

Cultivating Kwan-Yin
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Kwan-Yin is the most popular Goddess throughout Asia. She appears in the Gardnerian Book of Shadows because Lady Olwen, the High Priestess niece of Gerald Gardner, grew up in Vietnam. Her name is variously spelled Kuan-Yin, Guan-Yin, Gwun Yam, Gun Yam, and Kannon (the Japanese camera company Canon is named for Her).

Kwan-Yin's origin myth is heartbreaking, violent, and sexist: While she was helping her fisherman father, a gale arose; he threw her overboard and slapped her clutching hand with an oar until she let go of the boat and drowned. Bereft by man's cruelty, She chose to forego nirvana to be a bodhisattva until every human is compassionate.

Kwan-Yin is the epitome of care: She hears cries in the night, of fright and panic, the pathos and plight of the slighted, wounded, downtrodden. She counsels the troubled. She is a Goddess of the sea in wave-like gown; She holds a vase in Her left hand that contains the nectar of life, an upturned palm or a willow branch for sprinkling the nectar in Her right. Kwan-Yin is a Witchy bodhi who aids "through divination, dreams, magical formulas, and mediumistic practices" (page 20, *The Kuan-Yin Oracle*, Stephen Karcher, Little Brown, Great Britain, 2001).

Cultivating Her mercy is *easy*: Place before a statue of Her an offering dish of favorites: Rice seed pearls, soft-edged sea glass, tumbled jade, weensy seashells and starfish: *Not* begging Her help is *hard*. I reserve my pleas, wringing my hands in abject distress, for times of true peril; otherwise, I divine Her wisdom through several tried-and-true means.

Traditional Methods

1). Create a shrine. Surround Kwan-Yin with items that scream peace. It can be a cupboard, windowsill, or top of low bookcase – any flat surface dedicated to Her *full* of tangible meaning.

I have Her throughout the Covenstead, but Her main altar includes hanging bells I can softly gong with a leather mallet; Chinese paper money; her divination devices (below); carved oriental boxes; lotus incense burners; silk lanterns; spiral shells; beach sand; silver chopsticks; sake sets; bamboo motif bowls with *netsuke* (kimono toggles), etc.

2). Statuary matters. Kwan-Yin stands gracefully or meditates squat. She ranges in size from 2-inch brass through 4-inch dark resin to tall white ceramic or resin. Find a calming one.

3). *Jiaobei* 'moon' crescents. This red lacquered, bamboo wood pair resemble smiles, with a half-round 'feminine' *yin* side and a flat 'masculine' *yang* side. The querent holds the two in prayer gesture and purifies them by circling them thrice round through incense smoke. Querent gives details (name, birthdate, address, question), then drops or tosses thrice and interprets answers:

Both land balanced (one up, one down): Yes! The Gods favor your desire!

Both land in *seeming* smile (half-rounds up): No. Selfish goal; Gods displeased.

Both wobble (flat up): Hell no. Answer obvious, Gods laugh at your naiveté.

One or both land on side or point (rare): Question unclear, void. Specify and repeat.

Alternatives: Toss two clean mussel shells or walnut shell-halves.

4). *Ciamsi* lot. Commonly called "the 100 sticks," these come in a large lacquered bamboo cylinder emblazoned with red-painted Chinese characters. Each bamboo sliver within is tall, fragile/slim, numbered, with sharp red tip like an angry tear.

Close eyes, ask or think a specific question, jiggle the tube in both hands until one protrudes, then look up the page number that corresponds with Her answer.

Karcher's work provides affecting quatrains, magical correspondences from Moon phase, to Elemental, seasonal, and yin or yang associations, what can and can't happen, and clear Advice to the Wayfarer. If you seek clarification or confirmation, do three *jiaobei* tosses above.