

## Painting

06.269  
S.I.290  
L. 537

Korean

Koryo, 14th century

The Buddha enthroned and preaching; eight  
Bodhisattvas.

Color and gold. Retouched. One seal,  
undecipherable.

Silk panel: 1.600 x .858 (63" x 33-3/4")

Neg.No.

~~950A~~

806B

535B

1. Bought from Yamanaka & Co. Received as a kakemono; later mounted in panel form. For price, etc., see L. 537, original Kakemono and Makimono List.
2. Original attribution to "Choshi-Kio", Sung. Corrected description gives attribution to Unknown Artist. Sung. See further, S.I. 290, Appendix I, and (re-described) Envelope File (see Paragraph 5 below).
3. (J.E.Lodge, 1921) A fairly good Yüan-Ming work.
4. Remounted by Y. Kinoshita in May 1945.
5. (H.E.Buckman, 1963) The following is incorporated from the Envelope File: Buddha and eight disciples. The Buddha is seated on a lotus throne aloft, in the attitude of teaching. His throne rests upon an alter decorated

in lotus motive, and before this and at his sides are eight Bodhisattvas, the "Beings of Enlightenment", depicted in beauty and brilliantly garbed. Each, like the Buddha himself, has a nimbus. The Bodhisattvas are standing, in groups of four. Silk a deep dark brown, considerably worn and showing some cracks. Vestiges of seal marks at lower left, unreadable.

The Envelope File has now been destroyed.

6. (H.P.Stern, 1965) Attribution changed from: "Chinese, Yüan-Ming dynasty" to "Korean, Koryo, 14th century".

7. (T.Lawton, 1972) A similar version is now in the Center of Asian Art and Culture, The Avery Brundage Collection, San Francisco (Accession Number B72 D38). In his letter of August 29, 1972, Mr. Clarence Shangraw described the San Francisco painting as follows: "The identification of the Eight Bodhisattva appears to be the standard group (Avalokitesvara, Akasagarbha, Vajrapani, Kshitigarbha, Vishkambhin, Maitreya, Manjusri, and Samantabhadra) cited in Getty, Gods of Northern Buddhism and Oldenburg, 300 Buddhist Images. The Avalokitesvara figure appears patterned after the Sung ideal of the Pandaravasini Avalokitesvara (minus the pearls), like the one in the Chang Sheng-wen scroll; the attribute of Samantabhadra has been transformed from a lotus stalk to a jui-i sceptre; the garb of Kshitigarbha is similar to the traveller's shawls worn by that figure on some Tun-huang banners thought to be Sung; and the stylistic treatment of the Buddha figure is highly reminiscent of the Sakyamuni Triad in the Nison-in, Kyoto (which was in the Cleveland Yüan dynasty

exhibition). Tentatively, I've given it full range--Koryo, 14th-16th century, and believe it to be probably a copy after a Sung version."

8. From an exhibition label, 1981: This painting is a masterpiece of Korean Buddhist painting of the late Koryō dynasty. At the center of the composition, Amitabha, the Buddhist associated with salvation of sentient beings, is enthroned upon a dais. His hands are held in the symbolic gestures representing preaching. Around him, grouped symmetrically in formal frontal poses, are eight Bodhisattvas. One, Ksitigarbha, who saves the deserving even from the Buddhist Hell, wears a distinctive patterned head-dress.

Koryō Buddhist paintings are very closely modeled after Chinese Buddhist paintings of the Sung dynasty (960-1279 A.D.), but they develop a distinctive delicacy of their own. This is especially evident in the detailed treatment of the patterns of the costumes of Amitabha and the Bodhisattvas. The translucence of their overgarments is skillfully rendered in white with touches of gold. The precision of this composition is especially evident in the placement of the perfectly circular haloes of the figures.

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

When purchased from Yamanaka and Company in 1906, this impressive painting was attributed to a Chinese painter, Chang Ssu-kung 張思恭, who is unrecorded in Chinese sources, but mentioned in the Japanese Kundaikan Sayūchōki 君台觀左右帳記 as a Sung dynasty

painter of Buddhist figures. Subsequently, John Ellerton Lodge, the first Director of the Freer Gallery, revised the description to "A fairly good Yüan-Ming work."

Only in 1965 was the painting recognized to be a Korean work probably datable to the late Koryŏ dynasty (918-1392 A.D.). The confusion between Korean Buddhist paintings and those from Sung or Yüan dynasty which are likely to have served as their models arose in part from the disappearance of such paintings from their native country, where a period of iconoclasm and the decline of Buddhism beginning early in the Yi dynasty (1392-1910) contributed to the poor survival of the elegant Buddhist paintings created under court patronage in the Koryŏ dynasty. Recent studies by Japanese, Korean, and European scholars have clarified the unique features of Koryŏ dynasty Buddhist paintings, which have survived principally in the collections of Japanese Buddhist temples, from where a number have entered European and American collections.

The subject of Amitabha and Eight Great Bodhisattva appears principally in surviving Buddhist paintings from Korea, although it seems likely to follow a Chinese prototype. The Freer painting reflects one of two major archetypes of this subject in which Amitābha, enthroned in the center, is flanked by two groups four bodhisattva, including his principal attendants: Avalokiteśvara (right-hand foreground), who is distinguished by the small image of Amitābha in his crown, and Mahāsthāmaprāpta, whose crown is embellished with a vase. The specific attributes held by the individual bodhisattva vary somewhat among the extant versions of this subject. The hooded figure of Kṣitigarbha, the only bodhisattva

not wearing a princely jewelled crown, represents a special form of this deity that is especially prevalent in Korean Buddhist painting. The hooded Kṣitigarbha also appears in Chinese or Central Asian Buddhist paintings, particularly those from Tun-huang. Amitābha and his attendant bodhisattva are especially worshipped in East Asia for their power to save sentient beings from endless cycles of birth and rebirth. Avalokiteśvara is generally associated with compassion, but Kṣitigarbha is believed to descend even into Hell to rescue souls that have acquired some merit on earth.

This painting, originally a hanging scroll which was remounted as a panel, exhibits many stylistic details characteristic of Koryŏ dynasty Buddhist paintings, including the delicate but abundant details painted in gold, the elaborate superimposed textile patterns, many of which have parallels in Koryŏ dynasty inlaid lacquers or celadons, and the precise delineation of contours and facial features. In its high degree of formalism--both in its almost rigidly symmetrical composition and the complex precision of the patterned garments--this painting represents a late phase of development in Koryŏ Buddhist painting, and is probably datable to the very end of the Koryŏ or early Yi dynasty, around the end of the 14th century.

10. (From an exhibition label). The Buddha, wearing a red cloak with gold emblems, is seated on an elaborate lotus throne with his hands in a gesture of preaching. Standing in front of his dais in symmetrical groups are eight attendant bodhisattvas, each of whom is portrayed with an identifying attribute.

The depiction of these deities in sumptuous garments and transparent scarves is close in style to Chinese Buddhist paintings of the Sung period (960-1279), and it is possible that this scroll was based on a Chinese prototype.