

Painting

04.13
S.I. 1p
L. 31

Korean

~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ Koryo dynasty, 14th century

Küan-yin, seated.

Color and gold. Much darkened, coarse silk.

Poor condition.

Neg.No.
774B

Silk panel: .984 x .478 (38-3/4" x 18-13/16")

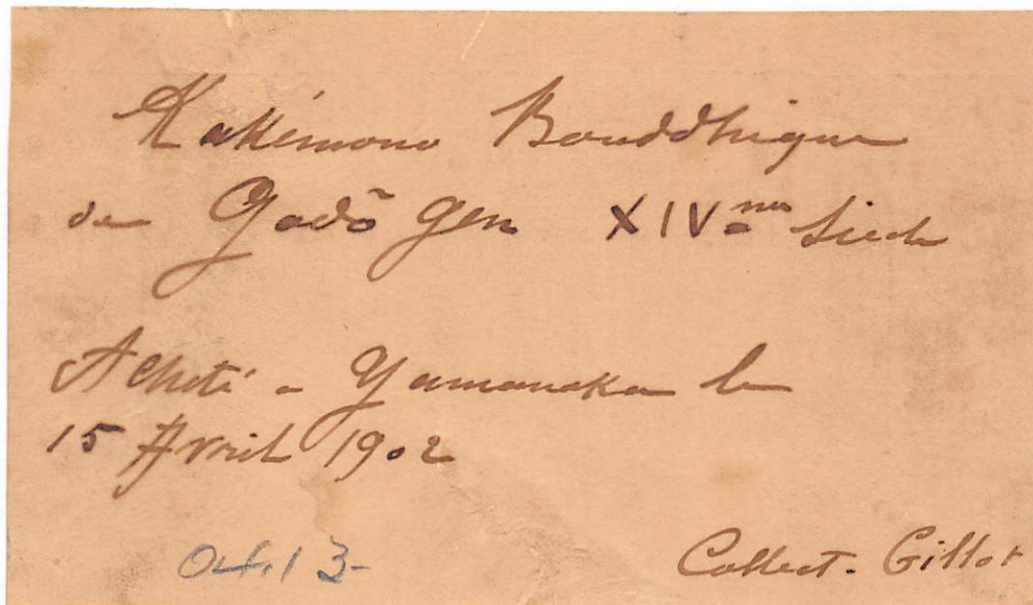
1. Bought by Mr. Bing for Mr. Freer at the Gillot sale in Paris, February 1904 (Gillot No. 2004). Received as a kakemono; later mounted in panel form. For price, see L. 31, original Panel List.

2. Original attribution: "Copied in Japan during the 14th century after a design by Godoshi." Later, on corrected description: Artist Unknown. Period uncertain. See further, S.I. 1, Panels, Inventory, and (re-described) in Envelope File.

3. (J.E.Lodge, 1921) Looks Chinese, on the whole, and if so -- may be Ming, or even Yüan-Ming work -- suspicious that it may be Japanese, though I doubt it. Coarse work -- not important.

4. Remounted by Y. Kinoshita in 1933.

5. (H.E.Buckman, 1963) The following is incorporated from the Envelope File:



Painted on silk, in colors and gold. Without signature or seal. Received as a panel and still remains in that form.

The Envelope File has now been destroyed.

6. (J.F.Cahill, 1965) The attribution should be changed from: "Chinese, Yüan-Ming (?)" to: "Korean, Yi dynasty, 15th century".

7. (Exhibition Label, 1981) Images of Avalokitesvara, the Bodhisattva associated with compassion, shown with a willow branch and seated on a cluster of rocks near the water, are traditionally held to have first appeared in China during the T'ang dynasty (618-906 A.D.). Under the influence of Ch'an (Zen) Buddhism, paintings of this subject became very popular, and many examples were carried from China to Korea and Japan during the Sung (960-1279) and Yüan (1279-1368) dynasties.

This painting, executed in ink, colors, and gold on silk, follows the same Chinese prototype as numerous other surviving examples executed during the late Koryŏ period. The willow branch is held in a small vase to the side of the Bodhisattva. The small figure in a devotional pose may represent an allusion to a passage in the Avatamsaka sutra. The details of this painting, from the elegant pose of the deity to the delicate use of color to render elements of the costume are characteristic of Korean Buddhist painting at the peak of its development. Touches of gold highlight the landscape in a typically decorative manner.

8. (From An Exhibition Label: Studies in Connoisseurship: 1923-1983, September, 1983 - AYonemura).

Purchased for Freer in Paris by Siegfried Bing at the 1904 sale of the Charles Gillot collection, this painting was listed in the section of Japanese paintings in the Gillot catalogue. There it carried an erroneous attribution to "Gōdo Ghen," the T'ang dynasty Chinese painter, Wu Tao-hsüan 吳道玄 (Wu Tao-tzu 吳道子), whose paintings are no longer extant. Despite the illogical attribution to a painter of the mid-8th century, the date proposed for the painting was 14th century. A paper accompanying the painting seems to indicate that Gillot had purchased the painting from the Japanese dealer, Yamanaka, in 1902.

In Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art, published in 1912, Ernest F. Fenellosa argued against the attribution to Wu Tao-tzu, and described the painting in Freer's collection as probably a Sung dynasty painting reflecting the style of T'ang painter Yen Li-pen 閻立本 (d. 673 A.D.). Fenellosa regarded the painting as a fine example belonging to the tradition of a famous Avalokiteśvara in the collection of the Japanese temple, Daitokuji 大徳寺, which was then attributed to Wu Tao-tzu, but is currently identified as a Korean Buddhist painting. Freer's collection inventory describes the painting as "copied in Japan during the XIV century, after a design by Godoshi [Wu Tao-tzu]," and John E. Lodge considered it to be an unimportant work later in date than Sung. Only in 1965 was the painting identified by James Cahill, Curator of Chinese Art, as Korean, Yi dynasty, 15th century.

Comparison to a number of recently-published Koryŏ dynasty paintings of Avalokiteśvara shows this painting to possess the style and iconography typical of late Koryŏ Buddhist paintings. In recent studies by Japanese scholars such as Ueno Aki, Koryŏ Buddhist paintings have been shown to belong to a relatively limited repertoire of iconographic models. Most Korean representations of Avalokiteśvara follow a specific model, where the deity is seated in a rocky, cave-like setting overlooking water. Below the deity in the pond is a small holy child representing Sudhana whose pilgrimage to visit many Buddhist deities is described in the Avatamsaka sutra. A bamboo grove appears in the background, and a branch of willow is held in a vase or bowl near the extended right arm of the figure.

Stylistically, the Freer painting is closely related to other surviving 14th-century Korean paintings of this subject, especially one in the Japanese temple, Taizanji 太山寺 in Kobe city. Typical Korean stylistic features are the extensive gold highlighting of the undersurfaces of the oddly-shaped rocks, the textile patterns on the robes of the figure, including the diaphanous gauze veil, and the double outlines on the red lower garment.