



7378 A lacquer and gilt wood figure of Guanyin (Goddess of mercy) dressed in elaborately decorated flowing robes which she holds up with her left hand and in her right hand she has a large basket containing a fish

China 16th /17th century Ming dynasty

Dimensions: H.34¾" x W. 16¾" x D. 11¼" (88cm x 42cm x 28cm)

Guanyin is immensely popular among Chinese Buddhists, especially those from devotional schools. She is generally seen as a source of unconditional love and, more importantly, as a saviour. In her bodhisattva vow Guanyin promises to answer the cries and pleas of all sentient beings and to liberate them from their own karmic woes. Based on the Lotus Sutra and the Shurangama sutra, Avalokitesvara

is generally seen as a saviour, both spiritually and physically. The sutras state that through her saving grace even those who have no chance of being enlightened can be enlightened, and those deep in negative karma can still find salvation through her compassion.

She is revered due her compassion and is generally regarded as the protector of women and children. By this association, she is also seen as a fertility goddess capable of granting children to childless couples. An old Chinese superstition involves a woman who, wishing to have a child, offers a shoe to Guanyin. In Chinese culture, a borrowed shoe is sometimes used as a good luck charm when a child is expected. After the child is born, the shoe is returned to its owner along with the gift of a new pair of shoes.

Guanyin is also seen as the champion of the unfortunate, the sick, the disabled, and the poor. Some coastal and river areas of China regard her as the protector of fishermen and sailors while among businessmen and traders, she is looked upon as a goddess of fortune.

For a similar figure dated 1606, formally in the collection of the Tsui Museum of Art. Hong Kong see: Spink's, The Minor Arts of China III, p.18 pl.10 April 1987 and for a seated version see Gerard Hawthorn Chinese and Japanese Sculpture pl.7 November 2002.











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