



Guanyin

Date

1600-1643 CE

Medium

Wood and pigment

Description

In India, Guanyin was a male bodhisattva named Avalokiteśvara, but when introduced to China, a land with powerful cults of female deities, it became the Goddess of Mercy. The word Guanyin is a literal Chinese translation of Avalokiteśvara (the one who looks down upon [or cries for] the world), who first appeared in the Lotus Sutra around the middle of the 2nd century. Here, she sits in the “at ease” (maharajalila) pose on a lotus throne, the symbol of purity rising from impurity. Guanyin is the protector of all who are in distress, especially those at sea. This might be referenced by the fish beneath her throne.

Dimensions

49 × 16 × 11 in. (124.5 × 40.6 × 27.9 cm)