

Guan Yin

Heart of Compassion



Compiled by Koh Kok Kiang
Illustrated by Patrick Yee

ASIAPAC BOOKS

ASIAPAC BOOKS

Guan Yin

Heart of Compassion



Written by Koh Kok Kiang

Illustrated by Patrick Yee

 **ASIAPAC • SINGAPORE**

Publisher
ASIAPAC BOOKS PTE LTD

Come visit us at our Internet home page
www.asiapacbooks.com

First published May 2004 as *Guan Yin: Goddess of Compassion*
ISBN 981-229-379-5
© 2004 Asiapac Books Pte Ltd

This revised edition
Published April 2009

© 2009 ASIAPAC BOOKS, SINGAPORE
ISBN 978-981-229-490-6

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher. Under no circumstances shall it be rented, resold or redistributed. If this copy is defective, kindly exchange it at the above address.

The Heart Sutra (pages 65-81): Translation by E E Ho & W L Rathje
Cover illustrations by Patrick Yee
Cover design by Steve Wan

Publisher's Note

Guan Yin must be one of the most prominent deities in Chinese mythology. Her gentle gaze and compassionate features are immediately obvious in any statues that depict this deity. Originally a Buddhist bodhisattva, she is revered and worshipped by followers of Taoism and even in India, Japan and Korea.

Guan Yin's immense appeal transcends national and religious boundaries. She does not discriminate in choosing whom to help. She does not attempt to impart any high-sounding religious doctrine. Instead, due to her compassion,

she merely seeks to render assistance.

This book brings forth some of the little known facets of Guan Yin, to allow readers to gain a deeper insight and appreciation of this bodhisattva.

Also included in this edition is the complete text of The Heart Sutra, which provides an understanding of our humanity in the context of universal laws and rings true as we attempt to find peace with our place in the material world.

We would like to thank Koh Kok Kiang for his extensive research and script, and Patrick Yee for his vivid illustrations. Additionally, we wish to thank the production team for their hard work that has made this publication possible.

Contents

Publisher's Note

About the Writer/Illustrator

A.	Introduction	7
	Origins of Guan Yin	9
	Guan Yin in China	14
	Guan Yin's 33 Forms	20
	Other Forms of Guan Yin	55
	Guan Yin's 18 Arhats	59

Guan Yin's Principal Emblems	58
------------------------------	----

B. The Heart Sutra	65
--------------------	----

C. Legends of Guan Yin

Legend of Miao Shan	82
---------------------	----

Guan Yin's Home in Putuoshan	99
------------------------------	----

Story of the White-robed Guan Yin	103
-----------------------------------	-----

Fish-basket Guan Yin	109
----------------------	-----

Guan Yin's Watermelons	117
------------------------	-----





D. Miracles of Guan Yin

Xuan Zang Saved 129

Organs Cleansed 133

Zen Master Xu Yun 135

Guiding Lights 139

Executioner's Knife Breaks 142

House Not Burnt 145

Saved From Tiger 149

Enemies Become Friends 153

Appendices

Appendices

The Heart Sutra

156

Further Reading

158





About the Writer

Koh Kok Kiang has worked in the media industry in Singapore, including newspapers and magazines, for 20 years. The books he has translated for Asiapac Books include *The Sayings of Lao Zi*, *The Sayings of Zhuang Zi*, *The Book of Zen*, *Origins of Zen*, *Roots of Wisdom*, *36 Stratagems*, *The Eight Immortals* and *Origins of Chinese Festivals*. He is also the author of *Zen Wisdom*, published by Asiapac Books.

About the Illustrator

Patrick Yee holds a degree in graphic design specialising in illustration from Camberwell College of Arts, London and a Master's Degree from Brighton University. He has been working as an illustrator for many years both locally and overseas, and his work has won international acclaim. He now has almost 100 books to his credit. *Guan Yin: Goddess of Compassion* is his first comic book.

He has been collecting antique Buddha sculptures for many years, some of which date back to as early as the Northern Dynasties (AD386–581). He holds exhibitions on his Buddha collection and paintings frequently and he also

helps to illustrate books and comics for The Buddhist Library and Singapore Buddhist Federation.

He teaches at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts and Kinderland Learning Centre, and conducts art workshops for young children in Singapore.



Introduction

Guan Yin is easily one of the most well-known and best-loved goddesses in Asia and, in the course of human history, possibly in the world. This is an astonishing fact, considering that the form by which she is known today, a beautiful woman known as the Goddess of Mercy, is relatively recent and spans only about 1,000 years. By contrast, the historical Sakyamuni Buddha has been known to history for more than 2,500 years.

Vat Guan Yin is often more popular with ordinary people than the Buddha

Let Guan Yin's often more popular with ordinary people than the Buddha himself. Go to any place in East Asia such as China, Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore and one indisputable fact emerges. The most popular temple in that land, the one that draws the most visitors, is always a temple dedicated to Guan Yin.

Guan Yin started out as a male Buddhist Bodhisattva of Compassion in India and eventually took shape as a non-sectarian Goddess of Compassion who has been depicted in 33 forms in the art of East Asia. Her popularity is cross-cultural and knows no religious boundaries. Even people who are non-Buddhists pray to her. For example, in many Chinese temples which are not exclusively Buddhist and even in Taoist ones, Guan Yin statues can often be found. Her images appear in all the sacred mountains in China, whether Buddhist or non-Buddhist.

Known by different names throughout history, he/she had widespread appeal in India, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Indochina (especially Vietnam), China,

Korea and Japan. Now she is becoming better known in the West as a result of the spread of Buddhism and feminist interest. When Westerners are asked to name an Asian goddess, hers is the one name that comes readily to mind.

Throughout history, many people in all stations of life, from rulers to ordinary folks, find living in this world fraught with problems and so pray to her for help. It is no doubt due to her efficacious response to supplicants that she remains the most trusted and respected source of divine help to successive generations of people.

This book features four main sections. The first section is devoted to the origins and historical background of Guan Yin in India and the spread of the worship beyond India to other Asian countries. A special showcase is the 33 different forms of Guan Yin depicted in Asian art.

The second section depicts in comics the complete text of The Heart Sutra, a Buddhist text loved and revered by devotees all over the world.

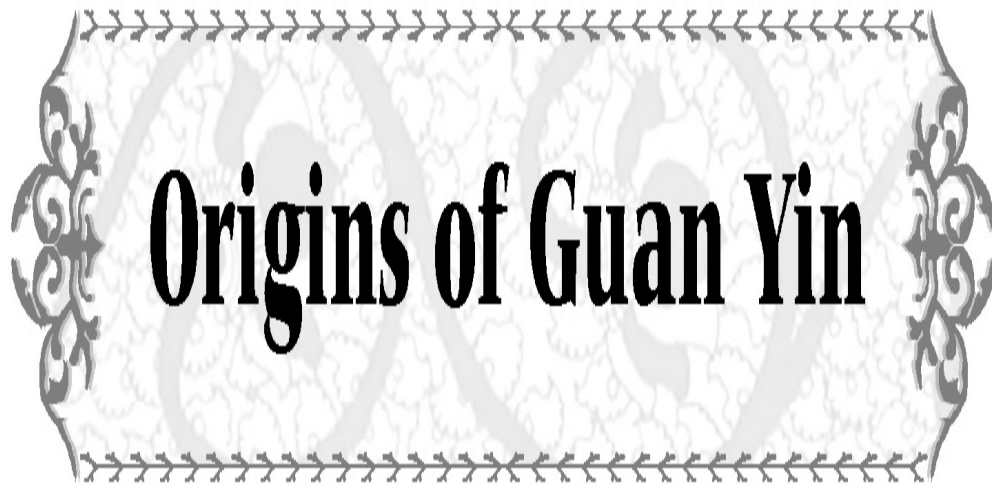
The third section highlights legends associated with Guan Yin which have accounted for her folk popularity.

The fourth section portrays miracles or



THE FOURTH SECTION PORTRAITS hundreds of personal stories about how various people had been helped by praying to Guan Yin. Such personal accounts which are still published today (especially in Taiwan, Hong Kong and China) explain the enormous popularity and relevance of Guan Yin from the time the deity appeared down to modern times.





Origins of Guan Yin

Guan Yin was originally Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva in Indian Mahayana Buddhism.

The first statues of Avalokitesvara (He Who Regards the Sounds of the World) were created in Gandhara (in present-day Afghanistan) and Mathura sometime in the second century soon after the rise of Mahayana Buddhism and the start of the making of Buddhist icons. It should be noted that all the statues of Avalokitesvara in India show a masculine form.

Buddhism in India underwent a transformation following a strong revival of Hinduism under the support of the ruling house of the Sungas in the second century BC. To meet the challenge of the *sakti* (devotional) element of Hinduism, Buddhism also became more devotional and started absorbing the Hindu gods.

At first, the historical Buddha Sakyamuni was shown with the Indian gods of Heaven and Earth, Indra and Brahma, on his left and right respectively. He was also shown with other Buddhist bodhisattvas such as Vajrapani and Padmapani. Later, however, when the Sukhavativyuha Sutra of Mahayana Buddhism became popular, it was said that there was



popular, it was said that there was a faster path to salvation instead of the one of personal diligence taught by the historical Buddha. And that was to seek external help by calling on the name of Amitabha Buddha so as to be reborn in the Pure Land.



*Amitabha Buddha (middle), flanked by
Avalokitesvara (right) and
Mahasthamaprapta.*

So instead of Sakyamuni Buddha being the central figure in the sculptures of the Three Holy Ones, he was replaced by Amitabha Buddha and the two Hindu gods or Buddhist bodhisattvas were replaced by two new attendants, Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva and Mahasthamaprapta Bodhisattva.

Avalokitesvara was regarded as more majestic than Mahasthamaprapta because of his vow to bring all beings to the pure land and thus he was more prominent.

Later, sutras such as the Saddharmapundarika Sutra (Lotus Sutra) mentioned Avalokitesvara's ability to save people from many kinds of tribulations and that added immensely to his popularity. Indeed, Avalokitesvara became a well-known deity in his own right instead of as

part of a triad.



The Chinese pilgrim Fa Xian, who travelled to Mathura in about 400, reported that he saw monks worshipping Avalokitesvara by presenting offerings. When the famous Chinese pilgrim, Xuan Zang, went to the northwest from 630 to 645, he provided eyewitness accounts of Avalokitesvara statues being worshipped by devotees from all walks of life, from kings to monks and laypeople. Avalokitesvara's popularity remained undiminished until Buddhism disappeared from its homeland in northwestern India in the 12th century when Muslim invaders conquered the land and destroyed Buddhist monasteries.

以无所得故，菩提萨埵，依般若波罗蜜多故，心无挂碍，
无挂碍故，无有恐怖，远离颠倒梦想，究竟涅槃。

People receive enlightenment because they follow this perfect wisdom.
They have wide-open hearts without worries
and, therefore, none of the worries of a separate self.
They also have no fear.
All delusions and self-centred fantasies are far removed.
Enlightened ones reach ultimate nirvana.

三世诸佛，依般若波罗蜜多故，得阿耨多罗三藐三菩提。
故知般若波罗蜜多，是大神咒，是大明咒，是无上咒，是无等等咒，
能除一切苦，真实不虚。

Three generations of Buddhas have followed this ultimate wisdom
and attained the highest perfect enlightenment.
Therefore, come to know this ultimate wisdom in a grand spiritual mantra,

a great enlightenment mantra, a supreme mantra,
a mantra with no peers that is able to end all suffering.
This wisdom is real and not an illusion.
Therefore, the perfect wisdom mantra has been proclaimed.

故说般若波罗蜜多咒，即说咒曰：

揭谛揭谛，波罗揭谛，波罗僧揭谛菩提萨婆诃。

Chant the mantra this way:

GATE, GATE PARAGATE, PARASAMGATE, BODHI SVAHA

Further Reading

Blofeld, John, *Bodhisattva of Compassion: The Mystical Tradition of Kuan Yin*, Shambhala Publications, 1977.

Boucher, Sandy, *Discovering Kwan Yin: Goddess of Compassion*, Beacon Press, 1999.

Chandra, Lokesh, *The Thousand-Armed Avalokitesvara*, Shakti Malik Abhina Publications, 1988.

Chutiwongs, Nandana, *The Iconography of Avalokitesvara in Mainland South East Asia*, Indira National Centre for the Arts and Aryan Books International, 2002.

Lee, Yu-min, *Visions of Compassion: Images of Kuan-yin in Chinese Art*, National Palace Museum, Taipei, 2000.

Palmer, Martin, Ramsay, Jay & Kwok, Man-Ho, *Kuan Yin: Myths and Prophecies of the Chinese Goddess of Compassion*, Thorsons (imprint of Harper Collins Publishers), 1995.

Teoh, Eng Soon, *Guanyin: A Hundred and One Questions*, Gallery 99, 2004.