

Metropolitan museum of art primary source analysis

[Religion](#), [Buddhism](#)



The artifact that I picked from Metropolitan Museum of Art is called Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara of the Lion's Roar. It is a large wood statue of an Avalokiteshvara, the basic idol of Buddhism, completed around the 12th century in China during the Ming Dynasty. The Buddha Statue is a representation of the philosophical belief system of Buddhism. Different Buddha Statues have different meanings. Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara symbolizes "the compassion in the world and the willingness to bear the pain of others" according to the description. Avalokiteshvara is important for religious practices. It is an idol for Buddhists to worship. Besides the philosophical and religious values of the statue, more importantly, this artifact shows the differences of values and beliefs that people have according to the change in forms of Avalokiteshvara. The exact time period when Buddhism was introduced to China is a question that remains unknown. It is generally believed that Buddhism was spread from India to China in 67 AD through the silk road during the Han Dynasty. Chinese people did not accept Buddhism in the beginning, but it soon became popular during Northern and Southern Dynasties around 5th century, when Buddhism adopted some ideas and beliefs from Daoism and Confucianism and transformed them to its own doctrines. It is extremely rare to see a male form of Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara in China today. Generally, Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, or GuanYin in Chinese, is interpreted in an all-female form. That means this artifact had to be made before the revolutionary change of Buddhism. Many Buddha statues had been changed slowly through out time under the influences of Chinese culture. In the Song dynasty, Avalokiteshvara was still in male form with the lion and the relaxing gestures

as the result of the weak military of the Song dynasty. As the result This form gives people a sense of security because the lion and the male symbolize the power. And people were seeking for the strong protection Buddhism came to its heyday during the Ming dynasty around 12th century. During this period, Guanyin(Avalokiteshvara) was interpreted in an all-female form and " Guan Yim is usually shown in a white flowing robe - white being the symbol of purity -, and usually wearing necklaces of Indian/Chinese royalty. In the right hand is a water jar (as the Sacred Vase the water jar also one of the Eight Buddhist Symbols of good Fortune) containing pure water, the divine nectar of life, compassion and wisdom, and in the left, a willow branch to sprinkle the divine nectar of life upon the devotees as to bless them with physical and spiritual peace". The image of Avalokiteshvara was no longer a male with a lion and relax gestures as the result of strong military power of the Ming Dynasty. People put more emphasis on spiritual aspects and inner peace than seeking protection or chasing material things in the world. This artifact was important because this could be the only male form of Avalokiteshvara that was made in the Ming Dynasty since all Avalokiteshvara were in female form. It reflected the values and beliefs that people had before the Ming Dynasty. Work cited: " Buddha Statue-Find Real Hope", <http://www.allaboutreligion.org/buddha-statue.htm> " Buddhism in China", <http://www.travelchinaguide.com/intro/religion/buddhism/> " GuanYim", http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/Chinese_Customs/Guan_Yin.htm