A large number of Chinese Bronzes, figures and paintings are seen all over the world in various museums and private collections. There is a bewildering variety of Guanyin belonging to different periods of Chinese history. There are two reasons for this phenomenon. Firstly the three persecutions san wu chih huo, particularly the last and the most severe in 845 AD, left very few figures in situ in China and whatever that could be hidden for posterity had been removed from the temples. Second, were the expeditions of foreign collectors and predators who managed to buy/remove legally and illegally from China during its troubled times. Another offshoot of the persecution was that the best preserved Chinese traditions of Buddhist art until Tang Dynasty, are seen more in Japan than in China itself. A study of this nature will not therefore be complete without examining some of the representative Chinese artifacts from around the globe.

The earliest Chinese representation of Guanyin in bronze is the standing image in the Fujii Museum in Kyoto which may be said to belong to the fourth century (Pl.110). The Bodhisattva resembles an Indian prince with a bare upper torso while the lower torso covered in
dhoti which the foreigners feel is a skirt, long hair and wearing jewels befitting a prince. The right hand is in abhaya mudra while the left holds the vase containing heavenly dew also called amrit which bestows immortality on worshippers sprinkled with it by the deity. The style is very close to the Gandhara models because of the moustache and the folds in the dhoti and the flowing scarves.

An image in the British Museum dated 471 and the Seattle Museum (Stimson Memorial) figure dated 485 show Avalokitesvara/Guanyin as Padmapani (Pls 111 & 112). The style especially of the Stimson Memorial collection is that of Northern Wei with pointed halo. The right hand holds the padma and the left the nectar vase. The figure of the British Museum is based on the Gāndhara style for it is short and stout while that of the Stimson Memorial is long limbed.

Two early 6th century Northern Wei Dynasty Guanyin are found in the City Art Museum, St. Louis, USA and in the Musée Guimet, Paris (Pls 113 & 114). In them, the linear structure of the Northern Wei style is more evident. The Paris image shows the nectar vase, the lotus bud and the tiny Amitābha in the head dress. These attributes do not appear in the St. Louis Guanyin image whose right hand is in the abhaya mudra and the left holds an object resembling a lotus leaf. The head gear of St. Louis statue is also different from the one from Musée Guimet.
The Tokyo University of Arts houses a sixth century Northern Zhou statue of Guanyin (Pl. 115). A distinctive feature of this statue is that the entire garment is covered with jewels far in excess of anything normally found in a Bodhisattva image, probably an inspiration from the Central Asian figures.

A bronze of late sixth century in the Winthrop collection, Fogg Museum, Cambridge, Mass., USA shows a Guanyin which is small but graceful (Pl.116). This figure holds a willow branch in the form of a fly whisk in the left hand. The whisk symbolizes the compassionate nature of the Bodhisattva. The image resembles a little girl which is quite unusual, but it does show that the feminization had set in, just as we had seen earlier.

In contrast to the previous image, A Sui Dynasty Guanyin in the British Museum, London, holds the Cintāmani in the right hand and a vase in the left (Pl.117).

A Sui Dynasty sculpture of Guanyin's head is in the Chauncey McCormick Gallery, Art Institute of Chicago. (Pl.118). The features are well-chiselled and the half closed eyes have a kind look. The sitting Buddha image is seen on the crown, the usnisa is also visible, the long nose and the firm mouth which curves at the end as if in a smile and all other details are very clear. The face is very much a male one.

While the Kurkihar metal image of Hayagriva (Pl.119) has a ferocious look and is seated, the Dunhuang scroll
(X century) shows Hayagrīva (Pl.120) with three faces, the centre face having a third eye on the forehead and a small Buddha image on his head. The Buddha image has two halos and the three heads of Hayagrīva are also encircled by a halo. Surmounted on the halo is a horse neck. On either side of the figure there are fierce looking animals and birds who are the evil spirits. Hayagrīva as shown here is wide eyed, long moustache and beard only on the main face. His chest is decorated with ornaments and his hands are drawn towards the chest. He does not look as fierce as the metal image or the Japanese sculpture described below.

The Japanese sculpture (Pl.121) dated 1241, shows him the way he is described in scriptures. He is three headed and the main head shows the third eye on the forehead. He has an angry smile inspiring fear in all that is evil. His head carries the horse neck which is very conspicuous. The hair on his head stands up like a flame adding to his angry glance. The shoulders are covered by a shawl. There is a necklace round his neck.

A bronze image in the University Museum, Philadelphia, from Song Dynasty has a matronly look, is fully covered and wears an intricate head dress (Pl.122). She has a benevolent look with trace of a smile, the right hand is in the vitarka mudra while the left holds a lotus bud.

A painting in ink and colour on silk belonging to Song Dynasty in Freer Gallery of Art shows Guanyin
sitting in padmāsana on a lotus throne in a nimbus, his right palm facing upwards with a willow twig between his fingers and the left holding the nectar vase (Pl.123). The head gear has the image of his spiritual father which is proof that it is Guanyin for normally all Shuīyue Guanyin images are depicted in the maharajalila attitude or seated in a relaxed manner on a rocky surface in a pool or pond (the rocky surface symbolises the Bodhisattva's abode Mount Potalaka) and the vase is usually found beside the seated image. There is also a bamboo grove missing in this picture which is part of the Shuīyue Guanyin paintings. The painting shows two Bodhisattvas of a lesser rank who have come to worship him. The bottom register shows four donor figures on either side of the central cartouche which contains an inscription dated 968. The scroll is said to have come from Dunhuang.

A sculpted form of Shuīyue Guanyin from the eleventh-twelfth century, either Northern Song (960-1127) or Liao Dynasty (907-1125) - is kept in the Nelson Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri (Pl.124). This statue exudes beauty from every pore. Sitting regally in the "mahārajalīla" pose its pendant left foot is placed in a lotus. The extended right arm which rests on the raised right knee looks delicate and maiden-like. The left arm rests on the rocky surface supporting the body. The Bodhisattva is clothed in splendid attire. The crown displays a sitting Buddha, the gaze seems to read your
mind. The Bodhisattva is sitting beside a pool. The nimbus is absent perhaps because it is a sculpture.

Another Shuiyue Guanyin from the Museum für Kunsthandwerk, Frankfurt am Main, Germany, of Yuan-Ming Dynasty, sits in the style of the Simhanāda Avalokiteśvara (Pl.125). The left hand rests on the rock, the right arm is extended and rests on the raised right knee. The difference in the two plates is that this statue has the palm facing upwards with the forefinger and little finger pointing out while the middle fingers are folded inwards. This is karana mudrā (the mudrā of Yamā and Ekajatā) which is not commonly seen. There is no crown but there seems to be a headband. The figure sits erect with the head slightly bent as if looking into the pool. The nectar vase and a bird which are absent in the first plate are noticed in this one. The presence of the bird is perhaps to show that it is a female Guanyin. On the whole, only the concept and not the figure, is Chinese here.

From Yunnan province in south western China and dating back to the twelfth century of Freer Gallery of Art, Washington from Song Dynasty, is a Guanyin different from typical Chinese representations, with a distinctive Indian quality. The bare chest, tight skirt, tapering body form and conical headdress is similar to sculptures of Gupta India than to Chinese sculpture of any period (Pl.126). The Bodhisattva's dhoti is held in place by a belt, the right hand is in the vitarka mudrā and the left
perhaps in vara mudrā for it is not clear. His jatāmukuta carries a sitting Buddha image. He wears necklace, armlets and bracelets. There is a semblance of a smile on his lips. There is no doubt that it is a male Guanyin.

A bronze female Guanyin sitting on the back of a horned lion lying on a lotus throne is also a part of the collection of Ferenc Hopp Museum of Eastern Asiatic Arts, Budapest belongs to Early Ming Dynasty. (Pl. 127). She sits in lalitāsana with one leg pendant and the other foot resting on the thigh of the hanging leg. Her right hand shows the abhaya mudrā, the left dhyāna. Lotuses rise from her hands on which are a book and a pearl. She wears a five leaved crown, necklaces, armlets and bracelets. This is similar to the Śimhanāda-Tārā described earlier.

A very rare, bronze with lacquer image from Ming Dynasty, sixteenth century (Pl.128) is seen in the same museum of Budapest.¹ The Bodhisattva is seen with a clear moustache and beard. A narrow band with a small image of Amitābha goes round his head. The right hand holds the kundika and the left the willow. The image has thick eyebrows.

Also from the same collection is a Guanyin represented with a fish basket (Pl.129). It is an elegant piece from Ming Dynasty, made of wood, lacquer

and gilding, with the basket added later. She is represented as a charming lady with top knot, wearing a Chinese style robe which covers her figure and held in position by a belt. Such images of Guanyin became very popular in the east coast of China especially in the Fujian Province.

A brass standing figure of Guanyin from the same museum with hands held gracefully in front of her hips, the high knot of hair covered by a veil, belongs to the seventeenth century. She wears a wide pleated robe. The iconographical type appears to be strongly influenced by Taoist Xiwangmu images (Pl.130).

Some images of Guanyin from the Nitta Group Collection are seen in the National Palace Museum, Taiwan. One such is the Bodhisattva decked with elaborate jewellery. He holds the kundika in the left hand and the right is raised in the teaching gesture. The period of this statue is perhaps tenth century (Pl.131).

One eleven-headed Guanyin with the heads arranged in three tiers, from the same collection is in princely dress. The right hand hangs down holding a portion of the scarf and the left holds the kundika. The hands seem to be long for the size of the body which is short from waist below (Pl.132).

A seated thousand-armed and thousand-eyed Guanyin also from the same collection is well-decked in the finery of princely garments. He is seated with feet
apart, his multiple hands are shown with symbols with are associated with this Bodhisattva. The principal hands are in the namaskāra or anjali mudra, the hands below the main ones carry the lasso and rosary, a pair of hands carry the sun and moon, the last pair of hands hold the Buddha figure above the head of the main figure. Other symbols such as the ghanta, Cakra, ankhusa, vajra, kundika, khadga, are seen in the remaining hands. This image is unusual in the sense that the thousand-armed and thousand-eyed variety is mostly represented standing (Pl.133).

A marble image of the thousand-armed Guanyin housed in The Art Institute of Chicago is an elegant eighteenth century piece (Pl.134). Unlike the previous one, this image sits in padmāsana on a lotus and looks serene in spite of the closed eyes. The crown bears the Buddha image, the main hands are in anjali mudrā and the hands below these are in the dhyāna or samadhi mudrā. The usual attributes are seen in the hands of this image. As if to enhance the purity of the deity, Guanyin is shown in white here.

The Fuller Memorial Collection, Seattle Art Museum, has a beautiful eleven headed, thousand armed image of Ming Dynasty and Guanyin has a definite masculine mien, sitting on a multi petalled lotus (Pl.135). This again is another form of a sitting Guanyin having many arms and heads which is quite unusual.

An unusual female form from the recent period (19th
century) is seen in the Collection of Ivan Hart, New York (Pl.136). The peculiarity of this image is that the child is held in the right palm with the arm raised at the shoulder. Normally the Songzi Guanyin (Child giving) is seen holding the child in her arms or on the lap while sitting.

The Warren Cox Collection, New York has another peculiar Songzi Guanyin image of Qing Dynasty (Pl.137). The distinctive feature of this image is that the figure is mounted on a many petalled lotus with the child sitting on the lap doing the namaskar mudrā (which is also unusual). The figure has a "motherly" look, and the face is full of tenderness with the left hand gently touching the child as if protecting the little one.

The Art Institute of Chicago has the statue of a Songzi Guanyin of seventeenth-eighteenth century from Kangshi of Manchu Period (Pl.138). The child is held in the left hand and the right hand holds the vase pointing downwards which is rather unusual. The folds of the robe look very natural.

I had an opportunity to see some beautiful images of Kannon (Guanyin) in Japan. One such is the statue in the Todai-ji temple (Pl.139) in Hokke-Do or Sangatsu-do at Nara. The bronze image has three eyes and eight arms and is known as "Fuku-kensaku-kannon" (Amoghapāsa Avalokitesvara (Bukong juansuo Guanyin in Chinese), who is said to save all living things by means of a rope (kensaku) of mercy. The image was made in the eighth
century and is of high artistic value. The temple which was renovated in 1180 and again reconstructed in 1692, was first established by Emperor Shomu, along with the Indian and Japanese high priests such as Bodhisena, Gyogi and Roben.

Unlike the Chinese image of Cintāmani cakra Avalokiteśvara (Ruyi Lun Guanyin), the Japanese version in wood of Edo period, 18th century (Nyoirin Kannon Bosatsu), sits in an erect posture in padmāsana with the right hand showing the abhaya mudrā and the left hand placed on the knee with the palm facing upwards (Pl.140). The figure is heavily jewelled and the headgear holds a standing image of Buddha.

The third one is at Sanju Sangendo at Kyoto. It is said that the seventy-seventh emperor Goshirakawa (1126 A.D to 1191) abdicated, entered Buddhist priesthood and became a fervent devotee of Bodhisattva Kannon. He ordered the construction of a big building to facilitate the worship of 1001 images of the thousand-armed Kwannon. In the centre of the Hall sits the principal image (joroku - double life-size) along with life-size statues placed on either side in columns of fifty statues long and ten deep (Pls.141). Each of the 1000 statues is "Juichi-men-Senju-Kannon", (Ekadaśamukha-sahasrabhuja-Avalokiteśvara). However, the images have only 21 pairs of arms supposed to be regarded as 1000 arms because each is supposed to save 25 worlds.