

Collection, tell us a story

Once upon a time there was a museum with many treasures. They all had stories to tell us...

So often the collections of a museum are admired for their beauty, their artistic interest or because they are testimonies of a past life or activity, the works also echo by their subject or the context related to their creation, to many real or fictional stories. The latter generally rely on a substrate that can be religious, historical, scientific or popular.

The exhibition *Collection, tell us a story* proposes to let the works speak and to come and listen to their stories. The most diverse stories will give the opportunity to go back in time, and dive, back 2000 years ago, into a Roman Empire where plots and power struggles reign. This time trip will also encourage a better understanding of the reason and the course of the terrible clashes arising, on the one hand, from the religious wars between Catholics and Protestants during the 16th century, and on the other hand oppositions in France between revolutionaries and royalists supported by foreign powers, in 1792. Other stories will finally lead to the shores of Haiti to evoke its ephemeral empire, a rather mirror of the Second French Empire.

In a completely different field, some works presented will trace the birth of some of humanity's greatest inventions such as the hot air balloon, the first flying machine, or the magic lantern, ancestor of the cinematographic projector. Other pieces will offer, for their part, an immersion in the great classical literature (novels, theater and poem) or will allow to wander in the universe of some myths and legends from ancient Greece, taken from the Old Testament or linked to Buddhist beliefs.

Let these incredible stories tell you...



Tiberius and Agrippina: Power, plots, exile

In the year 14 AD, in the heart of Roman antiquity, Tiberius became emperor and ruled many provinces.

He was already old when he succeeded his adoptive father, the glorious Augustus. Tiberius is a dark and suspicious man, indeed, he was not the appointed heir. Moreover, he had many rivals during his reign. The best known of them is Germanicus, his nephew, whom he nevertheless proclaimed as his successor.

This military leader, crowned with victories, became annoying and was sent to the Middle East to administer the provinces. He died there in the year 19 in a mysterious way (poisoning?). His widow Agrippina (known as the Elder) then brought his ashes to Rome and swore to assert the rights of her sons to the succession of Tiberius. Germanicus' wife, however, found the fiercest opposition in the person of Séjan, commander of the Praetorian Guard and close adviser to Tiberius.

Séjan is a manipulative and power-hungry man. To achieve his goals, he pushed the emperor to isolate himself on the island of Capri and made the Praetorian Guard a force of counter-power. Worse still, in order to ward off a rival, he seduces the wife of Julius Drusus, son of Tiberius, and pushes her to poison him.

It was in this context of rivalry and heightened suspicions that Agrippina and her children became the last bastion of Séjan's ambitions. The latter incites Tiberius to paranoia by raising the spectre of danger for the state. Séjan takes the opportunity to eliminate relatives of Agrippina. As early as 29, the widow of Germanicus and her sons were arrested, tried by the Senate and banished by order of Tiberius. Agrippina was exiled to the island of Pandataria where she died of starvation in 33. Only one of her sons survived, the future emperor Caligula.

As for Séjan, his wish to become emperor eventually aroused the suspicions of Tiberius who had him arrested and sentenced to death for high treason.



Wars of religion - The siege of Sancerre

Between images and reality

6000 cannonballs fell on the city of Sancerre between February 7 and August 24, 1573. Then, France is torn for several decades by the wars of religion that oppose Catholics and Protestants. The Berrichon Huguenots were hunted and persecuted, some of them took refuge in Sancerre, a city that had traditionally embraced the Reformed cult. By order of the king, the governor of Berry, Claude de la Chatre, besieged the city with more than 7,000 men and 18 pieces of artillery. On its rocky peak and with a castle and ramparts, Sancerre is impregnable, forcing Claude de la Chatre to begin a siege that lasts 7 months. This blockade will lead to a terrible famine killing more than 500 people.

This tragic event is just one of the countless sieges, battles and massacres of the religious wars. The development of printing, the improvement of printing techniques, the expansion of the book market make it the first media conflict in history. The image and its diffusion take a primordial place. The print becomes a weapon, used by Catholics as well as Protestants to convince people Europe is the scene of major events and printers, engravers and booksellers are fighting to be the first to illustrate these conflicts via current engravings. Sancerre did not escape this frenzy of representation and it took only a few days for Guillaume de Nyverd to represent the end of the siege. This speed is sometimes at the expense of reality and some printers booksellers, do not hesitate to take back existing engravings. From seats to battles, we find the same elements of representation with sometimes just the names of cities and geographical elements that differ.



The French Revolution, 1792

1792 was an important year during the French Revolution. Many key events took place including the decree of 21 September which abolished royalty and established a new regime: the Republic.

This act is the consequence of several facts. The flight of King Louis XVI on 20 and 21 June 1791 marks a break in the «contract of trust» between the people and his king. Distrust of the monarchy is growing. It was in this context that the National Legislative Assembly, created in September 1791 to establish a constitutional monarchy, gradually became the main holder of power. Louis XVI, meanwhile, hoped for a foreign intervention. This situation prompted the European powers, headed by the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, Leopold II, to take an interest in French affairs.

On April 20, 1792, the Assembly had to declare war on the emperor, hostile to the Revolution. Hoping for a quick victory, France invaded Belgium but immediately experienced setbacks. In July, the Duke of Brunswick, general of the Austro-Prussian armies, threatened Paris with destruction. This act aroused patriotic fervour among the revolutionaries who declared the homeland in danger on 22 July. It also led to the assault of the Tuileries castle on 10 August, which directly threatened the royal family. The war intensified between the French nation and the allied monarchical powers of Europe. This period gave rise to numerous violence and political instability leading to the creation of a National Convention that proclaimed the Republic.

At the same time, anti-revolutionary forces entered the territory and defeats followed for the French army. These events brought together the French who, in the hope of saving the country, won the battle of Valmy (Marne) on 20 September at the cries of «Vive la Nation! ». The Prussians are retreating. This episode, although it will not end the conflict, thus reinforces the feeling of an unwavering French patriotism.



A story of the Second Empire: Haiti

France and the island of Haiti are intimately linked by their history. The Haitian territory is a former French colony that obtained independence by arms in 1804. First proclaimed a republican, Haiti established the empire as a form of governance, following the example of France. After a troubled period with successive dictatorial or republican regimes, a second empire was declared in 1849 in an interval finally close to the coup undertaken by the future Napoleon III in 1851

In the manner of Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte, the President of the Second Republic, Faustin Soulouque, granted himself full powers in 1849 thanks to the support of the army. Thus he became Emperor Faustin I. His reign lasted nearly ten years. The head of the country is an authoritarian and absolutist man, who has all his opponents arrested and removes, in particular from the army, the half-breed men. Under the pretext of wanting to protect himself from foreign intrusions or destabilizing revolutionary ideas, he sees the independence of his neighbor, the Dominican Republic, as a potential danger. Then he tried in vain to invade, especially with the support of France, the other part of the island, a former Spanish colony. But the chain of defeats for Faustin I and his authoritarianism gave rise to a revolution from 1858 to 1859 which was led by General Fabre Geffrard. The emperor was forced to abdicate in favour of Geffrard on 15 January 1859 and had to go into exile in Jamaica. Thus, a new republic of dictatorial nature is established without ending the many tensions on the island.



A story of the Second Empire: Napoleon III and the Hundred Guard's squadron

The squadron of the Hundred Guards, elite cavalry corps attached to the person of Emperor Napoleon III, is the symbol that characterizes the strong personalization of power under the Second Empire and the desire to reconnect with the splendor of the court of Napoleon I. The French Empire was officially restored on December 2, 1852, a year after what strongly resembled a coup d'état by the President of the Republic Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte. In 1854, the emperor created the military corps of the Hundred Guards.

This squadron is initially made up of experienced horsemen of one hundred, and organized according to a clear hierarchy of officers and non-commissioned officers. Its role is to ensure the protection of the emperor, his family and his palaces. Worthy heirs of the various close guards who rubbed shoulders with the kings of France (the Scottish guard under Charles VII, the Hundred Swiss created by Louis XI), these elite soldiers must measure at least 1.80 meters and be perfectly irreproachable. They are famous for their sumptuous uniforms and enjoy great prestige with the people. They are present at all major ceremonies, often motionless like stone statues which will also earn them the nickname «caryatids». The body of the Hundred Guards is therefore a symbol of the Second Empire to the point that it disappears with him, in October 1870 by decree, just after the terrible defeat of Sedan against the Prussian soldiers which seals the fate of Napoleon III.



Assassination of Sadi Carnot on 24 June 1894

Marie François Sadi Carnot, fourth president of the Third Republic from 1887 to 1894, came from a family of influential politicians in their time. He was the grandson of Lazare Carnot, former deputy, member of the Committee of Public Salvation during the Revolution as well as general and Count of Empire under Napoleon I.

After studying at the Polytechnic School and the Bridges and Pavements, Carnot became involved in French politics in 1871. He characterized himself throughout his career as a moderate republican, but it was posthumously that he entered the memories. Indeed, he was assassinated during an official trip, a little like a John Kennedy sixty-nine years later.

It is June 24, 1894. The President of the Republic moved to Lyon to visit the universal and colonial exhibition then organized in the brand new park of the Tête d'Or. It is 9pm, Sadi Carnot comes out of a banquet given in his honor at the Palais de la Bourse and must go to the Grand Theatre to attend a performance of Andromaque. He gets into his sedan that enters the Republic Street. He sits at the back, alongside the mayor of Lyon. But the car only went a few meters when a man appeared, leaning on the footboard and stabbing the president in the liver shouting «Long live the revolution, long live the anarchy! ». The murderer, mastered by the gendarmes, is named Sante Geronimo Caserio, a young Italian anarchist. Sadi Carnot has just refused the presidential pardon to three renowned anarchists. The highest representative of the order, thus he is the man to be slaughtered.

Following this tragic event, the president was rushed to the new Prefecture but died around midnight. Sadi Carnot was buried on July 1, 1894 in Paris at the Pantheon.



The Hot Air Balloon

The hot air balloon is a fascinating invention. It is an aerostat from the family of aircraft that operates on a lighter gas than ambient air such as hot air, hydrogen or helium. This gas inflates a huge envelope, the balloon.

The invention of the hot air balloon came about 1782-1783 in the France of Louis XVI. Although some attempts have taken place before, it is admitted that it is the Montgolfier brothers (Joseph-Michel and Jacques-Etienne), paper manufacturers, who are at the origin of the first major experiments. We are on June 4, 1783 in Annonay, in Ardèche when a huge canvas extended on the ground begins to bomber and turns into a large balloon of 11.70 meters in diameter. For this test, there is no one on board but a large crowd who attends dumbfounded to the flight of the balloon thanks to hot air fanned by a fire. This demonstration was spotted by members of the Royal Academy of Sciences who urged the Montgolfier brothers to repeat their experience before the king at Versailles. Thus, on September 19, a rooster, a sheep and a duck board a hot air balloon that rises 600 meters above sea level to the cheers of the Versailles public. The balloon travels 3.5 km and lands in a wood. The animals are alive and the experiment is a success.

This is the beginning of the great adventure of the hot air balloon which already travels 52 km in June 1784. But the flight is not without danger, and some will flight too close to the sun, starting with Jean-François Pilâtre de Rozier, first man to fly or Sophie Blanchard, first professional aeronaut, who died in 1819. The great epic of the hot air balloon will know ups and downs but will forever mark the spirits as can be read in the novel of Jules Verne, Five weeks in balloon.



Bandits of the Loire

During the 19th century, the theatrical genre evolved a lot and one theme was particularly appreciated, that of romanticism mixed with drama that exalted freedom and feelings. Many pieces are born like Ruy Blas by Victor Hugo. Among these are the «Bandits of the Loire» published in 1842, one of whose characters is played by a very popular actor, Alexandre Maugin.

This story is based on a sense of nostalgia for the First Napoleonic Empire. The plot takes place in June 1815, shortly after the Battle of Waterloo, the day after the abdication of Napoleon I. Soldiers of the imperial army are stationed in an inn when a fire breaks out at the castle of the Marquise de Chevilly! Is it a criminal fire?

Back in the past... 22 years earlier, the Marquis de Chevilly was mysteriously murdered. Two decades later, an odious baron, who knows a lot about this episode, comes to ask the hand of the Marquise's daughter. But this one loves another, a captain of the imperial guard.

Important events occurred: the emperor abdicated. His soldiers were fired. Not only will our baron be able to marry his young marchioness, but he has him believe that the marquis' murderer is... the father of the former captain (his great love)! Everything seems lost.

Fortunately, the handsome officer has friends to count on: a former brigadier Robert (played by Alexandre Maugin) and Firmin, ex-major. The brave Robert confronts the baron in a duel to restore the honor of his friend. Although wounded, he discovered fortuitously, by a letter, the identity of the real assassin of the marquis, 22 years earlier: the baron! The whole mystery unfolds. The baron was once the son of the intendant of the marquis. It was a dark period, the Revolution, and it was easy for man to kill the marquis and recover his wealth. A fire was supposed to make the last evidence disappear.

The epilogue finally comes. The young captain and his friends pursue the baron who decided to kill his future wife. But, Robert, the brigadier, finally gets rid of the wicked man. The play ends happily and the captain can marry the one he loves...



The story of the Ver-Vert Parrot

Works by Jean-Baptiste Gresset, 1734

Once upon a time there was a parrot. Yes! A parrot sporting a pretty green pelage. The bird, which was called Ver-Vert, lived in a convent, that of the Visitandine sisters of the city of Nevers. He was tender, innocent and virtuous. Needless to say, he was pampered by the sisters who gave him many sweets and exquisite sweetmeats.

He was by far the freest and most satisfied of the residents of the convent. Loved by all, he lived in great laziness, «fat as a monk, and no less venerable». Accustomed to rub shoulders with the nuns, Ver-Vert knew better than anyone the psalms and prayers and of all vanity, he was ignorant. His qualities were so important that people began to talk about him far beyond the convent and spectators came from far enough away to hear his language and taste his charm.

Its fame was so distant that it reached other shores, where the Loire flows towards the end of its journey, in the great city of Nantes. There, other sisters of the same order wanted to see the bird to hear its praise. After hard discussions, the nuns of Nevers agreed to share their Ver-Vert to lose the reason. It was now time to think about the journey and what other way than to take a royal river. «Let the zephyrs carry you on the waves!» The parrot boarded a large boat surrounded by new companions. «It was no longer these pious conversations that he heard in our sweet vestals». The sailors who led him, swore and blasphemed all day long. The poor parrot dared not say anything, so much so that he was urged to reveal himself. After innumerable mockery, the bird understood that he had to change his language. His innocence was shattered and he was soon able to utter more curses than the worst of the thieves. Ver-Vert was applauded. He was «proud and happy with his little merit».

The journey came to an end and the sisters of Nantes longed to wait for their most precious treasure. When they saw him, they took the poor Ver-Vert into disarray. While the mother superior urged him to speak, he took his haughty air and let go: «By the corbleu* that the nuns are crazy! ». «He then sang all the horrible words that he had learned to bring back boats». Trembling with fear and speechless, the sisters fled, praying to the Lord. Seeing in this parrot the demon, they locked him in a cage and sent him back by boat, declaring him «proscribed» and «detestable» for having tried «to undermine the virtue of the holy sisters».

Ver-Vert sailed again and was greeted at Nevers in the greatest distress. The Visitandine sisters chained him and judged him until they wanted him dead. But finally, he was sentenced to several months of abstinence, silence and biscuits! Some sisters, taken with compassion, brought him some sweets but when the bird «became more devout than a canon», it was for him a «flood of sweets» so that «stuffed with sugar, and burned with liquor», the parrot Ver-Vert breathed his last. They made him a hero, a regretted soul for whom they built a tomb where they read these few words: «Here lies Ver-Vert, here lie all the hearts».

*corbleu: an old French swear word emphasizing indignation, used in XVII century



Robinson Crusoe

Who has never heard of the story of Robinson Crusoe, this man who was shipwrecked on an almost deserted island? It is an adventure novel written by an Englishman, Daniel Defoe, in 1719 and whose story is freely inspired by the life of a Scottish sailor. This book is a resounding success and has become a great classic of literature.

The plot begins in 1651 when Robinson Crusoe leaves York, England, against the will of his parents. From his first trip, he had a few adventures as the boat on which he embarked was attacked by pirates. Finally, while he became a slave, he is saved by a Portuguese boat that takes him to Brazil.

At the age of 28 and having become the owner of a plantation, he decided to join an expedition dedicated to searching for African slaves. But a terrible storm struck the sinking ship near an island off Venezuela. Robinson was the only survivor. Desperate, he finds that the wreck of the boat contains some tools, equipment and weapons. Thus, he sets out in search of discovery of the island then shelters himself in a cave. He built himself a house, made a calendar, hunted and cultivated wheat. But he missed the company of men. One day, he notices that cannibals periodically approach the island to eat their prisoners, Amerindians. He decides to release several, but only one escapes. He becomes his companion and Robinson names him Friday, the day they meet. He taught him English and converted him to Christianity. 28 years passed on this desert island when an English ship docked. A mutiny breaks out on the boat but Robinson comes to the rescue of the captain who finally, to thank him, embarks him and his companion. Robinson Crusoe then returned to England and found, after so many years, wife and children.



The Miserables/ Les Misérables – Gavroche

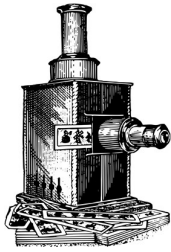
The novel «Les Misérables» is a monument of French literature written by Victor Hugo in the 1840s and published in 1862. Beyond fiction, it is a historical, social and philosophical novel tinged with a critique of society.

The action takes place between 1815 and the republican riots of June 1832. The main character is Jean Valjean, a former convict who will seek redemption and strive to become a good and just man. To rebuild his life, the character changes his identity and becomes Monsieur Madeleine. He prospers, becomes rich and notable but does not forget to help the needy people like Cosette, daughter of a young prostitute, who is raised by a greedy couple who exploits him, the Thénardier.

But Valjean is caught up in his former life and must escape the relentless police inspector Javert. He fled to Paris and kept his promise to raise Cosette. Ten years later, in 1832, she became a woman. Marius, a young Republican falls in love.

The revolt rings in Paris because the republicans wish to overthrow the July Monarchy. Several characters go to the barricades and among them, a very young boy Gavroche, 12, son of the Thénardier who do not take care of him. He lives on the street, left to his own devices. His weapons, to survive, are slang, scum and humour. He is smart! But this day of June 6, 1832, the child finds himself on the barricades. He helps the insurgents by recovering the unburnt cartridges but as he advances under the fire of the guns, he is hit and sings his famous chorus: I fell to the ground, It's the fault of Voltaire, The nose in the stream, It's the fault of... [Rousseau]. He cannot finish his song...

As for Valjean, he is no longer pursued by Javert and lets Cosette marry Marius to find her later in her last moments of life.



Magic lantern

Long before the invention of the cinematograph by Louis Lumière and Jules Carpentier, the magic lantern, ancestor of projection devices (including slides) allowed to entertain and educate a wide audience through the image. Knowledge seems more fun, more lively and therefore more accessible.

The origins of the magic lantern are blurry. Arab scholars from the 11th century and Leonardo da Vinci and his «camera obscura» are sometimes mentioned, but it seems that his inventor was Father Athanase Kircher, accompanied by Father De Châte, in the middle of the 17th century. This fascinating object will be given many names: lantern of fear, megalographic, thaumaturgic or cassette of illusions. It is finally designated «magic lantern» in 1668 after Christian Huygens, Dutch physicist, realized the first instrument. These different names are related to the projected subjects forcing wonder but also fear.

On a technical plan, the lantern is a box (a darkroom) pierced with an opening through which penetrates an external light that reflects on a mirror then comes to strike a glass plate painted by hand and installed upside down. The image is retransmitted on a sheet or wall using a converging lens. The glass plates are sometimes equipped with small mechanisms or are superimposed which allows to partially animate the image.

In 1659, the first projected scene depicts an animated skeleton that is strongly influenced by the artist Hans Holbein's The macabre dance. Throughout the centuries, the magic lantern is perfected. The art of projection reached its peak between 1840 and 1900, and lanterns, which became very popular, were produced in series and spread in the homes. The invention of cinema, however, led to a marked slowdown in the use of lanterns in the 20th century.



Adam and Eve

The story of Adam and Eve is certainly one of the best known stories of all since it contains, according to certain beliefs, the origin of human creation. It is in chapter two of Genesis, the first book of the Bible, that God, after having created the world, expresses himself thus on the sixth day of Creation: "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness, and let him dominate the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the cattle, the whole earth, and all the reptiles that crawl on the earth." Adam, whose Hebrew translation means «first man», is created from the dust of the earth and could initially be an androgynous being (asexual: neither man nor woman). God believes that it is not good for man to remain alone and that he would need a companion. Thus, he models the beasts of the fields and the birds, then makes them parade in front of Adam who gives them a name without finding the being that corresponds to him. God decides to plunge Adam into a deep sleep, takes one of his ribs and shapes the woman. Thus Eve is created and both live in harmony in the Garden of Eden.

Then comes the most important episode because, according to the myth, it characterizes human nature and reveals its destiny. God gives total freedom to the first beings except to consume the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, under penalty of losing their immortality. A cunning serpent then appears and encourages Eve to taste the fruit that would bring him immense knowledge. The young woman lets herself be tempted and then shares the forbidden fruit with Adam. When God calls Adam, he hides, ashamed of his nakedness. Thus he understands what happened and in great anger, drives the couple out of the Garden of Eden, forbidding them to return and access the tree of life that would make them immortal again.



David and King Saul

If we know well the epic of King David (including his fight against Goliath), the story of his relationship with King Saul is less widespread. The latter is a character in the First Book of Samuel from the Bible.

By the will of God, the prophet Samuel proclaimed Saul the first king of the Israelites in the land of Canaan. The new ruler initiates a military campaign against the Philistines, which threatens the kingdom, but many of his choices prove contrary to the will of God and Samuel. Although he won an important victory against his enemies, he became a troubled and melancholic king (because rejected by God), and it was in this context that he called upon the services of a young shepherd, David, who came to play the harp at his court to appease him. David thus gains the king's benevolence until he marries his daughter and participates in a new military campaign against the Philistines who try to invade the country. It is on this occasion that the young shepherd crushes the Philistine champion named Goliath. This feat makes the enemy flee but it also engenders a growing jealousy in King Saul. This jealousy turned into animosity and the king thought seriously about having David murdered. He was forced to flee.

Meanwhile, King Saul faces another attack from his enemies. He tries in vain to get a message from God. He learns from a witch, who communicates with the prophet Samuel, which his fall is near. King Saul saw the disaster of his army before the Philistines and threw himself on his sword. He and his three sons died. We know what happens next: David is proclaimed the new king of Israel, he defeats all his enemies and his reign opens an era of prosperity.



Tobias

The book of Tobias is a biblical account that quotes for the first time the archangel Raphael and bears the name of his main hero, a young Israelite.

It is about 721 BCE, the Assyrians invade the kingdom of Israel and deport many Israelites to their capital, Nineveh. An elderly man named Tobit, pious and rich, is one of those deportees. He knows a number of misfortunes, he becomes blind in particular by receiving bird droppings in the eyes. Morally shot, he prays for his death and sends his son Tobias to recover money hidden at a relative in Medina (region of present-day Iran).

At the same time, a young woman, Sarah, also prays to God because she has lost in turn her seven husbands on each of the wedding nights. They are killed by the demon Asmodeus. God hears the prayers of the two characters and sends them the archangel Raphael under the guise of a man who presents himself to old Tobit to accompany his son. The angel therefore escorts young Tobias on his journey and advises him. While fishing, he is attacked by a fish that he kills and from which he recovers the heart, liver and gall on the recommendations of the angel. During the trip, Raphael explains that these collected elements will heal his father and chase the demon. He then leads Tobias to Sarah, whom he urges to marry despite his fear. The latter accepts and fulfills God's will without hesitation. Thanks to the heart and liver of the fish, Tobias frees Sarah from the demon and then he returns to see his father to heal him from his blindness and bring him his money.

The miracle takes place. Tobias thinks only of one thing: how to reward the archangel Raphael with his kindness? This is how the heavenly being, in his angelic appearance, appears to Tobias and his family. He told them to continue their good works and keep their faith in God.



The bull in Greek Mythology

The bull is a recurring animal in the culture of ancient civilizations (Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece, etc.). Crete, the largest island in the Greek archipelago, is home to the most famous myths.

Zeus and Europe

It is the story of a young princess, named Europe, daughter of Agenor, king of Tyre in Phoenicia (Lebanon). Of great beauty, she is coveted by Zeus, who, in order not to arouse the suspicions of his wife Hera, metamorphoses into a white bull. He meets the girl who walks on a beach and who, fascinated by the animal, approaches, caresses and rides it. Zeus abducts her and takes her to the city of Gortyne in Crete. The two beings unite and give birth to Minos.

Pasiphae, Heracles (Hercules) and the Bull of Crete

Minos became king of Crete, marries Pasiphae, daughter of the sun god Helios. In order to legitimize his throne and show his people his privileged relationship with the gods, Minos prays to Poseidon to bring out of the waves a magnificent white bull; in gratitude the animal will have to be sacrificed. But the king, seduced by the beauty of the beast, deceives the god of the oceans and sacrificing another. To punish Minos, Poseidon influences a great rage at the bull that ravages the island and makes Pasiphae fall in love with the beast. From their union will be born the terrible Minotaur, half-man, half-bull. As for the animal, it will be captured by the powerful demigod Heracles.

Theseus and the Minotaur

Years later, King Minos asks Daedalus, a brilliant Athenian architect, to build a labyrinth to enclose the Minotaur. The ruler, who once besieged Athens, demands from this city the sending, every nine years, of young boys and girls to feed the creature. To put an end to this terrible sacrifice, Theseus, son of the king of Athens, joins the future victims.

Arriving in Crete, he is helped by Daedalus and Ariadne, daughter of king Minos, in love with the hero. She gives him a sword and a ball of wool so that he unrolls the thread to find the exit of the labyrinth. The Minotaur is killed and Theseus manages to escape with Ariadne and his companions.



Dionysus and Silenus

Bacchus, the Roman god of wine and drunkenness likewise of debauchery, is also known as Dionysus in ancient Greece. This divinity is the son of Zeus and Semele, a mortal. Dionysus' conception and birth are chaotic to say the least: his mother, who wanted to see Zeus in his divine splendor, is struck down. The king of the gods, however, has time to remove the child from his mother's womb and keep it in his thigh for him to grow. At his birth, he is entrusted to nymphs to escape the revenge of the goddess Hera, wife of Zeus. It is then that Silenus, a satyr, is designated by the gods to perfect the education of the young Dionysus and accompany him.

This satyr, son of the god Hermes or the god Pan, is endowed with great wisdom but has for him a defect, intoxication! He is an ugly character who is at the heart of burlesque tales where his penchant for wine leads him to wander among humans. Thus, it is said that one day, King Midas of Phrygia (Turkey) has the idea of tricking the satyr's knowledge. He pours wine into the spring where Silena quenches her thirst, so that the satyr falls asleep and is captured. Dionysus worries and finds the satyr at King Midas who plays the perfect host. The god wants to grant him a wish and the king, greedy, asks the faculty to be able to transform what he touches into gold. His wish is granted but very quickly becomes hell because it prevents him from drinking or eating. Midas is then forced to purify himself by plunging his hands into the Pactole River.



Guanyin

Chinese goddess of mercy and compassion who considers «the sounds of the world», she is a bodhisattva (wise having reached spiritual awakening but who wishes to stay on earth to help humans).

Under the «Golden Sky Dynasty», King MiaoZhuang wanted above all an heir but as he had shed blood during a war, the gods were reluctant to grant it. Yet three daughters were born of his wife, BaiYa. While the first two girls found a good catch, the third, MiaoShan, persisted in not wanting to marry because she wanted to live in religion. Faced with her insistence, her father dressed her in rags and abandoned her in nature left to the elements. Against all odds, this life of hermit perfectly suits the girl who decides to go to the «Temple of the White Bird» where five hundred nuns live. The king lets her go but orders the nuns to lead a hard life for the princess. MiaoShan endures everything without complaining, so that the Mother Superior tells her the truth without the princess having to complain. Moved by so much piety, the Jade Emperor (divine being) sent him spirits to help him, which amazed the sisters.

The king, overwhelmed, dispatches his army to burn the temple. Frightened, the nuns pray MiaoShan to help them. The princess implores Heaven and rain begins to fall. The king, furious, decides to execute his daughter even though the princess ignored all this. During its execution neither the sword nor the spears can pierce it. She is thus strangled, and as her soul leaves her body, the spirit-god of the ground, Tudi Gong, sent by the Jade Emperor, seizes it. MiaoShan wakes up in the other World in which she is asked to visit the 18 underworld and pray there. She did so well that the damned were won by joy, hell becoming a paradise. The princess's soul is thus returned to earth in its intact body but waking up alone in a forest, she is desperate. It is then that a stranger comes to her, takes pity on her and offers to marry her what she refuses. The man revealed to her to be the «Buddha* Rulai».

He tested her faith and decided to take her to the «Pagoda of the Mount of Perfumes» on the island of PuTuo to pray for the salvation of all beings. She thus becomes the queen of «three thousand Bodhisattvas» and beings of flesh. «DiZang Wang», the Bodhisattva of Hell, amazed by so much virtue, decides to erect it as Sovereign of Heaven, Earth and Buddhism. In a grand ceremony, MiaoShan becomes GuanYin and ascends to her lotus throne.

*Buddha: The one who attained Awakening



Tara

According to a legend, she was born of a lotus flower coming from a tear of the Bodhisattva Guanyin who cried while watching the suffering world. Tara, «The One Who Saves» has the mission to assist Guanyin, who is embodied in every Virtuous Woman.

Everything begins in the dawn of time, in the time of the Buddha "Lord of the sound of the Drum". Then lives a princess named "Moon of Wisdom" who, for ten million years, makes immense daily offerings to Buddha and his disciples. In his presence, she also promises to reach awakening* to help all beings, and to devote herself unceasingly to their good. The monks then tell her that to achieve her goal, she must pray in order to be reborn man. Moon of Wisdom, who sees nothing wrong with her femininity, does not appreciate their comment and, having pointed out to them that as far as Awakening is concerned, there is no man or woman, she declares to them: "Many desire Awakening in a male body, but no one works for the good of beings in a female body. Therefore, until the Samsara* is empty, I will work for the welfare of all beings in a female body". Then, for ten million years, she practices this until she reaches full realization and becomes able to release ten million beings every morning and as many in the evening. It was then that Buddha "Lord of the Sound of the Drum" declared that she would now be known as "Târâ", the Liberator.

Nota Bene: There are 21 different Taras that are distinguished by their color, posture and attributes (white, yellow, green, black, etc.).

White Tara can be recognized here by her 7 eyes: 3 on the face, 2 in the palms of the hands and 2 in the palms of the feet. These eyes signify the vigilance and compassion she expresses.

**Buddha: The one who attained Enlightenment*

**Bodhisattva: Wise who can reach spiritual awakening but who wishes to stay on earth to help humans*

**Awakening: State of inner enlightenment to grasp the ultimate reality of life*

**Samsara: cycle of reincarnations conditioned by karma*



Buddha

Siddhartha Gautama, known as Shakyamuni or Buddha, lived in the 6th or 5th century BC. He is the historical founder of a community of wandering monks that gave birth to Buddhism.

The story of the birth of Buddha is a famous legend. His mother Mayadevi (whose name means "illusion") conceives Siddhartha in a dream, fertilized at the breast by a white elephant with six tusks. She gives birth in a sacred wood, hanging on a tree branch, while the Brahmanic (member of the Hindu religious caste) deities rain flower petals on her.

As soon as born, the child stood up and took possession of the Universe by turning to the four cardinal points, then made seven steps to the north.

His father, warned that his son would be either a great fighter or a sage, raised him as a warrior within the family palace, preserving him from all difficulties and all evils.

Legend has it that he discovered suffering by making four encounters that changed his life: he met an old man, a sick man, another who was led to the stake and a hermit who showed him a possible way to wisdom.

The prince then understands that if his condition protects him from need, nothing will ever protect him from old age, illness and death. He leaves his family to seek the way of salvation.

Siddhartha began a life of asceticism and devoted himself to austere meditative practices. Over the years, understanding that these privations have not led to a greater understanding of things, he accepts the bowl of rice stretched by a girl and puts an end to his mortifications. The 5 disciples who followed him see this as a betrayal and abandon him. He then devotes himself to meditation, places himself under a tree and vows not to move before reaching the truth.

Mara, demon of death, afraid of the power that Siddhartha was going to obtain against him by delivering the Men from the fear of dying, tries to get him out of his meditation by launching hordes of frightening demons against him. He also threw poisons from snakes or emerging from his eyes and breath, as well as flames. And the circle of fire stops as if the bodhisattva were protected by a halo of light. The wise Buddhist, calls for help the earth by making the gesture of the

witness taken (the right hand hanging and the palm turned towards the sky) and says: "O Earth! I realized the thirty perfections, and in my birth I made the sacrifice of my wife and my children, and distributed the gifts by seven hundred at a time; but I have neither religious nor brahmin as a witness, O Earth, why don't you come and testify". The Earth, thus challenged, testifies in his favor. Mâra the Tempter does not admit defeat. He placed himself near the throne of the Blessed and brought his three daughters to tempt the sage who had just attained Perfect Science. Wasted effort, Siddhartha despises the Tempresses, and Marâ, definitively defeated, moves away.

The Awakening reached, he becomes Buddha* and claims to have reached the total understanding of the nature, the causes of human suffering and the steps necessary for its elimination. He always insists that he is neither a god, nor the messenger of a god, and that enlightenment does not result from supernatural intervention, but from special attention to the nature of the human spirit. It is therefore possible for all human beings.

The last 45 years of his life, Buddha travels along the Ganges. He taught his meditative practice and founded the community of Buddhist nuns and monks, so that his teachings would continue after his death.