

The Kuan Yin Oracle presentation by Denise Cicuto at PantheaCon 2016

"You drop a few coins in a bowl, take joss sticks and spirit money to burn in the Great Urn that holds the ashes of generations of offerings and light them at an everburning lamp. Then you step towards the altar. Above it Kuan Yin looks down on you out of her cloud lotus, while the waves of the Great Ocean of Suffering churn below. Her insightful eyes and compassionate heart wrap you in an aura of calm and joy. Help is at hand.

You step closer and make a formal prostration. Then you pick up the a red and black bamboo cup containing the one hundred Sticks of Fate, long thin bamboo slats, red at the top and marked with a number on the hidden bottom. You whisper your question to the goddess and shake the cup back and forth until one stick pops out.

Kuan Yin has heard you and answered you.

Reading the number from the bottom of the stick, you turn to Kuan Yin's Book of Divination. Each number indicates a four-line Poem, a Moon Phase, a group of Things You Can and Cannot Do, and a set of Directions for the Wayfarer to help you focus your energy and choose the right spiritual practice. If you cannot read, the diviners will be glad to help you."¹

What is the Kuan Yin Oracle?

The Kuan Yin Oracle is a system of divination that dates back to about the Jin Dynasty (AD 265 to 420.) It includes 100 poems that are attributed to and/or inspired by the Bodhisattva of Compassion. A general name for this type of divination is [Kau Cim](#) or Chien Tung which means "Request a Stick". In Kau Cim, the number of sticks and corresponding poems vary between 38, 78 and 100 ²The traditional objects used for this practice include a bamboo cup with numbered sticks, two crescent moon-shaped discs called "[jiao bei](#)" and the 100 poems themselves.

A person shakes the cup of sticks until one falls out. In the version by Marina Lighthouse, they then throw the jiao bei discs:

"One flat side up, one flat side down YES

Both flat sides up NO

Both flat sides down the Gods are laughing at you and you should not be asking this question at this time."³

A simpler version is to skip the jiao bei discs because it can sometimes take a while before getting a "Yes." I believe that Kuan Yin guides us to the right poem for us without this extra step.

1 Karcher, Stephen *The Kuan Yin Oracle*, pp 1-2

2 Lighthouse, Marina, *The Kuan Yin Temple Oracle*, p.24

3 Lighthouse, Marina, *The Kuan Yin Temple Oracle*, p.27

Sample poem and translations

After you have confirmed your number, you read the corresponding poem. Here is an example of Poem 13 and some of its translations and interpretations:

Poem 13

"Born with silver spoon in mouth one is immersed in luxury. On top of it all is the Excalibur bestowed by the emperor, one's fame across the four seas is assured." - *Oracle of Guan Yin - iPhone app*

"Born to a family of magnificent wealth, Ever showered with riches and luxuries, Honored by the emperor yet humble you remain— Your good name travels across the four seas." - *Kuan Yin Temple Oracle by Marina Lighthouse*

"You belong to a noble family, rich, and distinguished. Once the Emperor has bestowed the Golden Girdle, your name and fame will be in every mouth. All the ways to the Golden Door are open to you." - *Kuan Yin Oracle by Stephen Karcher*

Some versions include moon phases and seasons for each poem, as Karcher's does. For poem 13, the season is Spring and waxing moon. In the Kuan Yin Oracle deck above, I include the bigrams for the seasons that Karcher uses with a color to distinguish them.

Accordingly, Spring is green and waxing moon, Summer is red and full moon, Fall is silver and waning moon, and Winter is Blue and new moon. (These colors correspond to Chinese Five element associations.) If your question is time-sensitive, you can think of the season and moon phase as when it will come to pass.



You belong to a noble family, rich and distinguished. Once the Emperor has bestowed upon you the Golden Girdle, your name and fame will be in every mouth. All the ways to the Golden Door are open to you.

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Ritual and divination for the Kuan Yin Oracle

You can invoke Kuan Yin by placing a statue of her nearby, lighting a candle, and saying "*Namo Guan Shi Yin Pusa*" or "*Om Ma Ni Pad Me Hum*" ("Hail the Jewel in the Lotus") and she will hear you. If you so desire, you can also say a longer invocation of your choice. Lighthouse has a few beautiful rituals and poems such as this one:

*"May the peace of Kuan Yin be upon this household
May the light of Kuan Yin be in my soul
May the wisdom of Kuan Yin be in my mind
May the virtue and purity of Kuan Yin be with the members of my household
May the health and well-being of Kuan Yin be manifest throughout my body and radiate through the garments I wear
May the grace of Kuan Yin be in my worship
May the talents and genius of Kuan Yin be manifest through my senses
May the peace of Kuan Yin be upon me."*⁴

Variations on the Kuan Yin oracle

Karcher's book has more detailed information for each poem for different aspects of life, such as health and marriage. The full set includes the book, a cup with numbered sticks, and a small statue of Kuan Yin.

The Oracle of Guan Yin app has a picture of that cup of numbered sticks that you virtually 'shake' (or tap the screen). You can also opt to "throw" or skip the divination blocks. Then there are categories for "Feng shui," "Self," "Love & Marriage," "Fortune & Business," etc. (The Fortune & Business section is the most general one and corresponds to the translation in poem 13 shown above.)

Lighthouse's version includes the Kuan Yin Oracle board, which has a picture of Kuan Yin and a board with numbers on it. You think of your question and let your finger fall on a number and then read the corresponding poem.

The Kuan Yin Oracle Deck includes my photographs and Karcher's translations made into cards. You can either shuffle the cards and choose them like you would tarot cards, or, keeping the deck in numerical order, shake the sticks, and look at the card corresponding to the number on the stick.

⁴ Lighthouse, Marina, *The Kuan Yin Temple Oracle*, from Kuan Yin's Great Compassion Ritual in ebook version only

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My personal story with the Kuan Yin Oracle deck

I had the Kuan Yin Oracle sticks and Karcher's book on my home altar for several years. One day, I told my spiritual teachers in Circle of Cerridwen that I wanted to learn a divination system. They told me the best way to learn was to make my own version. I am a photographer so it felt like a natural fit to make a photographic version. Canon cameras were named after Kuan Yin (Kannon is her name in Japanese.) I love the idea that when we take pictures, we are Kuan Yin's eyes on the world.

I applied photographs I had already taken to many of the poems. At a certain point, it became a kind of treasure hunt and I went out to take photographs to go with the remaining poems. With the help of friends and teachers for advice on layout and graphic design tools, I made the deck on thegamecrafter.com

I emailed Stephen Karcher and sent him a copy of the deck. And after a flash of inspiration from Kuan Yin, I decided to make a limited run of cards with proceeds benefitting an organization I volunteer at as an acupuncturist - The Charlotte Maxwell Complimentary Clinic for low income women with cancer: <http://www.charlottemaxwell.org/> (This deck is available for pre-order now following the link on my website below.)

Bibliography

The Kuan Yin Oracle: The Oracle of the Goddess of Compassion by Karcher, Stephen, 2001 Little, Brown and Company.

Kuan Yin Temple Oracle by 2008 by Lighthouse, Marina; Wen-Chao Li, Dr. Chris; and H.H. Grandmaster Lin-Yun Rinpoche, 2008 Beacon Lighthouse.

Kuan Yin Oracle deck by Cicuto, Denise 2016 <http://www.denisecicuto.com/#/kuan-yin-oracle-deck/>

Oracle of Guan Yin - iPhone app: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/oracle-of-guan-yin/id388811774?mt=8>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kau_cim

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jiaobei>

Please note: The Kuan Yin Oracle by Alana Fairchild is an entirely different system created by her and a painter but it is worth looking at for its beauty and as another way to connect with the Kuan Yin. Fairchild also has an album of chants called "The Divine Lotus Mother".