



# The Chinese Wooden Sculpture of Guanyin

New technical and art historical insights

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One of the unanimously acclaimed masterpieces of the collection of Asiatic art in the Rijksmuseum is the Chinese wooden sculpture of the seated Guanyin.<sup>1</sup> The life size human figure, with its introspective, serene expression and its elegant and completely relaxed pose, attracts everybody's attention. Although the Chinese male physical ideal of a slim yet stocky body with rounded limbs and a full face contrasts strongly with the European ideal of a tall, taut, broad-shouldered muscular figure, looking the spectator straight in the eye, this does not prevent Westerners from appreciating the sculptural qualities of the statue (figs. 1-3).

At the time of its acquisition, in 1939, it was considered to be a great work of art and the limited information about it was regarded as of little importance in relation to its great beauty. The sculpture is still a very important asset to the collection today and has frequently been published as such.<sup>2</sup> It is one of a number of comparable Buddhist images, all made of polychromed wood and seated in roughly the same relaxed way, which

were added to European and Northern American collections in the early 20th century, a period when the decline of Buddhism in China coincided with the growth of interest in Chinese and other Asiatic art in the West.<sup>3</sup>

Given it measured up to current European aesthetic norms, Buddhist sculpture from the various regions in Asia – provided they could withstand the European standard of aesthetics of the day – was part of the repertory of sought-after works of art. This new movement of recognition and aesthetic appreciation of traditional arts made for the domestic markets in Asia, was represented in the Netherlands by the Society of Friends of Asiatic Art (*Vereniging van Vrienden der Aziatische Kunst*). To further its aims the Society, founded in 1918, mounted exhibitions, organised lectures, published high quality reproductions of important works of Asiatic art and built up a collection. The President of the Society, H.K. Westendorp (1868-1941), and the Secretary and later Curator, H.F.E. Visser (1890-1965), were strategists in the battlefield of the international art market and the

Fig. 1  
*Water-Moon Guanyin*,  
Northern China,  
12th century (front).  
Polychromed wood.  
Rijksmuseum Amsterdam,  
on long term  
loan from the Society  
of Friends of Asiatic  
Art. Photograph  
Rijksmuseum, c. 1999.



Fig. 2  
*Water-Moon Guanyin*,  
 Northern China,  
 12th century (back).  
 Polychromed wood.  
 Rijksmuseum, Am-  
 sterdam. Photograph  
 Rijksmuseum, c. 1999.

art circles at home. The two of them determined the policy of the Society for about a quarter of a century and were able to built up an excellent collection of major works of Asiatic art, which still form the core of the collection of the Department of Asiatic Art of the Rijksmuseum. Although from different social backgrounds, Westendorp and Visser were of one mind about the definition of the Asiatic art that the Society ought to promote.

Westendorp, of Amsterdam patrician stock and married to Betsy Osieck, a painter belonging to the group of the 'Amsterdamse Joffers' of similar background, was himself a formidable collector of Japanese ceramics and other Asiatic and European art. He was very influential in Amsterdam art circles: not only was he President of the Society of Friends of Asiatic Art, but he was also President of the Society for the Formation of a Public Collection of Contemporary Art, popularly known as: Society with the

Long Name (de Vereeniging tot het Vormen van eene Openbare Verzameling van Hedendaagsche Kunst, or Vereniging met de Lange Naam), based in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. It was through him that in 1932 the Society's Museum of Asiatic Art (Museum van Aziatische Kunst) was housed in the gallery overlooking the garden of the Stedelijk Museum.

Visser, a Dutch engineer of assimilated Jewish background, who had trained in Germany, continuously was engaged in writing about the appreciation of Asiatic art, reviewing exhibitions and new installations in galleries and museums, visiting national and international art dealers, enticing collectors to buy the right art objects, corresponding with every expert in any branch of Asiatic art in the world and pressuring persons of any sort for acquisition money. Naturally, it was Visser who spotted and secured the prized Guanyin sculpture for the Society.

Fig. 3  
*Water-Moon Guanyin*,  
 Northern China,  
 12th century (base).  
 Polychromed wood.  
 Rijksmuseum, Am-  
 sterdam. Photograph  
 Rijksmuseum, c. 1999.



For any major acquisition for the Museum of Asiatic Art Visser had to go through an ordeal. The Dutch were not used to spending a lot of money on art, let alone on art without any Dutch connection and from a far away continent. In this case the threat of the impending Second World War made it even more difficult to raise money. Moreover, the desired sculpture of Guanyin was in New York, another continent again, with the widow of the well-known banker and collector Otto Kahn. Only through the perseverance of Visser was it finally acquired. The Vereniging Rembrandt was of great assistance, as were several members of the Society. In the end even Mrs. Kahn helped by lowering the price. Then, sadly, the sculpture was on display only for two months, since by the end of 1939 all the works of art had to be removed from the galleries because of the danger of air attacks. Not until six years later, late in 1945, was the Guanyin installed again.<sup>4</sup>

Soon after the sculpture was put back on display to the public, the idea arose of restoring it to its original appearance. It was covered in several layers of paint, put on to preserve it over the centuries it was worshipped. Its appearance was that of a gilded sculpture, but in one place, at the back of the raised right knee, the original polychromy of the Bodhisattva's rich cloth shimmered through. The textile pattern, a network of rare fine gold leaf known by the Japanese term 'kirikane' or 'cut gold', looked particularly appealing. The conservator F.A.J. Smoorenburg (1912-1963) was commissioned to undertake the work and the cleaning of the sculpture was, indeed, considered a great success. Some of the polychrome layers were removed. Gilded areas of bare flesh – the face, arms, breast, etc. – on a red brown priming were uncovered. The red loincloth decorated with a pattern of clouds and phoenixes enriched by the very fine *kirikane* was particularly

admired. Moreover, by the removal of the paint layers the overall shape gained its original sculptural qualities.<sup>5</sup>

The results of recent investigation of a Chinese wooden sculpture in the Victoria & Albert Museum comparable to the Rijksmuseum Guanyin<sup>6</sup> in particular and the increasing interest in post-Tang Dynasty (618-907) Buddhist sculptures in general have stimulated new examination of the Rijksmuseum Guanyin's iconography and origins in the Buddhist art of China, as well as its material and technique and the way it was treated during worship and also thereafter.<sup>7</sup> Since these various investigations were able to profit from each other, opening the way to more and wider new insights, an unexpectedly rich conclusion can now be presented here.

#### Identification

It used to be thought that Guanyin sculptures of this type were made in Shanxi province, in the area of the river Fen, during the Jin dynasty (1115-1234). Nowadays differences in style have been noted and one cannot say more than: Northern China in the eleventh to thirteenth centuries. The Rijksmuseum Guanyin is generally ascribed to the twelfth century. The figure can be identified as a particular manifestation of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, known in Chinese as Guanyin.

Bodhisattvas seated in a natural setting in a relaxed pose with one leg pulled up, have been identified as representations of the Water-Moon Guanyin (Chinese: Shuiyue Guanyin, fig. 4)<sup>8</sup> by comparison with paintings dating to the 10th century from the Buddhist cave temples in Dunhuang,<sup>9</sup> in Western Kansu, on the border of Chinese Turkestan. This Bodhisattva is mentioned in the last chapter of the *Flower Garland Sūtra* (Chinese: *Huayanjing*), in which a boy called Sudhana, who is in search of enlightenment, visits and questions fifty-



Fig. 4  
Water-Moon Guanyin,  
Central Asia, 10th  
century. Colours on  
paper. From: Jaques  
Giès, *Les arts de l'Asie  
Centrale – La Collec-  
tion Paul Pelliot du  
musée Guimet*, vol. 1,  
Paris 1995, fig. 83-1.

three 'wise teachers'. Guanyin, the twenty-eighth of these teachers, is found residing at his home, Mount Potalaka (Chinese: *Putuoshan*), a mountain situated on an island. The text describes the Bodhisattva sitting on a diamond boulder in a clearing surrounded by willow trees and bamboo.<sup>10</sup> Images of divine beings seated in a reclining pose with one leg pulled up and the foot resting on the throne, many examples of which comparable to the Rijksmuseum one are now preserved in Western collections, have been identified as representations of this particular manifestation of Guanyin.<sup>11</sup>

### The seated pose

Comparison with early painted versions of the Water-Moon Guanyin sheds light on the seated pose and that of the left leg in particular. A rocky, grove-like setting on an island as seen in Dunhuang painting is attested by textual sources, but the relaxed seated pose is not. On the contrary, in the last chapter of the *Flower Garland Sutra*, when Guanyin is receiving Sudhana, the Bodhisattva is described as sitting in the meditation position or *lotus posture* with crossed legs. In visual renderings of this textual passage from the 10th century onwards Water-Moon Guanyin assumes various poses. On a banner painting in Dunhuang the Bodhisattva is shown seated in a natural setting in the *lotus posture*. In another example he is depicted with the ankle of his right, raised leg lying on the knee of the left leg, which is hanging down in a pose similar to the *half-lotus posture* (Chinese: *ban jie jia fuzuo*). Sometimes the Bodhisattva is clasping the raised knee with both hands in a quite casual manner.<sup>12</sup>

The back of a bronze mirror in the Seiryōji temple in Japan (fig. 5), which is also dated to the 10th century, shows the Bodhisattva reclining in exactly the same way as the Rijksmuseum sculpture, with one leg lying flat and the other pulled up with the foot on the surface of the throne, a pose also assumed by other sculptural representations such as the one in the Saint Louis City Art Museum.<sup>13</sup> This pose and its variation with the left leg hanging down are thought to have originated in India, where they are frequently met with Buddhist and Hindu figures. They are therefore called poses of *royal ease* (Sanskrit: *maharajalilasana*).<sup>14</sup> These relaxed sitting postures appear from the 10th century onwards in China, which they could have reached via Sri Lanka.<sup>15</sup> The Chinese pose of *royal ease* is reserved to Guanyin and can be observed in early



Fig. 5  
Circular bronze mirror  
with a depiction of  
Water-Moon Guanyin,  
10th century. Diam.  
11.3 cm, Seiryô-ji  
temple, Japan. From:  
Pan Liangwen, 1996,  
fig. 10.

representations of manifestations of this Bodhisattva, such as a 10th century print, showing the Eleven-headed and Six-armed Guanyin accompanied by two smaller depictions of the Water-Moon Guanyin in the left and right upper corners.<sup>16</sup> Here Guanyin is shown seated in quite a casual, relaxed way. Later murals from Dunhuang also show Water-Moon Guanyin sitting in various relaxed ways. To be seated in some relaxed way without further specification is apparently the characteristic element of the *royal ease* pose. The observations mentioned above show that the variation with the left leg lying in front of the Bodhisattva on the throne surface is known from representations of Water-Moon Guanyin from the 10th century onwards. Therefore, both positions of the left leg, hanging down from, or laying flat on the throne surface, are acceptable in the Chinese Buddhist tradition.

As traces of clay have been discovered by Aleth Lorne on the bottom of the sculpture, the throne was perhaps made out of clay, like the grotto-like

wall mentioned above, and not necessarily out of wood, as in the case of the Guanyin sculpture in the Victoria & Albert Museum in London. Clay is frequently used as a material for the surrounding elements and for restorations on Buddhist sculptures, as can be seen on the crown of the Amsterdam Guanyin.

#### The setting, the secondary figures and the location

As can be shown by comparison with wall-paintings in the Dunhuang cave temples dating from the 11th to 13th centuries, the relaxed seated Guanyin is not on his own, but is being visited by the boy Sudhana, who has come to question him.<sup>17</sup> The boy is standing on a piece of land separated from the Bodhisattva by a narrow strip of water and is slightly bowing with his hands clasped in front of his chest in respectful greeting. Some sculptural representations also show the boy standing in front of Guanyin. So far the earliest known example, discovered by Jan Fontein, is a stone relief in the Northern Pagoda at the Beishan cave temple in Dazu, Sichuan province. It is dated to the mid 12th century.<sup>18</sup>

Yet another figure may accompany Guanyin. The Dragon Princess Longnü is associated with the Bodhisattva, but was added to Water-Moon Guanyin's entourage slightly later. According to esoteric scriptures, Longnü, the daughter of the Dragon King, presented a jewel to Guanyin out of gratitude for the Bodhisattva having revealed the Buddhist law to her and her father.<sup>19</sup> Such a group of figures around Water-Moon Guanyin dating to the Ming Period (1368-1644) is preserved in excellent condition in the Guanyin Hall of Shuanglinsi temple in Shaanxi province. The Bodhisattva is seated in *royal ease* on a rocky throne with his back shielded by a screen depicting rugged stones. The boy Sudhana and the Dragon Princess



Fig. 6  
Water-Moon Guanyin  
with Sudhana and  
Longnü, 14-15th  
century. Clay with  
colours. In situ in  
the Guanyin Hall,  
Shuanglinsi, Shanxi  
Province. From:  
Zhongguo fojiao  
wenhua yanjiusuo  
(Chinese Research  
Institute of Buddhist  
Culture) (ed.), *'Shanxi  
fojiao caisu' (Buddhist  
Clay Sculptures of  
Shanxi Province)*  
Beijing 1991, fig. 108.



appear floating on clouds above and worshipping the Bodhisattva (fig. 6).

Images of Water-Moon Guanyin are also to be found in another place in Northern-Chinese Buddhist temples. Like a Chinese palace, the temple-complexes are commonly oriented on a north-south axis on which stand the main buildings like the image-hall(s), lecture-hall and monk's-quarters. Flanking the main buildings and forming courtyards with them, there may be various side-halls dedicated to Bodhisattvas or guardian deities etc. In the main image-hall of a temple images of Water-Moon Guanyin with attendants are often encountered sitting back to back with the main Buddha-assembly so that they seem to be guarding the back of the central hall, where there is often a back door leading into the next courtyard. An example of such a Water-Moon Guanyin with attendants behind the main altar is seen in the temple of Dulesi (fig. 7) dating from the Liao-Period (907-1125). Assemblies like this, in which Guanyin is accompanied by guardian deities, can also be attested in several other halls of Jin (1115-1234)<sup>20</sup> and Ming-Period temples in Northern China. In Dulesi the guardian deity Weituo,<sup>21</sup> one of the 32 generals who guard Buddha's law, is venerating Guanyin. Therefore it may be assumed, that one of the main functions of deities in this position is to protect the Buddha's realm against evil spirits.

Fig. 7  
Guanyin on Mount  
Potalaka, Liao  
Dynasty, 984. Clay  
with colours, h. 120  
cm. Guanyin Pavillion,  
Dulesi, Hebei  
Province. From:  
Gridley, 2001, fig. 6.





Fig. 8  
Water-Moon Guanyin,  
10th century. Colours  
on paper, 82.9 x 29.6  
cm. Stein Collection,  
British Museum, Lon-  
don. From: Whitfield,  
Roderick: *The Art of  
Central Asia – The  
Stein Collection in the  
British Museum*. Vol. 2,  
New York 1983,  
fig. 52-1.

### The halo or full moon disk

Halos are often found behind the heads or the entire figures of enlightened beings, symbolising the light emanating from them, but in the case of Water-Moon Guanyin the halo also has a special meaning, calling to mind the disk of the moon.<sup>22</sup> That a full moon-like halo emphasises the iconography of Water-Moon Guanyin is indicated by paintings from Dun-

huang<sup>23</sup> such as the earliest representation of Water-Moon Guanyin of AD. 943 in a painting of the Thousand-armed and Thousand-eyed Guanyin (Musée Guimet) and a painting of the 10th century (Aurel Stein Collection, British Museum, fig. 8). The Chinese mirror in the Seiryōji Temple in Japan on which Water-Moon Guanyin is engraved, as mentioned above, indicates in a specific way the Buddhist idea that the illusory nature of all phenomena is expressed by the deceptive reflection of the moon in water.<sup>24</sup> The mirror, as the surface for the representation of Water-Moon Guanyin, is itself a symbol of delusive reflections, while at the same time its circle serves as the full moon-like halo surrounding the image (fig. 5). However, in respect of three-dimensional representations of Water-Moon Guanyin it is more difficult to come to a conclusion, mostly because only few examples are known of this Bodhisattva in his original setting and the only one showing a large halo behind the back is the clay sculpture of Water-Moon Guanyin in the Liao Dynasty temple hall of Dulesi in North China, dated to 984 (fig. 7).<sup>25</sup>

The wooden dowels at the back of the Water-Moon Guanyin in the Victoria & Albert Museum may have been the attachment for a halo surrounding the upper body. In their report Larson and Kerr suggest that this sculpture was attached to a background, possibly of painted or gilded rocks.<sup>26</sup> Sculptural examples of the Water-Moon Guanyin placed in front of mountainous screens are known still *in situ*, but the backs of those sculptures are never attached to the screens. This makes it more likely that a halo, as seen in the sculpture in the Dulesi temple hall mentioned above, may have been attached to the back of the Water-Moon Guanyin in the Victoria & Albert Museum. Whether the Rijksmuseum Water-Moon Guanyin was provided with a halo is more difficult to ascertain. The rec-

tangular cavities in the back, one at the height of the shoulder blade, the other below the waist, may derive from the attachment of a large halo surrounding the upper body, but their positions one above the other to the left of the spine and not in the centre, seem unsuitable for this purpose. What other function they may have had is impossible to tell at this stage.

### The construction

The sculpture of the seated Bodhisattva is composed of many pieces of wood, the smooth, even surface of which may be observed through the losses in the paint layers. Most of the wood has been identified as a species of willow, a tree that grows in humid regions such as along the river Fen in Shanxi province, and also in the more temperate climate of Northern China; three original fragments are of paulownia wood. They are the right hand, the right arm, and a thin plate on the side of the right leg. No survey of the types of wood used for Chinese religious sculpture exists as yet, but it seems obvious that the wood carvers would have used trees locally available and suitable for carving.<sup>27</sup>

The Guanyin is composed of no fewer than thirty-one blocks of wood. Most of the joints have become visible over time, making it possible to detect much of the construction, which was later confirmed by radiography.<sup>28</sup> The torso is carved out of a single huge tree trunk (60 cm in diameter). The head, the legs, and the arms, which are joined to the central block, are themselves made of several parts. The closer to the extremities, the more fragments are used. This is a technical solution for the manufacturing of large size wooden figures, which may have its origin in early Indian sculpture.<sup>29</sup> An advantage is that the sculpture is stronger because the grain of the wood can run in the same direction as the limbs, but a disadvantage is that the large number of joints form the weak spots. The technique allows the proportions of the figure to be adjusted by the addition of an extra piece of wood. The right upper leg of the Rijksmuseum's Guanyin and the lower part of the back have been thickened in this way, for example. Large and medium sized parts are joined by dowels, while the small parts are simply glued together.



Fig. 9  
Detail of seated  
Guanyin, 11th century.  
Clay with colours,  
h. c. 50 cm. Provincial  
Museum Zhejiang,  
Hangzhou. Photo  
Petra Rösch.

The radiographs show that dowels have been used for joining pieces of wood which are in line. Without a dowel the glue bond between the end-grain surfaces would not be strong enough. The radiographs also show tenons, rectangular blocks joining two solid blocks of wood, as for instance in the right thigh. They are 7-8 cm long, 5-6 cm wide and probably 1.5 cm high (fig. 10). Unlike the dowels, the tenons join large blocks of wood with the grain in the transversal direction. Thanks to their large size and position, these rectangular tenons are able to withstand high pressure.

Fig. 10  
The Rijksmuseum  
Water-Moon Guanyin,  
see figs. 1-3. X-ray  
photograph, detail of  
right leg.



### The damage, repairs and alterations to the wooden body

Considering its age and history, the sculpture is in good condition. Most of the damage is physical in nature and in all likelihood due to protracted neglect as well as the removal and transportation of the image from its original place. There is some insect-infestation, particularly at the back, where it has caused the loss of a section of wood, and there are shrinkage cracks in various places. The joints came loose and some of the blocks of wood are missing, including the toes of the left foot, part of the loin cloth and two strands of hair running from the ears to the back of the shoulder. At the back a section behind the left ear and large sections below the left shoulder and at the waist are missing. The X-rays have revealed early repairs by means of small wooden pins of a circular section.<sup>30</sup> At a later period many handmade iron nails of different sizes, as well as huge iron cramps, have been used to reinforce the joints. Some of the open joints have been filled in by a whitish material which seems to be a white clay or chalk mixed with animal glue.

Other damages are deliberate and more difficult to explain. The head has been roughly sawn off and refixed in its original place. The jagged saw cut running from the upper part of the back and shoulders to the folds below the chin is clearly visible in the early photographs (figs. 16, 17). The 1946 restoration concealed it at the front (fig. 18), but it can still be seen at the back. The sawing off of the head may have caused further damage. At the nape of the neck and behind the left ear part of the wood has come off and two strands of hair are gone.

The present condition of the left leg suggests that this part of the figure has also been subjected to repairs. The tip of the loin cloth laying flat in front of the leg has been joined on in such a



way that the folds on it do not match up with those in the cloth on the leg. A long unpainted piece of wood has been fixed behind the folded leg in order to adjust its thickness, while the surface of the left thigh was remodelled in 1946 by a thick layer of gypsum painted brown in order to hide a wide deep crack, as can be seen on the earliest known photograph of the Rijksmuseum Guanyin (fig. 16).<sup>31</sup> Finally, some of the folds of the loin cloth behind the left leg, which now lie in a horizontal position, have been roughly broken off and removed (fig. 11).

Examination of the underside of the sculpture provided clues for the interpretation of the general disorder around the left leg (fig. 3). The first observation was that deep, wide cracks had endangered the solidity of the underside. The second was that the joinery detectable through the splits and open joints showed that the leg had originally been in a vertical hanging position and that it had been turned 90 degrees at some time.

Traces of original polychrome layers on the fragments fixed to the leg indicated that they were re-used parts belonging to the original construction. The change of the position of the leg also explained why the folds of the loin cloth behind it had been broken off and why there was a pin hole under the left foot. This may have been used originally to fix it to a support now lost.

The left hand of the Bodhisattva making the gesture of resting with its palm on the surface of the throne is actually floating above it. The tip of the scarf curling down the arm, on which the hand is placed in most similar Water-Moon Guanyin sculptures, is missing. The scarf now terminates abruptly at wrist height where the block of wood forming the arm also terminates. The block forming the hand shows a flat side where the wrist meets the palm and does not fit smoothly to the arm (fig. 2), contrasting sharply with the subtle shapes of the sculpture as a whole, particularly in comparison with the right hand

Fig. 11  
The Rijksmuseum  
Water-Moon Guanyin,  
see figs. 1-3. View of  
the left leg from  
above.

and arm.<sup>32</sup> The block of the left hand is joined to the arm by a dowel, but a large handmade nail was later driven through the joint. A careful examination of the radiographs shows that the dowel joining the hand to the arm is similar to the one of the right hand in every aspect. The same pink flesh tones of the early period are found on the hand and the arm and the paint layers are not disturbed by any repairs. Everything seems to point to the originality of the hand. The only explanation for the supporting hand not touching the surface of the throne would be that the throne surface, representing a boulder, was raised at that point, but that would be a rare exception.

#### The original paint layers

Repairs and alterations are not confined to the wooden body of the sculpture. The many superimposed layers of paint still present on the surface of the sculpture, even where they were reduced to small patches by the restoration in 1946, give evidence of the worship over the centuries. To apply a new layer of paint was an act of devotion attracting merit as well as helping to maintain the sculpture, while at the same time it offered an opportunity to adapt the appearance of the sculpture to the taste of the period. The remains of the paint layers have been investigated under the binocular microscope in order to find out what the original colour scheme of the sculpture was, and how it developed over the centuries. It has not as yet been possible to identify the materials.

Eight or nine superimposed layers of polychromy were observed on the front of the sculpture. The back and right side have never been over-painted, probably because they could not be seen by the worshippers or because they were not accessible to the painters, or perhaps for both reasons. The layers of polychromy can be divided into two homogeneous groups,



determined by their specific style.

The first group consists of the four earliest layers of polychromy and is characterised by a very naturalistic style. The flesh tone was originally pink and the hair was the dark blue it ought to be according to the traditional colour scheme of the Bodhisattva. The loin cloth reaching to the ankles was red and decorated with black figures of phoenixes and clouds.<sup>33</sup> Another piece of cloth also draped around the lower body, but covering the hips and thighs only, is held in place by the same belt. The border of this cloth was decorated with a band of white, green and black flowers. The same colours are used for the foliage pattern painted on the cloth partly covering the upper part of the body (fig. 12). The scarf enveloping the shoulders and curling down the arms is black and its inside is painted

Fig. 12  
The Rijksmuseum  
Water-Moon Guanyin,  
see figs. 1-3. Detail of  
the traces of original  
polychromy on the  
back, foliage pattern.

with the same red as that of the loin cloth. Red and black are the dominant colours of the various cloths, with additional touches of green and white. The very mat cloth draped over the lower part of the torso contrasts with the slightly shiny red paint of the loin cloth. This original colour scheme has been repeated three times in succession in the same materials and technique, but with some variation in the ornamentation.

The loin cloth may have been the most elaborately finished part of the clothing. The wood was first impregnated by a very thin greyish layer of priming. A thicker layer of priming was applied on the construction joints in order to make them less visible. Then came a thin bright orange layer which served to give depth and lustre to the top layer of transparent red paint. The mat black clouds, trees and phoenixes were not painted on top of the red layer, but the space for them was left in reserve, the red paint running beyond their outlines (fig. 13).

Fig. 13  
The Rijksmuseum  
Water-Moon Guanyin,  
see figs. 1-3. Detail of  
a phoenix painted in a  
reserved space on a  
red background with  
*kirikane* on the left  
leg.



### The kirikane

The loin cloth was overpainted twice in red and continued to be decorated with the same clouds and phoenixes. It was only when it was repainted for the second time (third polychrome layer) that the paint layer was enriched by an amazing pattern of very thin strips of gold crossing each other endlessly. This decoration technique, *kirikane*, is achieved by folding and cutting gold leaf into extremely narrow strips, which are glued on to the surface and arranged with great precision in geometrical patterns.<sup>34</sup> Examination of the Rijksmuseum Guanyin under the microscope shows clearly that the *kirikane* is spread like a network over the whole surface of the loin cloth with no consideration of the underlying phoenix-and-cloud pattern. This *kirikane*, laid bare by the 1946 restoration, is of a very fine quality and well preserved.

The rich *kirikane* is among the most elaborate examples now extant on Chinese sculptures. The pattern



Fig. 14  
The Rijksmuseum  
Water-Moon Guanyin,  
see figs. 1-3. Detail of  
thickly overpainted  
clouds (and trees?) on  
a red background with  
kirikane, on the right  
side.

of a star in a medallion, limited to the knees, and the geometrical pattern of segmented rhomboids covering the largest part of the loin cloth, as well as the leaf like border on the hem of the loin cloth, show a variety in decorative motifs. Not only the quality of the *kirikane* on the Rijksmuseum Guanyin, but also the growing number of other Chinese Buddhist sculptures with traces of this technique (fig. 11) becoming known to us, show that the application of *kirikane* on wooden sculptures must have been widespread in China, at least during the 11th and 12th centuries.<sup>35</sup>

The underlying decoration was disregarded when the network of *kirikane* was applied over the third layer of phoenix-and-cloud motifs on a red ground (fig. 14). On the one hand the phoenix-and-cloud motif could have been inspired by Liao Dynasty (907-1125) textiles,<sup>36</sup> while on the other, the origins of complex geometrical patterns of *kirikane* interwoven or embroidered with silk or gold threads are found in other Chinese textiles of

the eleventh century.<sup>37</sup> No combination of both patterns is known in extant examples of textiles. Many Japanese sculptures of the 11th and 12th centuries are decorated with *kirikane* combined with polychrome patterns and Japanese scholars assume that some of these must have been inspired by Chinese sculptures of slightly earlier date.<sup>38</sup> In these Japanese sculptures geometrical *kirikane* patterns are never applied over coloured motifs, but surround them, this in imitation of extant textile patterns.<sup>39</sup> Thus the application of the *kirikane* pattern ignoring the underlying motifs on the Rijksmuseum Guanyin is astonishing and indicates that the *kirikane* was probably a separate decoration.

Over the *kirikane* the sculpture was given one more layer in the naturalistic style. This last addition, however, was limited to the phoenix-and-cloud motifs, which were repainted with a thick blue and green layer finished by a few gold lines of *kirikane* following the outlines. As this *kirikane* is of a

lesser quality than that of the previous layer (fig. 14) this partial overpainting was probably not applied at the same time. At present these overpaintings can only be seen on the right side of the sculpture, since the phoenixes and clouds painted on the front were accidentally removed during the 1946 restoration.<sup>40</sup>

### The layers of gilding

The next layers of paint indicate a sudden change of style. The Guanyin was gilded all over except for the hair which remained dark blue. The gilding is built up in the following way: a greyish priming followed by an opaque orange layer on which thick gold leaves have been glued. The gold leaves were finally covered by a varnish which has now darkened strongly. This gilding has been repeated three times, each time with similar materials and technique. Strips of paper covered with polychromy, which the conservator Smoorenburg removed from Guanyin's surface in 1946 and kept in his private files, were brought to our attention only recently. They show that the last two layers of gilding, if not all of them, were each isolated from the previous one by layers of paper. This could not be discovered by the examination by binocular microscope. A similar practice has been observed on the Victoria & Albert Museum Guanyin.<sup>41</sup>

Most of the layers of gilding on the Rijksmuseum Guanyin were removed by the 1946 restoration. The gilding visible at present is the remains of the earliest layer. Only these gilded flesh tones and a few patches here and there prove that the Bodhisattva was once gilded all over.

The gilded surface of the clothing was enlivened by a raised pattern, as can be seen on a photograph taken before the 1946 restoration (figs. 15-17).<sup>42</sup> Surface irregularities comparable to an Italian *pastiglio* indicate the presence of raised decorations on the

knees, the border of the loin cloth and the cloth draped over the torso.<sup>43</sup> It is, however, impossible to tell if these patterns were part of the first gilded layer or applied at a later stage. The totally gilded surface combined with raised decoration on the cloths was meant to give the Guanyin the appearance of a rich, chased and gilded bronze, as suggested by Kerr and Larson for comparable layers of gilding found on the Victoria & Albert Museum Guanyin.<sup>44</sup> The same authors date these layers to the Ming period (1368-1644).<sup>45</sup>

### The Chinese art market c. 1930

When Herman Visser embarked on the acquisition process for the Guanyin in 1939, it was not the first time he had seen it. In the spring of 1929, when visiting Berlin for the exhibition of Chinese art, held from 12 January to 2 April, he had seen it at Tiergartenstrasse 2, the premises of Edgar Worch (1880-1972), whose business partner Jörg Trübner (1901-1930) had brought it in. At that time he had considered the price too high.<sup>46</sup> Berlin was one of the European cities with a great interest in things Chinese. The month of May following on the exhibition saw the sale of the well known Breuer collection, while several other dealers like Worch, who imported directly from China, were based there.<sup>47</sup>

The Museum of Far Eastern Art had opened in 1906<sup>48</sup> and the flourishing Society for East Asian Art was founded in 1926.<sup>49</sup> Trübner had been on a buying trip to China in order to be able to offer a wide variety of objects to the customers expected to come to Berlin for the Chinese art exhibition. An idea how much he was able to secure on this trip can be obtained from the book published in his memory after his untimely death the next year at the age of twenty-nine. The Rijksmuseum Guanyin was among his last acquisitions (fig. 15).<sup>50</sup>





Fig. 15  
The Rijksmuseum  
Water-Moon Guanyin  
in Berlin in 1929. From:  
Kümmel (note 2),  
Tafel 76.

In the twenties and thirties Beijing, an international metropolis housing Western diplomats, artists, dealers and many others, was the centre of a very brisk trade in Chinese curios, art and antiquities. Interest in the West in Japanese and Chinese art had started in the late 19th century, but now it was at fever pitch. Any kind of object made in any kind of material during any point in time in China was brought on to the Beijing market. Several Chinese art dealers had established businesses, but Western and Japanese ones had also set up there for the lucrative trade. Direct routes connected Beijing with Berlin, Paris, London and New York. The countryside was stripped of anything man-made and movable. Often the objects were forcibly removed. They were eagerly awaited by the many Westerners living in Beijing who could count on a regular supply of a wide choice of art objects, many of which were of a kind not seen

before in the West. Collecting Chinese art had become a true craze.<sup>51</sup>

A photograph of the Rijksmuseum Guanyin on page 299 of the book *Preuves des Antiquités* reveals the source of Trübner's purchase (fig. 16). It must have been made before the sculpture was transported to Berlin before or early in 1929. The book, published in Beijing in 1930 by the Chinese art dealer Paul Houo-Ming-Tse, is a very special one in many ways. A de luxe publication of large format with around 700 pages, it is at the same time the story of his life and a new history of Chinese art. The author presents himself as a specialist in antiquities and owner of the antique shop 'Ta-Kou-Tchai' ('Daguzhai' = 'Antique shop'). His life story starts with his being a poor orphan and goes on to show him attending a Christian school, becoming a civil servant and establishing himself at the age of twenty-seven as a curio dealer in Beijing and culminates with the presentation of his history of Chinese antiquities, which comprises the major part of the book. He classifies the antiquities in categories, such as coins, seals, books, bronze vessels, musical instruments, paintings, wooden and bronze sculptures, etc. Each category is introduced by the author and illustrated by photographs of objects from his own extremely rich stock. The majority of the text is in French, the captions to the photographs in both Chinese and French. *Preuves des antiquités* must have been produced at the very height of the author's career, when he had reached a certain age and felt he was a made man. Two years later he had his entire stock auctioned in Paris.<sup>52</sup>

*Preuves des antiquités* shows, in few words and many photographs, what was happening at the time on the Chinese antique market. One passage is particularly telling: Paul Houo, at the very beginning of his career as an art dealer, sets out for Lingshi district in Pingyang prefecture (in the south of

Shanxi province on the river Fen) to collect antiquities. He shows us a photograph of a completely broken down cart in a landscape. The caption says that the accident on the way could have cost him his life, implying that he put his life at stake for antiquities. Several illustrations of the interior of his shop and garden in the book are dazzling for the enormous number and variety of objects. He must have joined in with the junk dealers pillaging the country side around Beijing and further out, collecting curios by the cartload for the eager but often ignorant Western customers in Beijing.

Of the twenty or so life-size wooden sculptures illustrated in *Preuves des antiquités*, the Rijksmuseum Guanyin has all the parts it had in Berlin, but most of the others have lost one or more hands and other extremities. They appear to have been neglected for a long time. It can be imagined

Fig. 16  
The Rijksmuseum  
Water-Moon Guanyin  
in Beijing in or before  
1929. From: Houo-  
Ming-Tse, (note 2),  
p. 299.



that while the sculptures were being photographed for the book, the loose parts were lying about, some of them waiting to be reused to patch up defective sculptures. On one Water-Moon Guanyin in *Preuves des antiquités* the missing lower right arm and hand were added before it was auctioned two years later in Paris by Paul Houo-Ming-Tse.<sup>53</sup> Worse things also happened in Beijing: Buddhist sculptures were fashioned out of wooden roof beams and telegraph poles, and these were also acquired as works of art by keen Western collectors.<sup>54</sup> The Chinese art market was extremely rich, but the good was jumbled up with the bad and one needed a good eye to pick out the best.

#### The 1946 restoration

Since this was not required at the time, no report was made of the restoration carried out in 1946. Visser's communications about it in that and the following year are the nearest thing to a report that we have, while envelopes containing scraps of paper with gilding and other colours stripped from the Guanyin sculpture were rediscovered in the files of the museum and the conservator. The present investigation of the remains of the layers of polychromy, the radiography and the photographs made while the sculpture was in the care of the subsequent owners in Beijing before or early in 1929, in Berlin in the spring of 1929 and in Amsterdam in 1939 and 1946 now allow us to reconstruct what was done by the conservator F.A.J. Smoorenburg in 1946 (figs. 15-18). The work was entrusted to him, as he had done other restorations on objects in the collection of the Society of Friends of Asiatic Art to complete satisfaction, and a commission was established to supervise it.<sup>55</sup>

The aim was to restore the sculpture to its original appearance, to strip it of the layers of paint and paper



Fig. 17  
The Rijksmuseum  
Water-Moon Guanyin,  
Northern China, 12th  
century. Polychromed  
wood. In Amsterdam  
after its acquisition in  
1939.

added after its inception in order to reveal the original forms and to retrieve the initial colour scheme. This last was motivated by the fragment of *kirikane* on the right knee, which was then believed to be the original decoration of the Bodhisattva's loin cloth. The restoration was certainly not meant to make the sculpture look like new or undamaged, as is evident from the back, the left shoulder and the left leg and foot.

Smoorenburg removed large iron clamps holding wide cracks together and he filled in and repainted the cracks. He completely covered the upper part of the loin cloth, with a whitish material (gypsum) and repainted it. As the retouchings have discoloured over time, they are now clearly visible. The paint layers of the fleshy parts were removed down to the first layer of Ming gilding, those on the loin cloth to the *kirikane*, the last embellishment over the red cloth dec-

orated with phoenix-and-cloud motifs. Smoorenburg proceeded with caution and did not interfere if it was not necessary. He filled in the crude saw-cut through the neck and retouched it only at the throat. He left as they were the hole in the forehead, where a crystal or other semi-precious stone is missing, and the front of the crown where a tiny figure of Guanyin's spiritual father the Buddha Amida has disappeared. Everything was done to please the eye of the beholder, an aesthetic approach completely in agreement with the taste of the curator H.F.E. Visser, who together with the President H.K. Westendorp, set the tone for the collection of the Society of Friends of Asiatic Art. Smoorenburg's know-how must have been rare at the time, but so must have been his customers.

One result of the 1946 restoration was that the gilded flesh tones of the Ming period were now combined

Fig. 18  
The Rijksmuseum  
Water-Moon Guanyin,  
Northern China, 12th  
century. Polychromed  
wood. In Amsterdam  
after its restoration in  
1946.



with the red loin cloth covered with *kirikane* from the naturalistic style of the 12th century. Unintentionally the conservator produced an image of Guanyin in a mixture of historical styles, which complicated the present examination.

### Conclusion

The general idea about the area and period in which the Rijksmuseum Guanyin and other sculptures of its kind were made is not influenced by the research results presented here, but many other hidden aspects of the sculpture as a Chinese object of worship and as a Western work of art have come to light. The Rijksmuseum Guanyin is made of a type of willow native to China. The construction, with one large solid tree trunk for the body of the deity, to which smaller blocks of wood were added for the head, limbs and other parts, seems to have been the usual technique.

According to the texts and in surviving paintings Water-Moon Guanyin is seated on a rocky boulder of the mountain Potalaka. The seat of the Rijksmuseum Guanyin must have been a boulder too, but made separately, possibly in clay. The back of the Bodhisattva image, which is summarily sculpted, was not painted as long as it was on its original place in the temple, standing without an attachment in front of a screen or other device suggesting an environment of trees and bushes. It is unclear whether the Rijksmuseum Guanyin had a halo or not. It must have been accompanied by one or more smaller secondary figures hovering symmetrically above or placed next to it. These may have been, in order of likelihood: the boy Sudhana, the Dragon Princess, the Guardian of the Buddhist law or other Buddhist guardians. Such a group of Water-Moon Guanyin and accompanying figures was usually placed at the north side of the main hall of a

temple complex with the main group of Buddhist figures, so that they served as guardians.

It is now possible to reconstruct the main events of the history of the Rijksmuseum Water-Moon Guanyin. The layers of overpainting of the sculpture can be divided into two distinct styles, each of them very homogeneous in materials, technique and taste. When the image was created sometime in the 12th century, it was painted in natural colours, i.e. pink for flesh, red and black for the cloths, etc. The first group of overpaintings for the upkeep of the sculpture was the same. The last layer of this group, the *kirikane*, was decorated with phoenix-and-cloud motifs copied from the underlying imitation of a red textile. The *kirikane* is not as rare as was thought in 1939, but is still considered of very fine quality and well preserved. The second group of overpaintings was applied much later, during the Ming Period (1368-1644). It is of a different taste altogether, Guanyin being turned into a richly gilded bronze in appearance. After that the image was overpainted a few times in the same fashion, but these layers of gilding were not applied on the back.

It is difficult to establish with certainty the historical connection between the three successive periods of Guanyin's outward appearance and the alteration of the position of the left leg. However, this must have been done at a late stage and in view of the roughness of the construction, it cannot have been contemporary with the fine gilding. Repairs were done to the image during the long period over which it was worshipped. Both positions of the left leg are acceptable according to Chinese Buddhist rules. The main effect of the turning of the leg, however, was to hide the damage to the left upper leg and the area around it. Although definite proof is lacking, in view of the attitude towards Chinese antiquities at the time,

this looks more like an intervention to prepare the piece for the Western art market. Something also happened to the left hand, but, regrettably, it is impossible to establish exactly what this was, while the reason for the sawing off of the head also remains unclear.

The Guanyin sculptures in the Rijksmuseum and the Victoria & Albert Museum had approximately the same career, beginning around the same era in China and ending up in a Western collection, over the same period of time. They were given similar treatment as objects of worship, as well as thereafter. By the late 19th century both Buddhism and the economic situation in China were in decline, while at the same time Western interest in the arts and crafts of remote periods and lands was growing. As a result, instead of being mended and repainted, Buddhist images were removed from their rightful places and exported to the West to be worshipped by quite a different audience. The case history of the Rijksmuseum Guanyin may be exemplary for other Chinese sculptures.

In conclusion the Rijksmuseum Water-Moon Guanyin can be said to have successfully withstood the many centuries during which it was in the care of people with a diversity of interests. It remains a masterpiece, not only of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, but also amongst sculptures of its own kind all over the world. It is to Herman Visser's credit that he recognized the sculpture's hidden beauty.

## NOTES

\* We would like to thank Jan Piet Filedt Kok and Jan van Campen who in the course of their duties of Director of Collections and Acting Curator of the Department of Asiatic Art respectively, stimulated and co-ordinated the activities leading to this article; Paul van Duin, Head of Furniture Conservation, and Dominique van Loosdrecht, Senior Furniture Conservator, for contributing in their expertise in X-ray photography, as well as observation with the naked eye; Arie Wallert, Curator and Consultant for Scientific Research of the Department of Painting, for helping with the X-ray photography; Klaas Ruitenbeek, former Curator of East Asian Art of the Department of Asiatic Art, and Patricia Wardle for scrutinising the text and making some helpful suggestions; Jan Fontein, former Curator of the Museum of Asiatic Art, for his continuous interest and encouragement.

1 Inv.no. AK-MAK 84, h. 117 cm., acquired with the aid of the Vereniging Rembrandt and members of the Society of Friends of Asiatic Art. The Guanyin sculpture, as part of the collection of the Society of Friends of Asiatic Art, was transferred in 1952 within Amsterdam from the Garden Room of the Stedelijk Museum to the Drucker Wing of the Rijksmuseum. Since 1972 the collection of the Society has been a long term loan to the Rijksmuseum.

2 Paul Houou-Ming-Tse, propriétaire des magasins de curios Ta-Kou-Tchai (expert spécialiste en antiquités), *Preuves des Antiquités*, Peking 1930, p. 299; Otto Kümmel, *Jörg Trübner zum Gedächtnis. Ergebnisse seiner letzten chinesischen Reisen*, Berlin 1930, Tafel 76-77; H.F.E. Visser, 'Een Levens-groote Chinese Houten Avalokiteçvara in het Museum van Aziatische Kunst', *Maandblad voor Beeldende Kunsten* 16 (1939), pp. 259-264 and 287-288; H.F.E. Visser, 'De Groote Chinese Houten Bodhisattva van zijn Polychromie uit Latere Tijden ontdaan' *Phoenix* 1 (1946), pp. 26-28, and pp. 26-27; H.F.E. Visser, 'A Twelfth-Century Chinese Wooden Bodhisattva Restored in its Original Beauty', *Illustrated London News*, vol. 211, Nov. 20, 1947, pp. 10-11; *Catalogus Museum van Aziatische Kunst in het Rijksmuseum*, Amsterdam, 1952, no. 86; H.F.E. Visser, *Kunst uit het Oosten*, Amsterdam 1953, fig. 27, no. 86 and fig. 12; H.F.E. Visser, 'De Datering van ons Grote Chinese Houten Beeld van Avalokiteçvara', *Bulletin der Vereniging van Vrienden der Aziatische Kunst*, derde serie, no. 1 (1953), pp. 26-27; Robert B. Hawkins, 'A Statue of Kuan-Yin: A Problem in Sung Sculpture', *Record of the Art Museum of Princeton University* XII, 1953, pp. 2-36, p. 33 and fig. 24; *Oosterse Schatten 4000 Jaar Aziatische Kunst*, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam 1954, no. 28 and fig. 11; D. Seckel, *Buddhistische Kunst Ostasiens*,

- Stuttgart 1957, fig. 68; D. Seckel, *The Art of Buddhism*, New York 1964, p. 231; Jan Fontein and Rose Hempel, *Propyläen Kunstgeschichte* 17, China/Korea/Japan, Berlin 1968, p. 175 and fig. 115; R. Goepfer, *Kunst und Kunsthandwerk Ostasiens*, München 1968, fig. 59; W. Watson, *Style in the Arts of China*, Hammondsworth 1974, fig. 72; Pauline Lunsingh Scheurleer, 'no. 19, 1939 China, ca. 12de eeuw. Zittende Avalokiteshvara', *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 31 (1983), afl. 3, pp. 217-218; Pauline Lunsingh Scheurleer (ed.) *Asiatic Art in the Rijksmuseum* Amsterdam 1985, no. 32; Karel R. van Kooij and Pauline Lunsingh Scheurleer (eds.) *A Companion to Buddhist Art. An Introductory course in Buddhist Art in Asia at Leiden University*, Leiden 1997, cover.
- 3 Other similar polychromed wooden Guanyin images of about the same period are in the Honolulu Academy of Arts, the Seattle Art Museum, the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, the City Art Museum of Saint Louis, the Cincinnati Art Museum, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Boston Museum of Fine Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Art Museum of Princeton University, the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, the British Museum in London, the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne and the Shanghai Museum. Naturally, other life size polychromed wooden sculptures were collected too.
  - 4 Lunsingh Scheurleer *op.cit.* 1983 (note 2).
  - 5 See below, Visser *op.cit.* 1946 and Visser *op.cit.* 1947 (note 2). 'Je kent het groote houten vergulde bodhisattvabeeld in het Stedelijk Museum. Zaterdag besloten we op een bestuursvergadering om het door Smoorenburg te laten schoonmaken en van het verguldsel te laten ontdoen. Het resultaat is verbluffend en prachtig. Er komt een prachtige gekleurde onderlaag te voorschijn met echt bladgoud en het beeld wordt door deze schoonmaak het mooiste en belangrijkste beeld van dat soort in Europa en Amerika. Visser is al even verrukt als ikzelf.' [You know the large wooden gilded Bodhisattva image in the Stedelijk Museum. Saturday we decided at a Board Meeting to have it cleaned and the gilding removed by Smoorenburg. The result is staggering and magnificent. A magnificently coloured onder layer has emerged with real gold leaf and this cleaning has made the sculpture the most beautiful and important of its kind in Europe and America. Visser is as thrilled as I am.] cited from an undated [1946] letter by J.M. Hondius, Secretary of the Society of Friends of Asiatic Art, to his wife, Mrs. A.H. Hondius-Crone, kindly put at our disposal by her daughter, Mrs. W. Feenstra-von Saher.
  - 6 J. Larson and R. Kerr, *Guanyin, a Masterpiece Revealed*, Victoria and Albert Museum, London 1985; Unpublished graduation thesis of C. Riviere and C. Longo at the Istituto Centrale per il Restauro, Rome 1999; O.P. Agrawal, 'A Study of Indian Polychrome Wooden Sculpture', *Studies in Conservation* 16 (1971), pp. 56-58.
  - 7 Petra Rösch, a historian of Far Eastern art writing a dissertation on Chinese Buddhist art, based in Heidelberg, Germany, and Aleth Lorne, a conservator specialising in polychromy on wood, based in The Hague, have investigated the Rijksmuseum Guanyin sculpture over the last few years. To the results of their research is added information about the history of the sculpture and the Chinese art and curiosities market in the twenties and thirties by Pauline Lunsingh Scheurleer, a long time curator of the Asiatic art collection in the Rijksmuseum and student of the history of collecting of Asiatic art in the West.
  - 8 Matsumoto Eiichi, 'Tonkōga no kenkyū', 2 Vols., Tōkyō, 1937, vol. 1, pp. 344-354; Laurence Sickman and Alexander Soper, *The Art and Architecture of China*, London 1968, p. 94.
  - 9 Matsumoto Eiichi, 'Suigetsu Kannon zukō' [Research on Representations of the Water-Moon-Guanyin], *Kokka* 429 (1937), pp. 205-213; Pan Liangwen, 'Suigetsu Kannonzō ni tsuite no ichi kōsatsu' [Inquiry into Representations of Water-Moon-Guanyin], *Bukkyō geijutsu* (Ars Buddhica) 224-225 (1996), pp. 106-116 and pp. 15-39.
  - 10 Yü Chün-fang, 'Guanyin - The Chinese Transformation of Avalokiteshvara', in: *Latter Days of the Law - Images of Chinese Buddhism 850-1850*, Marsha Weidner (ed.), Kansas 1994, pp. 151-181.
  - 11 Sickman and Soper, *op.cit.* 1968 (note 8), p. 99 and see note 3.
  - 12 Matsumoto Eiichi, *op.cit.* 1937, (note 8), vol. 2, fig. 97a.
  - 13 Pan Liangwen, *op.cit.* 1996 (note 9), p. 23, fig. 10.
  - 14 Marilyn Leidig Gridley, 'Chinese Buddhist Sculpture under the Liao: Free Standing Works in Situ and Selected Examples from Public Collections.' New Delhi 1985, pp. 163-168, fig. 77.
  - 15 Derek Gillman, 'A New Image in Chinese Buddhist Sculpture of the Tenth to the Thirteenth Century', *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society* 47 (1982-1983), pp. 33-44.
  - 16 Pan Liangwen, *op.cit.* 1996, (note 9), pp. 23, fig. 11 and Yamamoto Yoko, 'Suigetsu Kannon to no natani kansuru ichi kōsatsu' [Inquiry related to the origin of the Water-Moon Guanyin representations], *Bijutsushi* 125 (1989), p. 34, fig. 10.
  - 17 Pan Liangwen, *op.cit.*, (note 9) p. 28.
  - 18 Jan Fontein, *The Pilgrimage of Sudhana*, The Hague 1967, pp. 63 ff; *Dazu shike* [Cave temples of Dazu]; Sichuan meishu xueyuan diaosuxi [Sculpture Department of the Art Academy of Sichuan Province] (ed.) Chengdu 1959, fig. 94.
  - 19 Yü Chün-fang, *op.cit.*, (note 10), p. 160; Yü Chün-fang, *Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of*

- Avalokiteshvara*, New York 2001, p. 440.
- 20 E.g. the Yanshansi in Fanshi county dating to 1158 and also showing a hitherto unidentified guardian deity beside Water-Moon Guanyin. Chai Zejun and Zhang Chouliang: 'Fanshi Yanshansi' (Yanshan temple in Fanshi district). Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe 1990.
- 21 Sculptures of Weituo are found in temple compounds since the Tang Period. Besides guarding the Buddhist monks and the law in sutra deposits and the refectorium, he is also guarding the back door of the main hall facing north. Peri, Noel: 'Le Dieu Wei-t'o'. *Bulletin de l'Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient* 16 (1916), pp. 41-56.
- 22 Harry A. Vanderstappen, 'Water-Moon Avalokiteshvara and its Appearance in Chinese Song Sculpture', *Kannon-Sonzō to hensō. – The Art of Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara – Its Cult-Images and Narrative Portrayals. International Symposium on Art Historical Studies* 5 (1986) pp. 77-102.
- 23 Matsumoto Eichi, *op.cit.* (note 9), fig. 98b.
- 24 Yü Chün-fang, *op.cit.* (note 10), p. 156.
- 25 Gridley, *op.cit.* 1985 (note 14), fig. 176; Marylin Gridley, 'A White Robed Guanyin as the Embodiment of a Liao Ideal', *Orientalism* 32.2. (2001), pp. 47-50, fig. 6.
- 26 Larson and Kerr *op.cit.* 1985 (note 6), p. 51.
- 27 The identification of the wood as a species of willow (*salix*) was done in the Rijksherbarium of the University in Leiden by Professor P. Baas and his staff, see his letter dd. August 10, 1998 to Pauline Scheurleer. A piece of 1 cm<sup>3</sup> from the bottom was used to make samples for microscopic identification. Dominique van Loosdrecht, furniture conservator of the Rijksmuseum, did the identification of the *paulownia* species. In this case only a splinter of the wood was available for making samples for microscopic identification, but it was nonetheless possible to arrive at a reliable conclusion in combination with macroscopic research.
- The Guanyin in the Victoria & Albert Museum is made of *paulownia* wood, see Larson and Kerr, *op.cit.* 1985 (note 6), p. 26. A life size sculpture of another manifestation of Guanyin in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford is made of a type of fig wood (*ficus*), see Mary Tregear, 'A Seated Avalokitesvara', *The Ashmolean* (Christmas 1982 to Easter 1983), pp. 10-12. A recently acquired Bodhisattva at the Metropolitan Museum in New York is made of poplar wood, see *Apollo*, (Dec. 2001), p. 27, right lower corner. Very probably the Chinese craftsmen used local trees for religious sculptures and although hard wood was sometimes imported, it was used only for furniture. We are grateful to Du Minh Lim, expert in wood identification based in Paris, for giving us his opinion in a letter dd. 9 February 2002 to Pauline Scheurleer. Professor Baas, independently, was of the same opinion, see his e-mail message dd. 31 January 2002.
- 28 On July 4th, 2000 radiographs were taken in the galleries of the Department of Asiatic Art in the South Wing of the Rijksmuseum by the Röntgen Technische Dienst of Rotterdam.
- 29 Riviere and Longo *op.cit.* (note 6), and Agrawal, *op.cit.* (note 6), pp. 56-58.
- 30 See the radiograph of the left arm. After the two vertical fragments of the arm had come loose, they were joined by a round wooden pin instead of the original tenon. The empty mortise is visible on the X-ray and the wooden pin has been placed just underneath it. However, this supposition needs to be verified by studying the cross-section of the paint layers at that point.
- 31 See Houo-Ming-Tse, *op.cit.* (note 2), p. 299. The exact date of the photograph is not known, but it was made before the sculpture was transported to Berlin in late 1928 or January 1929, see the section below on the Chinese art market in c. 1930.
- 32 It is only after pertinent remarks by Mr. M. Haga of the Print Room, that we started to wonder about the unusual 'floating left hand'. We are grateful to him for making us look with the naked eye.
- 33 It was difficult to imagine that the figures were originally plain black like shadows. Presumably details were applied on the surface. But no evidence of painted lines or a pattern has yet been found.
- 34 K. Yamasaki and K. Nishikana, 'Polychromed Sculptures in Japan', *Studies in Conservation* 15 (1970), pp. 278-293.
- 35 Ariga Yoshitaka, 'Kirikane to saishiki' [Cut Gold Foil and Colour], *Nihon no bijutsu* 373 (1997) fig. 61, 159.
- 36 Itō Shirō, 'Inseiki butszō aya no Kyōto to Nara marumon to shokkomon' [Decoration of Buddhist Sculptures in Kyōto and Nara during the reigns of Cloistered Emperors – Marumon circle pattern and shokkomon pattern]. *Tōyō bijutsu ni okeru sōshokusei* [The Decoration on Asian Arts]. Symposium No. 11 (1992), pp. 19-26.
- 37 James C.Y. Watt and Anne E. Wardell, *When Silk was Gold – Central Asian and Chinese Textiles*, New York 1997, pp. 44-45.
- 38 Watt and Wardell 1997, *op.cit.* (note 35), pp. 50-51; Itō Shirō 1992, *op.cit.* (note 34), p. 25.
- 39 Ariga Yoshitaka 1997, *op.cit.* (note 33), figs. 13, 15.
- 40 The clouds and phoenixes on the front may have been removed with aggressive chemicals during the 1946 restoration, possibly together with the later layers of polychromy. The mat paint layers of the phoenixes and clouds, being more fragile, may not have been able to resist this treatment. The right side of the loin cloth has never been overpainted after the clouds were painted for the last time. This part of the loin cloth was therefore not subjected to the same treatment in 1946.



- 41 Larson and Kerr, *op.cit.* (note 6), pp. 15-16. On another polychrome wooden Guanyin sculpture of smaller size, h. 66 cm., of about the same period, a layer of paper was also applied all over the sculpture, see the sale catalogue of Giuseppe Eskenazi, London 1990, no. 23 and pp. 14-22. The paper stripped off the Rijksmuseum Guanyin is certainly not European and very probably Chinese, according to Peter Poldervaart, head paper conservation of the Rijksmuseum.
- 42 Lunsingh Scheurleer 1985, *op.cit.*, (note 2), p. 19; Visser 1946, *op.cit.* (note 2), p. 26; Visser 1947, *op.cit.* (note 2), p. 10.
- 43 These raised decorations are very similar to those on the loin cloth of the Guanyin in the Victoria & Albert Museum, see Larson and Kerr, *op.cit.* (note 6), fig. 31, p. 39.
- 44 Larson and Kerr, *op.cit.* (note 6), p. 43.
- 45 Kerr reaches her conclusion by comparing the *pastiglio* dragons on the knees of the Victoria & Albert Museum Guanyin with dragons observed on early Ming porcelain, see Larson and Kerr, *op.cit.* (note 6), p. 64.
- 46 Patrizia Jirka-Schmitz, 'Otto Burchard (1892-1965). Vom Finanz-Dada zum Grandseigneur des Pekinger Kunsthandels', *Mitteilungen der Deutsche Gesellschaft für Ostasiatische Kunst*, no. 12 (Juni 1995), p. 29. For the viewing at Edgar Worch's see Maartje Draak in Lunsingh Scheurleer 1985, *op.cit.* (note 2), p. 12. About the importance of the exhibition of Chinese Art in Berlin see Percival Yetts, 'Chinese Art in Berlin', *The Burlington Magazine*, (March 1929), pp. 129-139; H.F.E. Visser, 'De Tentoonstelling van Chinese Kunst te Berlijn', *Maandblad voor Beeldende Kunsten* deel 6 (1929), pp. 36-46 and 67-68; Max Put, *Plunder and Pleasure. Japanese art in the West 1860-1930*, Leiden 2000, pp. 109-110 and Herbert Butz, "'Die Ausstellung wird gemacht". Die große chinesische Kunstausstellung in der Akademie der Künste im Jahre 1929', *Museumsjournal*, 14 (October 2002) 4, pp. 20-23.
- 47 Jirka-Schmitz, *op.cit.* (note 44), pp. 28-29.
- 48 Willibald Veit, 'Das Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst Berlin', *Mitteilungen der Deutsche Gesellschaft für Ostasiatische Kunst*, vol. 31 (October 2000) 8, pp. 40-46.
- 49 Patricia Jirka-Schmitz, 'Die Gesellschaft für Ostasiatische Kunst (1926-1955)', *Mitteilungen der Deutsche Gesellschaft für Ostasiatische Kunst*, (Oktober 1992) 2, pp. 1-11.
- 50 Kümmel, *op.cit.* (note 2).
- 51 Waren I. Cohen, *East Asian Art and American Culture. A Study in International Relations*, New York/Oxford 1992, *passim*; Put, *op.cit.* (note 43), pp. 97-117; Robert P. Picus, 'Charlotte Horstmann at Eighty-two. Twentieth-century Evolution of Western Interest in Asian Art', *Orientalions*, vol. 21 (November 1990) 11, pp. 82-89; Eleanor von Erdberg 'Peking; Erinnerungen an einen Lebensraum, den es nicht mehr gibt', *Mitteilungen der Deutsche Gesellschaft für Ostasiatische Kunst*, (Oktober 1992) 2, pp. 12-16; Jirka-Schmitz, *op.cit.* (note 43), pp. 23-35; Herbert Butz, 'Frühe Chinesische Bronzen in der Sammlung des Museums für Ostasiatische Kunst, Berlin', *Orientalions*, vol. 31 (October 2000) 8, pp. 47-55. The attitudes of local people towards the pillaging of the cultural heritage of their country differed. On the one hand they were protective: 'The inhabitants of Shanxi Province are so superstitious that even when a Buddhist sculpture is broken, they still attribute great power to the fragments that they collect to the last bit and do not permit to be thrown away or destroyed.' see Houo-Ming-Tse, *op.cit.* (note 2), p. 286. On the other hand, they wanted their share in the profit: Kerr cites a passage by Osvald Siren, travelling throughout China in the thirties, who noted that 'some buildings were boarded up to protect them from vandalism committed by local people, ..., large numbers of Buddhist sculptures and frescoes were being hacked out and transported to the cities for sale to Chinese and foreign collectors.' Larson and Kerr, *op.cit.* (note 6), pp. 11-12.
- 52 Houo-Ming-Tse, *op.cit.* (note 2); *Objects d'art Chinois*, auction catalogue Hotel Drouot, Paris, 1932. Many thanks to Helga Lormans, librarian of the Sinological Institute of the University in Leiden, for translating titles and captions in *Preuves des antiquités*.
- 53 As is shown by the art dealers Christian Deydier Oriental Bronzes, London 1996, fig. 30 and Li Yin Oriental Art, *Ancient Chinese Sculptures*, Taipei (October 2000) 10. Mr. Li Yin Tsai of Li Yin Tsai Oriental Arts Co. Ltd. has kindly provided several other examples of Chinese Buddhist wooden sculptures appearing in *Preuves des antiquités* and reappearing elsewhere with more or different parts. The Bodhisattva on p. 297 was auctioned in Paris in 1932 with an additional right forearm and hand; the one on p. 302 now in a private collection in Taipei, received a right and left hand, see *Chinese Buddhist Wooden Sculpture from Sung and Yuan Dynasties*, Taipei (The National Museum of History) 1997, p. 51; the one on p. 305 was provided with a right finger and toe before it was sold in Paris in 1932; of the one on p. 315, right, the topknot and both hands, probably not original, were removed, see Giuseppe Eskenazi's sale catalogue, *Chinese Works of Art and Furniture*, London, 16 November-5 December 1998, no. 1.
- 54 Erdberg 1992, *op.cit.* (note 48), p. 16.
- 55 Visser 1946, *op.cit.* (note 2), particularly p. 28 and Visser 1947, *op.cit.* (note 2). As reports were rarely made about them, we are certain of only two earlier restorations, those of the South Indian bronze sculpture of the Dancing Shiva acquired in 1935

(inv.no. AK-MAK-187) from which Smoorenburg removed the metal bars inserted in the two cavities in the lotus base and fastened at least two flames to the halo, cf. the photograph in the sales catalogue C.T. Loo & Cie, *Exposition de sculptures et bronzes anciens de l'Inde*, Paris 14 Juin au 31 Juillet 1935, fig. V, with the photographs in the first publication, Th.B. van Lelyveld, 'Schoonheid en beteekenis van het Nataraja-beeld' *Maandblad voor Beeldende Kunsten* deel 12 (1935), p. 290 and in the next issue of the same journal, p. 320 and the Chinese bronze ritual mask, a donation of 1945, from which he removed the crusts of corrosion and earth (inv. no. AK-MAK-12). We are grateful to Hans Smoorenburg, who provided us with photographs and other data about his father's work.