

# Free how is guanyin (avalokiteshvara) reflected in the journey to the west resear...

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



## **Introduction**

Wu Cheng'en's Novel Journey to the West is strongly rooted to the Chinese mythology, Chinese folk religion, the pantheon of Taoist immortals, Buddhist philosophy, as well as, Buddhist bodhisattvas who are still reflective of various Chinese religious attitudes at present. Arguably, the novel is at a comic adventure narration, a spring of spiritual imminence, and an extensively allegory in which an assortment of pilgrims journeys to enlightenment that they can obtain with the help from all the others. This paper analyzes how Guanyin (Avalokiteshvara) reflected in the novel Journey to the west. First, Guanyin is renowned in the entire Asia but with different names and spelling. In reference to Zimmerman and Cheng (2011) other names used to refer to Guanyin include; Kuan-yin and Kwan- yin. Guanyin is also referred to as Avalokiteshvara from a Lotus Sutra. Notably there are also several versions regarding the origin of Bodhisattva and the sex she represent although some know Guanyin to possess a male personage perceived to have a form of a female.

## **Features related to Guayin**

In keeping with Wu, Cheng'en (1990) Guanyin, is popularly acknowledged as the goddess of mercy, arguably a Madonna of the Chinese Buddhism. Wu, Cheng'en (1990) further notes that statuary great and small, with an assortment of paints of this feminine deity, is recognizable in several cities in the mainland China. In accordance to Luo and Roberts (2000) the contemporarily popular Guanyin of China can be defined as the ultimate embodiment of innumerable images scattered across Asia and down through

expansion and swell of Buddhism. Luo and Roberts (2000) argues that in order to better understand the evolvement of Guanyin, it is paramount to review various Buddhist cultures and soteriologies of China. Notably, the education centers for Buddhism are established in three various groups that cropped up at different times and to a certain extent developed autonomously. Nonetheless, they have influence each other with time. According to Wu, Cheng'en (1990) the three include; Mahayana, Theravada, and Tantric. According to Zimmerman and Cheng (2011) Theravada means teaching of the aged and it is the oldest of all, it also known as Hinayana by Mahayanists, which refers to a small vehicle. The second one is Mahayana and is means great vehicles. The third and the last is the Tantric, referred to by the Tibetans as Vajrayana Buddhism. According to Zimmerman and Cheng (2011) Vajrayana is also known as the diamond Vehicle. Arguably, the development of Guanyin has been different in all the schools.

In keeping to the Theravada Buddhism, Bodhisattva is a title that identifies historical Buddha's in their ancestral, way before they maintained Buddha hood. Notable, the female Guanyin is lacking in Theravada doctrines.

Though, the male Avalokitesvara appeared in the medieval Sinhala culture in the Theravada of Sri Lanka. Evidently, the idea of what comprises of a perfect being emanated from Theravada Buddhism and extended to the chaste land sect of Mahayana Buddhist in the first century of common era (Zimmerman & Cheng, 2011).

Remarkably, an ideal trinity, the Bodhisattva of wisdom, the Buddha himself, as well as, Bodhisattva of compassion has also been established in the Mahayana Buddhism more so in Bodhisattvas Avalokitesvara (Guanyin), the

Guanyin Buddha, and the Mahasthamaprapta (Zimmerman & Cheng, 2011). Among the Mahayana Buddhism, Gill et al. (2003) indicates that the term Bodhisattva refers to any individual who has bound to become a Buddha in an empathetic gesture to rescue all responsive being. In keeping with Wu, Cheng'en (1990), Mahasthamaprapta emanated from Guanyin's wisdom, in this regard, Mahasthamaprapta acts on behalf of Guanyin in enlightening people on why they should be saved from Samsara (world of death and rebirth). Mahasthamaprapta means (one of great power) (Gill, Oresman & Brzezinski, 2003). Guanyin in the novel plays critical role and function in the story. The novel begins from subjugating the Monkey King to showing the monkey searching for the Sutras. Guanyin is reveal in the entire novel even when creating obstacles to test Ch'an thought to be assisting demons in a journey to the west.

### **The history of Avalokiteshvara**

According to Wu, Cheng'en (1990) Avalokiteshvara refers to the secretion of the compassion of Guanyin. Arguably, Guanyin Buddha encompasses primary liberating energy of compassion. Further, Avalokita Bodhisattva symbolizes the second emanation of Avalokiteshvara. In reference to Gill et al. (2003) Avalokiteshvara refers to a Lord who looks down compassionately. He is also referred to as Cry regarder Kuan-yin and the Kuan-shih-yin, one who regards the cries of the world. Avalokiteshvara, according to Gill et al. (2003) wears a crown with tiny images of Guanyin in its center. Gill et al. (2003) adds that dresses in royal clothes and not monarchy robes - this is to indicate he closeness with the people. Wu, Cheng'en (1990) indicates that

the invocation of the male Avalokiteshvara stated in from India then spread to China in the beginning of the first century. In keeping with Wu, Cheng'en (1990) Hui-yuan was the earliest person to edify the Pure Land faith in Guanyin. According to Lai et al. (2008), Hui-yuan started the "White Lotus Society" which practices the Buddhist faith around 403 CE. Lai et al. (2008) further indicates that by the eight century, Mahayana Buddhism has become fully integrated in China. Referring to the Sutras of India, Avalokita which is a Lotus flower emerged from the ray of light that shoot from Guanyin Buddha's right eye and miraculously uttered syllables OM MANI PADME HUM. This is a mantra used to invoke Avalokiteshvara.

In keeping with Wu, Cheng'en (1990) the veneration of Avalokiteshvara expanded to Tibet in the 7th century and it was introduced by Sambhava. There, Avalokiteshvara took a human form in Tantric Buddhism. As such, Dalai Lama took the physical incarnation of Avalokiteshvara and maintained a male deity and according Cheng and Jenner (1993) is wrong for any Tibetan to think otherwise. Nonetheless, there is another being who feels the place of the female deity in Tibet. On one occasion all being lament the ought of Avalokiteshvara to abandon them when is about to get nirvana. From these lamentations, Avalokiteshvara shed a tear on compassion for all, and the tear changes to Tara who in essence is assumed to be essence of compassion. Another version notes that there are two Tara one who is white and another who is black. They were both born from the tears of Avalokiteshvara. Elsewhere it is indicated that Tara is an incarnation of a female Avalokiteshvara embracing a superior male stature in sexual unification. As elaborated by Wu, Cheng'en (1990), Buddha began his

monastic order while living in a male social system alongside contemporaries like the Jains that began the first order of nuns. Within the society, a general idea that females could not live a religious life and according to the culture, they were primarily children n bearers and servants of their families.

Nonetheless, the Buddhism has gradually allowed women to pursue their spiritual needs and to attain enlightenment since they are now viewed to be as capable as men in attaining spiritual gain.

## **Female Goddess Model**

Addition to the varying language is the highly symbolic and abstract Indian culture that required being simplified to feet the Chinese humanistic belief structure (Cheng & Yu 2012). In the beginning, Buddhism in South China which was initially allied to Taoism was viewed as a source of solutions to various problems in their philosophy and until the 4th century Buddhist terms were often translated by Taoist ones (Cheng & Yu, 2012). Arguably, when Buddhism was established, Taoist regarded it as a rival philosophy way before the change commenced.

Cheng and Yu (2012) notes that Mahayana Buddhism in the Pure Land Sect, Buddha foresaw a decadent period when people would see enlightenment too complicated to attain. Nonetheless, out of compassion, Mahayana presented an easier means to getaway from the world full of suffering. As such was the realm of Pure Land of Guanyin and Guanyin Potala Island. Due to its Monadistic link between the Buddha and Bodhisattva, the pure land School was also referred to as Other Power School. Cheng and Yu (2012) note that the devotees were part of the Buddha and they all co-existed with

unity. The Guanyin takes full conscientiousness for saving the devotees; this is dissimilar to the synergism Christianity where the devotees are partially responsible for their own salvation (Cheng & Yu (2012) - even though there are those Christian who believe they get salvation from the grace of God. The scroll that address Guanyin are available in the Lotus Sutra and the dependence on these deity for salvation is extremely popular that even the book itself has its own devotion apart from being believed to be the contributory for miraculous events. Cheng and Yu (2012) note that the miracles became material to more genre of Buddhist in China i. e. the miracle tale, record of the miraculous response, and for short (Wu, Cheng'en, 1990).

According to Cheng and Jenner (1993) there exists theory that the Guanyin role model had transformed into a feminine aspect back in 11th century. However, the evidence is contradictory. In keeping with Cheng and Jenner (1993) two Chinese pilgrims, Fa Hsien and Hsuan Tsang of fifth and seventh century CE respectively, visited India but did not make any record of any female appearance of Avalokiteshvara in either China or India. Guanyin was cast out as female by twelfth century in China and Japan. In Cheng and Jenner (1993) work Guanyin manifested himself as female in 479 when he was freeing devotee Pen Tzu-Chiao from bondage. Cheng and Jenner (1993) also indicate that in the sixteenth century, Guanyin was revealed as one of the main character in the Wu's novel journey to the west. In keeping with Luo and Roberts (2000), Wu Cheng'en lived during the Ming Dynasty that existed in (1500-1582). Arguably, the adventures of the mythical monk written by Wu Cheng'en was in the Tang Dynasty of 618 -097. In accordance

to Luo and Roberts (2000) the Tang dynasty was the period when devotion to the Lotus Sutra was at its peak. The Novel by Wu Cheng'en is based on historic traditional narratives. Arguably, Wu Cheng'en narratives from regional oral customs that have been re-done by the author i. e. the miracle tales, which are comprehended as popular in the sense of their anonymity and generic. The novel is a body of literature that reflects on religious theme that is widespread among the Buddhist monastic and lay life instead of prefecture of any particular stratum or sector.

Guanyin assisted the Buddhist monk Sanzang together with his disciples who transverse china and India to get Sutras from the Tathagata Buddha. Wu, Cheng'en (1990) acknowledges that in this story Guanyin's powers and personality are evident. In addition, Guanyin is on a diverse occasion by everyone in the temple who held her when she came to convey a unique cassock to the monk and hearten Tang emperor, as well as, all who were present that they must be forget the doctrine of the Little Vehicle for that of the Great Vehicle in the Thunder Monastery of Tathagata Buddha located in the west. In the Wu Cheng'en's novel the renowned Bodhisattva was a savior who was continuously relied on every time their situation was grave. Wu Cheng'en's novel is filled with escapades of the mysterious and niggling Monkey King transformed to monk, Friar Sand, the greedy and stupid Pig, the white horse that was a dragon that had been changed by Avalokiteshvara, and the monk who barely did anything for himself. In reference to Wu, Cheng'en (1990) the monk is established as a reincarnation of the renowned Golden Cicada who was the last incarnation before being transformed to Buddha. In keeping with Wu, Cheng'en (1990) all the demons coveted her



flesh to gain immortality. Wu, Cheng'en (1990) also establishes that the gods of heaven were frequently assisting monkey to protect him. In essence, he had to seek refuge from Guanyin who frequently commissioned him to guard the monk.

Wu, Cheng'en (1990) indicates that on one instance, monkey and the pig discovered a monfruit tree where they spent most of their time. Luo and Roberts (2000) indicates that the tree had magical fruits that resembled human infants and after consuming the fruits, the monkey and the pig had many years added into their lives. As indicated by Wu, Cheng'en (1990) a crop of thirty ripens every after nine thousands years and were considered as verily variable. In keeping with the story, things went awfully wrong when the Taoist attacked the monkey and the monkey in turn destroyed the tree. The monk was captured by the Taoists if the tree could not be saved when the monkey went to help it returned with the Guanyin. This account as is in the novel is a good example of how much power Guanyin possessed. The narrative also reveals the urn and willow twig that are often on her hands. In numerous statutory paintings she is seen to hold a goldfish in a vat. Luo and Roberts (2000) also notes that in the heroes' escapades, the monk was captured by a sea-monster who got ready to serve him for a meal in his palace located under the water. It is after a dramatic struggle that the monkey with the assistance of the Guanyin saved the situation. In the tale, Guanyin came from a bamboo grove carrying a basket though she was not well dressed and her hair fell loose. The monkey became shock but she ignored him and went ahead to save the Tang priest.

## **Spirit of Compassion**

In accordance to Lai et al. (2008), Guanyin presents numerous dimensions of the Asian Culture and it is easy to note how well-liked Bodhisattva is.

Nonetheless, most devotees embrace the assurance, comfort, and assistance Guanyin reaches out to them when they are most depressed in their lives. Similar to other Bodhisattva in China, Guanyin reaches out to people without any condition, attachments. Lai et al. (2008) notes that even foods have been related to Guanyin and provide an example of the Chinese tea Oolong that is referred to as Iron Guan Yin. Lai et al. (2008) states that this is a semi-fermented tealeaves green in color. According to Lai et al. (2008), many people are stated to have been assisted by Guanyin in numerous ways. Example in the novel by Wu, Cheng'en is in the folktales of the Mysterious monkey and the monk. Arguably, the sculptures and the temples elected in her honor are great indication of her adorable nature among the Chinese people.

## **Conclusion**

Notable, these theories present in the Journey to the West are renowned folktales, not from the Buddhist sutras; nonetheless, the narratives demonstrate the image of the laity and their beloved Guanyin. Wu Cheng'en's novel seldom addresses the origin of Guanyin, however it addresses in awesome words what she transpired to become. Notably, after the communist takeover in China and Cultural Revolution, the Buddhist waned among generations that are forty and younger. In keeping with the novel, the Chinese government applied numerous resources in the twentieth

century, in its bid to restore Buddhist monasteries, most of which live on as living museums. Contemporarily, there exist working monasteries in the mainland China though they are not as many as they used to be; nonetheless, Bodhisattva Guanyin (Avalokiteshvara) are present everywhere across the country as statues and paintings. Avalokiteshvara can also be found in dramatic plays and on public TV in narrating the “ Monkey King” narratives.

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