian arts. However, such representations have something remarkable in Vietnam, since Buddhism and Confucianism were introduced here very early. We can therefore assess that this exotic element has been voluntarily adopted and integrated in Vietnam.

Due to its very special geographical location, Vietnam has since

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early antiquity been a centre of cultural exchanges between the two great civilizations of China and India. These two mighty streams have combined to nourish the Vietnamese arts. The Buddhist influence flowing down from China brought Mahayana characteristics to Vietnam, whereas that from Champa was mainly tainted with Theravada elements. We can thus draw a diagram to map out the spread of Buddhism and its influence on Vietnamese iconography as below:



The diagram shows that there were five different streams of influence, three direct and two indirect, that, together with historical developments of society and the rise and fall of dynasties, impacted in different ways on the arts in Vietnam. Regarding the representation of Guanyin in particular, the 16th century is regarded as a landmark for the opening to and absorption of both streams of influence from these foreign cultures. Before that period, under the Ly – Tran and Le – Mac dynasties, the influence of the Champa and part of the Indian culture was predominant. The Champa aesthetic standards were clearly reflected in the sculptural representations of Avalokiteshvara with broad shoulders and slender belly, a lotus attached to the brim of his hat, and the miraculous bird Garuda supporting the four angles of the pedestal. After the 16th century, the Vietnamese Avalokiteshvara statues undergo changes that reflect the gradually increasing influence of the Chinese culture. Full-bellied statues are appreciated, the decorated hat brims are replaced by several light glyphs and the

miraculous bird cedes the place in favor of a guardian spirit holding a lotus seat, its sorrowful facial expression symbolizing the sufferings of samsaric beings. The difference appears particularly clearly when we compare the 16th century Avalokiteshvara statue in the Hoi Ha pagoda with the one from the 17th century in the But Thap pagoda.

Such very easily noticeable details aren't of course simply what remain of this influence, but they also reflect certain values and relationships in the transformation and developments of Buddhism in the mainstream of Asian arts.

Ⅱ. Thousand-arms thousand-eyes Avalokiteshvara:

Shiva as the origin of the "Thousand arms, thousand eyes" representation of Avalokiteshvara is a thesis that has already been supported by many scholars. In Hinduism, Brahma, Shiva, and Vishnu symbolize the three fundamental powers of nature, namely creation, preservation and destruction of the world. The merge of this triad of gods gave rise to statues with three or four faces and four arms, their hands holding the sacred attributes characteristic of each deity. With the passing of time, the worship of Vishnu and Shiva gradually overshadowed the figure of Brahma, producing new sects and symbols. The legend of Shiva's cosmic dance doubled the number of arms of its representation, whereas the legend of the churning of the milky ocean provided it with more magic attributes symbolizing Shiva's unlimited powers. Wh▣ 연구논문 ▣ most common representations of Vishnu are statues with four arms and a male appearance, Shiva has sometimes been sculpted with 28 arms and a female appearance. Later on, Buddhism borrowed such characteristics in order to take advantage of the closeness and familiarity between Shiva and Bodhisattvas to ease the spread of its doctrine in India. Of course,

the very nature of these statues is completely different. With arms radiating in all directions and the supple curve of the body, the Shiva statues clearly express the universal movement of the cosmic dance, whereas the statues of the female Buddha represent the serenity of sitting in meditation to reach absolute liberation, while the many arms with all the palms of the right hands facing towards the palms of the left hands finally combine in the two main central hands resting in the prayer/lotus mudra. This indicates the great difference in nature and conception between the two religions. Buddhism borrowed the image but re-codified it completely in accordance to the Buddhist beliefs.

This representation was not only borrowed but also validated by legends presenting details sometimes quite similar to legends relating to its Indian model. For instance, the legend of the Blue-throat Guanyin, one of the 33 manifestations of Guanyin according to the Chinese system, is related to Shiva and the legend of the “Churning of the Milky Ocean”. Shiva accepted to drink the deadly poison thrown out of the ocean by demons who wanted to destroy all gods and sentient beings, and the burning caused his throat to turn blue. This is why the blue color of Guanyin’s neck symbolizes the readiness to sacrifice one's life in order to save all sentient beings.

Apart from Shiva, the book “Chinese Buddhist deities and spirits", compiled by Ma Qiutian, also mentions the figure of the Twin Horse Spirits, belonging to the 'Four Great Heroes' of the Veda. These two inseparable twin brothers were handsome, intelligent, strong and healthy. They had a honey-golden complexion, were fond of sweet fruits, and wore lotus hats. They often drove a golden three-wheeler drawn by horses, birds, swans or buffaloes, which ran faster than thought and appeared with the rising sun, completing a whole revolution in one day. The main merit of the Twin Horse Spirits was to save people from dangers and sufferings, and to cure illnesses. They

would return sight to the blind and health to the handicapped, make barren women fertile, help single older women get married, and rescue sinking ships and drowning people. They would immediately drive their chariot to wherever they heard someone in distress cry for help. People also worshipped them for their capacity to subdue demons and evil spirits. We find them back in Tibetan Buddhism and the Mahayana (or Great Vehicle) absorbed all their virtues and merits into Bodhisattvas in order to express their broad and generous state of mind.

Of course, within Tibetan Buddhism, representations of Buddhist deities with many arms, eyes and heads are not exceptional. Avalokiteshvara with thousand arms and eyes is only one among many others. The particular point worth noticing here is that this particular form absorbed the role and functions of the Twin Horse Spirit, turning it into the form of a bodhisattva who saves sentient beings - a Buddha more popular and closer to the people. This is how this specific representation transcended the boundaries of Indian and Tibetan Buddhism and spread to other regions and countries. It arrived as an almost fully constituted form in Vietnam, but as it wasn't of course completely rigid and fixed, it continued to absorb indigenous elements that gave it its own specific features.

We can find in the Vietnamese Avalokiteshvara statues quite a few tangible evidence that they borrowed from Indian models. Firstly, the bracelets have a definite Hindu connotation as they are used by the God Shiva in his cosmic dance. If Shiva shakes these bangles in various directions and ways to produce the thousands of different sounds that subdue the world, Avalokiteshvara's bracelets were carved by sculptors as habitual ornamental elements with purely decorative value and no practical purpose. In terms of plastic arts, these bracelets underline the bareness and suppleness of the arms, bringing to the fore the feminine beauty of the statue. Of course, this emphasis on

the feminine element only applies to the discussion of the Vietnamese Guanyin. In Japanese statues, such features seem unnecessary because Avalokiteshvara, although wearing various ornaments, is represented with a beard and a very male appearance, sitting square and majestic like a representation of Amitabha that would have many arms.

The Indian origin of the Vietnamese Avalokiteshvara is also evident from the similarities found in comparing the magical implements held by Avalokiteshvara and Hindu deities with many arms, as listed below:

Avalokiteshvara	Indian deities
Long lance	Trident
Precious bows	Bows
Precious arrows	Arrows
Five-colored string	Lasso
White Lotus Green Lotus Purple Lotus Pink Lotus	Lotus
Precious conch	Hom, conch
Staff	Staff
Sun wheel	Sum wheel
Vajra	Vajra
Skull or skull filled with flowers	Skull

The evident parallels in this non exhaustive list seem to confirm the hypothesis put forward at the start. Although the meaning and symbolism of each particular implement is carefully explained in the Buddhist texts and legends, we can nevertheless notice a striking correspondence between the two religions and cultures. Of course, whereas Shiva and Vishnu's attributes, such as the conch, bows, arrows, long spears and lasso's for hunting wild boars and catching

animals refer to a society using hunting-gathering methods as their mode of subsistence, the same utensils have been given new meanings and values in Buddhism.

In the Hindu tradition, Shiva is the God of rivers and water, and fishing is therefore the first skill this God would teach his followers. The trident was also called the hunter's spear of Shakti, symbolizing the villager's source of food after each hunting party. Shakti then gradually gained the meaning of energy, competence and power(Huynh 2001). When becoming Avalokiteshvara's tool, besides preserving its original meaning of energy and power, it acquires the additional function/capacity to destroy enemies and put an end to all calamities.

The second most important Hindu item is the conch typically used by Vishnu to summon a gathering, announce the start of a battle or give the signal of setting off on a divine hunting party. Later on, the mighty sound of the conch became the symbol of the power of Good and the violence of Evil, and finally of the sacredness of the sexual drive, the strength of the vital principle preserving the world. Buddhism then used this symbol as the "precious loudspeaker", and changed its meaning into "the sound of the conch that purifies the heavy sins of those beings who hear it or causes their rebirth in the Pure Land of the West". Buddhism also uses the conch to summon believers to the teachings and prayers, which is why it is also called the "loudspeaker of the Dharma". The conch is blown to produce a powerful sound that urges disciples to make the doctrines and precepts of the Buddha flourish and prosper.

Here, the absorption of the form and meaning of an object from one religion to the other is quite obvious. Nevertheless, they have not been molded exactly from the original model, but their very position in the whole system has been turned upside down and they have been given different values to express the power of the dharma. Sometimes, they even completely detach themselves from their initial

symbolism, such as in the case of bows and arrows. The precious arrows, as mentioned in “Dharma of bodhisattva’s activity”, represent the swiftness of direct perception “as fast as arrows”, or a mean to summon every being, while the precious bow referred to in "Dedications for happiness and longevity” stands for a spirit of endurance and tenacity. In Hinduism, beside the symbolism linked to hunting as seen previously, Vishnu’s bows and arrows represent aspects of destruction and separation, while Shiva’s symbolize purified desire, divine power and military pre-eminence.

In the Vietnamese cultural context, such a problematic simply does not come into the picture in relation with the statue of Avalokiteshvara with thousand arms and eyes. The meaning attached to each particular symbol is highly relative, when these are not simply sculpted out of habit, or with only a few Buddhist monks or nuns knowing what they mean. Some other simple symbols such as prayer beads, lotus flowers, precious vases, precious bowls, branches of willow, Dharma wheels, volumes of sutras, precious clouds and hand postures such as the samadhi mudra (meditation posture) or the mudra of fearlessness, are elements of a completely Buddhist nature, which do not need discussion. However, we also find some Taoist symbols such as the fly brush or the magic stick (the stick of life and death). The Guanyin statues holding various attributes in their hands thus display multiple layers of cultural influences and symbolic meanings. At the same time, they also give evidence of the intertwined relations Buddhism had with other religions during its historical development.

Ⅲ. The Vietnamese Guanyin and Influences from the Chinese Culture

The influences of the Chinese culture on the Vietnamese statues

are even clearer than the Indian imprints, due to the fact that they were direct and long-lasting, and extended up to the latest centuries. The cultural similarities have led some critics to consider Vietnamese statues as bad copies of Chinese ones. However, if we analyze them thoroughly, these elements actually contributed to a rich development.

3.1. The Female Bodhisattva Guanyin: Differences between Vietnam and China.

First of all, we should notice that the gender change from male to female of Avalokiteshvara in Vietnam is not a unique phenomenon, but that this is not a phenomenon encountered in all the countries where Buddhism has been introduced. In all of Asia, it is only in Vietnam and China that we find the greatest number of representations of the female Bodhisattva. In other countries like Thailand, Cambodia and Japan, Avalokiteshvara is represented with a clearly bearded, male appearance.

Many reasons can explain the gender change of this Bodhisattva when he was introduced in China and Vietnam. Both countries had a civilization based on water and rice. The constraints of rice-growing and irrigation created a system that regulated their own cultures and had a powerful capacity to assimilate foreign cultures. There are two possible interpretations for the occurrence of female representations of Avalokiteshvara in Vietnam: either Avalokiteshvara had already undergone a gender change in China when Buddhism spread from China to Vietnam, or this gender change happened independently in Vietnam after the direct transmission of the original Buddhism from India.

A striking feature in the history of the Chinese arts is the scarcity of the central representation of women (with the exception of the representation of Xi Wang Mu, the Queen Mother of the West, during

a very short period of the Western Han Dynasty). The Chinese culture seems to have been very male- orientated until the introduction of Buddhism. Contrary to the primitive and mysterious nature of an Indian culture tainted with sexual elements, the Chinese culture had rational characteristics right from the start. This civilization was indeed built on the Confucian doctrines and the idea of the supremacy of the Confucian intellectual class, whose role was to 'pacify the world'. Buddhism may have entered China as early as 2 A.D. The rigidly and geometrically carved Bodhisattva statues in the caves of Maichi San (Gansu), Yunkang and Longmen date from the Northern Wei dynasty, at the end of the 5th and the beginning of the 6th century. During this period, sculpture had not yet reached high achievements, but we can already speak of a specific Chinese imprint on those Buddha statues, which create different standards from those inherited from India, their country of origin. It is only during the Sui (581-617) and especially the Tang (618-907) dynasties that we encounter the representation of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara under a female appearance. This is a period when literature, poetry, music and painting reached unprecedented heights, partly thanks to the noteworthy contribution of Buddhism. It produced a blast wave in the Chinese culture. It is also at the same time that Chinese Buddhism witnessed the introduction of the Vajrayana, in which female deities are the main object of worship. It is therefore only from the Tang dynasty onward that women start to appear in an independent position in paintings and plastic arts, in spite of the low social status they still occupied in the Chinese feudal society, in the material as well as the spiritual life. Thus, we can claim that Buddhism changed the face of Chinese traditional arts when it conquered an important role in the spiritual life of the people.

New concepts and approaches were initiated in the Chinese society of that time by the Buddhist devotion of the Tang emperors and the

roles played by Empress Wu Zetian and Imperial Consort Yang Guifei. This major power change contributed a great deal to the transformation of the Buddha statues, which passed from male gender to female, or were carved with androgynous features that blurred gender distinction. This was achieved by removing beards and mustaches, and giving limbs and bodies the predominant soft and supple lines so characteristic of the whole Tang period. Many scholars believe that these not entirely female statues reflect a regret of the previous Han tradition and an effort to conciliate the old and the new.(Maspero 2000) At the same time, these changes also underline the rationality of the Chinese culture. Female representations in Chinese Buddhism do not emphasize the carnal, sexual aspect as in Hinduism, but rather underline a psychological inclination. Chinese Buddhism stressed the suffering and misery of the human condition, and thus echoing the state of mind of the people, it spread rapidly all over China.

Apart from this, the gender change of various Buddha's in China can also be explained from another point of view, namely as a means to lure female disciples" away from Taoist idolatry"(Ma 1995), a religion in which goddesses are given a predominant position. Therefore, the phenomenon of female Buddha's in China can be seen as a strategy of adaptation to local customs in order to grow and expand.

In Vietnam, the female form of Buddhist statues is given a different, more homogeneous meaning. The female Bodhisattva resembles the image of the mother -close and familiar, generous, tolerant, protective - that is so deeply ingrained in the Vietnamese soul. Even at the earliest stage of the gender modification, there is no notion of blurred gender distinction as with the Chinese statues. Moreover, the Vietnamese culture is characterized by a strong Yin element, with an already existing belief in a Holy Mother, a Mother Earth, and the

notion that the activity of giving birth to the world and all its creature pertains to the 'Mothers'. The female form is therefore easy to understand and, in some Buddhist temples, it is not only the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara who is represented as a woman, but even the Buddha's of the Three Times are carved with impressive bosoms (Ba Te pagoda in Ha Tay province).

In addition, Vietnam was influenced by India through the Cham culture in the South. The supple and soft features of Cham sculptures, even when they represented male gods, were adopted by the Vietnamese. Thus although the Confucian (rational) thought system constituted the inescapable foundation of the Vietnamese society, suppleness and softness were always harmoniously preserved as an indispensable component in the field of sculpture in particular and plastic arts in general. Without the excessive male character of the Chinese or the passionate and fiery nature of the Indian, the Vietnamese statues display a female character expressed in their faces, arms and hands, and in the peaceful stability of their attitude.

Unlike in feudal China, and in spite of the ruling Confucian ideology, the status of women in Vietnam was quite respectable. If the Communal House in villages was the exclusive domain of the elders, dignitaries and young men, the pagoda's and temples were the gathering place of women, and they accordingly took part of the decisions in the spiritual field. This position was emphasized by the roles played by the Queen Mother Linh Nhan or by Queen Y Lan (Ly dynasty in the 11th century), who were both compared to the Bodhisattva Guanyin. In many temples, statues of queens and other female figures account for the majority. Many queens and princesses took refuge in the Buddha-dharma and were then categorized as manifestations of the Bodhisattva Guanyin.

This female element is also discernable in the legends of the “Southern Sea Guanyin” and “Thi Kinh Guanyin”, originally Chinese

stories that were completely transformed by the Vietnamese. The representation of Avalokiteshvara was feminized right from the moment it was introduced in Vietnam. In their previous incarnations, the princess Dieu Thien and her sisters Dieu Thanh and Dieu Am were all boys born in the Thi family. Thi Kinh disguised herself as a man so as to lead a religious life, prior to becoming Guanyin. We thus see both genders overlapping with men reincarnating into women, or women faking to be men before returning to their initial appearance. Therefore, we can consider the fact that Avalokiteshvara took an exclusively female appearance in Vietnamese as quite remarkable. Nevertheless, what matters is not so much the form as the feelings and concepts the Vietnamese attach to this female form of Avalokiteshvara, seeing her as the noblest and most precious manifestation of the Mother, whose thousand arms and eyes enable her to manifest her kind nature and generous activities to the utmost.

3.2. Avalokiteshvara in the Mantrayana: Similarities and Differences

The statue of Avalokiteshvara with thousand arms and eyes in the But Thap pagoda is considered as a masterpiece of the sculptural arts in the 17th century and is one of the few statues with a Mantrayana imprint in Vietnam. This mantric nature is expressed by the three layers of heads carved with nine faces. Another element is that the heads are arranged horizontally as in the case of the Guanyin statue in Thuong Trung pagoda. However, the Vietnamese artists have taken some liberty with the exact Mantrayana representation and the Vietnamese statue does not respect to the letter the doctrine it should reflect. According to the detailed description of a giant Chinese statue of Avalokiteshvara with thousand arms and eyes in the Dalai Lama's temple in Tibet that is carved with eleven heads, these heads are divided into five layers as follows:

1. Three faces: the front face painted white represents tolerant loving compassion, the one on the right is deep blue, and the one on the left is red.
2. Three faces expressing sadness: the central face is painted pale yellow, the right one is bright yellow, and the left one is yellowish red
3. Three smiling faces: the central one is pale red, the right one is green, and the left one is purple
4. The green face of wrathful Mahakala
5. On top of Mahakala's head is a small statue of red Amitabaha.

A second style of eleven-headed Guanyin with thousand arms and eyes, which was popular in Japan during the Heian Dynasty (794-893), is a form with heads arranged horizontally. The three heads on the left have a wrathful expression, the three on the right bare their fangs, and three at the back seem to rejoice in a demonic laugh. These nine heads were sculptured independently and placed around a bigger central head, crowned with a last head representing the Buddha (Noritake 1990,83). According to one interpretation, each triad represents the utmost expression of a particular attitude: compassion for those who suffer, anger at those who are cruel and wicked, joy at the sight of good actions. According to another interpretation, the ten heads symbolize the ten bhumis or ten levels of a Bodhisattva's path, the result of which is reaching the state of a Buddha, represented by the last head.

We can therefore conclude that although this Vietnamese Guanyin statue clearly bears the stylistic marks of the Mantrayana, it does not strictly follow the principles to the letter. There is generally a great distance between the sutras and their plastic representation by the Vietnamese artists, because they learned their craft through direct transmission from master craftsmen and therefore principles were only

relative. The majority of the statue's faces in the But Thap pagoda are identical. They express the loving compassion of the female Bodhisattva, without resorting to any joyful or intimidating attitude. Simultaneously, this is an indication of a Vietnamese trait of character: the reluctance to represent feelings and states of mind, despite the fact that portrait sculpture developed significantly in the 17th century, and with the exception of the statues of Arhats in the Tay Phuong pagoda. Their dislike of any exaggerated expression in the representation of Buddha's can also be explained by the Vietnamese conception of the nature of loving compassion, their respect for kindness and goodness. Wrathful expressions or attitudes lacking solemnity like mirthfully laughing Buddha statues were therefore not accepted.

Ⅳ. The Dragon Supporting the Lotus Seat on Its Head: a Specific feature of Vietnamese statues

The most special detail that we found in the course of our studies and comparisons is the representation of a demon with a dragon head supporting the lotus seat on the base of the statues. Although the legend of the Dragon King helping Guanyin cross the sea came from China, according to our documents on Chinese or Asian typical pedestals for statues, the motif of a dragon supporting a lotus seat on its head is a rare occurrence. The lotus seat is often linked to the base by a gem or a pear symbolizing the axis of the universe. On Chinese statues, this sphere is sometimes carved with wave motives that give a more dynamic character to the pedestal. The representation of two lions holding a pearl and crouching at the base of statues from the Ly dynasty period is also a unique Vietnamese feature. We can therefore suggest that the motif of a dragon holding

a lotus seat, carved on the base of the Vietnamese Thousand arms Avalokiteshvara statues, could be seen as a traditional Vietnamese element. The dragon also appears on Chinese Buddhist statues and paintings during the 19th century, but it is carved as undulating, with Guanyin standing on its head. Pagodas in South of Vietnam were influenced by this style (in some cases, Guanyin is standing on a fish), which was later on imported in the North with statues representing Guanyin standing erect and holding a vase of amrita (divine nectar), facing towards rivers or semicircular lakes in front of the temples. We can find a few other instances of carved pedestals in China in earlier periods. They appeared in Buddhist arts around the Tang period or a little earlier, triggered by the Buddhist faith of the Tang emperors. However, these forms have no traditional relation with the Southern Sea Guanyin statues with a dragon-headed demon holding a lotus seat.

The representation of a demon holding a lotus seat on his head became particularly popular in Vietnam after the 16th century, a period marked by a strong influence of the Chinese culture. However, we may wonder whether this doesn't correspond to a transformation of the motif of the “lion holding a pearl in its mouth” of the Ly period into that of the “dragon-headed devil holding a lotus seat” that we find later . If this is what happened, this metamorphosis indicates many different conceptions. According to Professor Chu Quang Tru, the image of the lions bearing a lotus seat on the statues of the Ly Dynasty represent power and majesty, and the hope of the peasant population for an abundant crop (Chu 2000, 91). Most of the statues dating from the Ly dynasty that have been found represent the Buddha's of the Three Times, and we find no sign of Guanyin statues. After the 16th century, the complex form of this kind of pedestal is no longer to be found with representations of the Buddha's of the Three Times, but they often appear in statues of the Southern Sea Guanyin. As society moved to a new stage, the original prayer for

good harvests may have been hidden under a new one, namely the plea of sailors and merchants to be saved from the dangers of hazardous journeys. The development of trade and exchanges resulted in an ever more popular worship of the Bodhisattva Guanyin endowed with immense magic powers and statues of Avalokiteshvara with thousand arms and eyes were erected everywhere in pagodas built along river banks.

To go back to the Chinese legends of the Southern Sea Guanyin and the story of Guanyin in Fu Da Mountain, they seem not to have been represented in sculptures in China. We do not find representations of the Southern Sea Guanyin in the Mantrayana system of Tibet. Although the legend of the Southern Sea Guanyin is related to the transmission of Buddhism from China to Japan, we cannot find even one statue representing the Southern Sea Guanyin among the 1001 Avalokiteshvaras with a thousand arms and eyes in Sanju Sangedo, the most famous Japanese Buddhist temple worshiping Avalokiteshvara. This temple was built in the 12th century, during the Kamakura period, at a time when Buddhism had already been flourishing in Japan for 6 centuries. We can therefore tentatively put forward the hypothesis that this particular representation has been a created by the Vietnamese people in the imaginative process of representing a legend in a concrete, material form.

We can therefore conclude that the Vietnamese Guanyin statues have absorbed several foreign features of a positive nature in the course of the general development of the Asian Guanyin system, but at the same time, developed its own unique characteristics, corresponding to the Vietnamese psychology and behavior, conceptions and indigenous religious beliefs. The Vietnamese imported and transformed legends from neighboring civilizations and imaginatively transformed them into plastic representations that can be considered as unique creations, in spite of the many shortcomings that can still be detected

in their art and techniques of carving sculptures of the Buddha. We don't find large scale giant statues as in China and Vietnamese statues are not as skillfully and finely detailed as the Japanese ones, but although they take a very modest position among the masterpieces of nations with a brilliant cultural background, they managed to integrate many sources of influence into original creations deeply marked by the popular spirit. Their simplicity reflects the soul of the Vietnamese people and expresses how close they feel to Buddhism. With their many facets and little formalism, the Vietnamese statues of Guanyin with thousand arms and eyes have made one more contribution to the infinitely rich variety of Guanyin sculptures in Asia.

Key Words : Guanyin, Avalokiteshvara, Shiva, Buddhist Arts

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<국문초록>

아시아 예술적 관점에서 본 베트남

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베트남 관음상, 특히 천 개의 팔과 눈이 있는 관음상은 일반적으로는 아시아에서, 구체적으로는 동남아에서 종교 혼합주의의 가장 명백한 증거로 여겨질 수 있다. 그것은 인도와 더불어 특히 중국모델에서 전래된 몇 가지 구체적인 증거를 베트남 관음상에서 발견할 수 있다. 많은 학자들은 시바를 관음상의 천개의 팔과 천개의 눈을 표상한 것의 원천으로 보았다. 베트남 관음상에 대한 중국문화의 영향은 그 영향이 직접적이며 장기간에 걸쳐 최근까지도 이어져져 왔기 때문에, 인도문화가 남긴 흔적들보다 더 분명하게 나타난다. 이러한 문화적 유사성으로 인하여 비평가들은 베트남 관음상을 중국 관음상의 단순한 복제품으로 간주하게 만들었다.

본 논문에서 저자는 베트남 관음상은 여러 외국의 특징들을 흡수해 왔지만, 동시에 베트남의 심리와 행동, 개념, 토착 종교적 믿음에 상응하는 그만의 독특한 특징을 반영했다는 사실을 주장할 것이다. 천개의 팔과 눈을 가진 베트남 관음상은 인도와 중국의 영향을 받았지만, 베트남 특유의 예술적 가치를 지니고 있으며, 아시아 관음상의 무한히 풍부한 다양성에 또 하나의 기여를 해 왔다.

주제어 : 천수관음, 관음상, 관세음보살, 시바, 불교미술