



True Identity: Reconsidering a Fourteenth-Century Buddhist Painting of the *Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara* in the Rijksmuseum

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In the field of East Asian art history, increasing attention has been devoted in the last few decades to Korean Buddhist painting produced during the Goryeo Dynasty (892-1392). In 1978 the first exhibition on the subject, the *Special Exhibition of Goryeo Buddhist Painting: The Golden Buddhas Brought from a Neighbouring Country to Our Country*, was staged at the Museum Yamato Bunkakan in Nara, Japan. The exhibition featured forty-nine Goryeo Buddhist paintings, many of which had formerly been identified as Chinese Buddhist paintings from the Song Dynasty (960-1279); it was a sensation and shed new light on the subject.¹ In the years that followed, various exhibitions focusing on Goryeo Buddhist painting were held in Japan, South Korea and the United States, accompanying new discoveries and research that revealed new information about the subject.² Around a hundred and sixty-five Buddhist paintings from the Goryeo Dynasty are known to date, including seventeen in the United States, six in Europe, more than thirty in South Korea (returned through purchases from Japan and the United States since the nineteen-eighties) and a hundred and ten in Japan.³ Over the decades, increased research in the field has identified more Goryeo Buddhist paintings in world collections and revealed the social and religious contexts.⁴

Fig. 1
*The Water-Moon
Avalokiteśvara,*
Japan?, fourteenth
century.
Hanging scroll,
ink and colours
on silk, 130 x 60 cm.
Rijksmuseum,
Amsterdam,
inv. no. AK-MAK-492;
on permanent loan
from the Vereniging
van Vrienden der
Aziatische Kunst.

In the Rijksmuseum collection is a Buddhist painting of the deity Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara seated on a rock in the pose of royal ease (*san maharajalilasana*), being worshipped by the boy-pilgrim Sudhana (fig. 1). The painting was done by an anonymous painter (or painters) and bears no inscriptions. The identification and dating of this painting are complicated. It had long been considered to be a Chinese work of the Song Dynasty and dated to the twelfth century; later the painting was thought to be a Chinese work from the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) and its date was revised to the fourteenth century. More recently, opinion has shifted and it is now regarded as a Korean Buddhist painting from the Goryeo Dynasty and dated to the first half of the fourteenth century, although there has never really been a fundamental examination of this painting.

My aim here is to rectify this situation by examining the iconography and style of this painting in detail. The trans-cultural interaction between Chinese, Korean and Japanese Buddhist painting is an important and interesting topic which nowadays attracts a lot of attention in the field, but before we can enter that discussion, we need a thorough analysis to determine the place of origin and the date of the painting. I will begin by reconstructing the reception history of the painting, then present a detailed

iconographic and stylistic analysis in order to date and identify the painting. I believe that this painting is a late fourteenth-century Japanese hybrid creation that combines both Chinese iconography and the style of Ningpo Buddhist painting of the Song Dynasties with decorative elements of Korean Goryeo Buddhist painting. In light of the recent research into the inter-regional connection of East Asian Buddhist image production, the Rijksmuseum *Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara* is an example of the interactions between China, Korea and Japan in the fourteenth century.

The Reception of the Painting *Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara* in the Rijksmuseum

In his report on the painting's provenance, H.F.E. Visser (1890-1965) stated that it was purchased by Dr Jörg Trübner during his trip to China.⁵ It was subsequently purchased by G.J. Verburgt (1871-1926), one of the leading members of the Vereniging van Vrienden der Aziatische Kunst (VVAK), the Asian Art Society in the Netherlands, from the Berlin art dealer Edgar Worch in 1929.⁶ The Verburgt collection was donated to the VVAK in 1968, and its collection has been on display in the Rijksmuseum since 1952.⁷

The painting featured in the special exhibition of Asian Art from private and public collections in the Netherlands, organized by the VVAK and staged at the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam from 5 July to 4 October 1936. In this exhibition the painting was labelled as a Chinese work from the Song Dynasty.⁸ In his monumental work *Asiatic Art in Private Collections of Holland and Belgium*, published in 1948, Visser commented on this painting:

One of the rare Chinese Buddhist paintings from China proper (in contrast to those from Tun Huang [Dunhuang] in London and Paris) in European public and private collections

and, no doubt, one of the most important documents of Far Eastern pictorial art in this part of the world.⁹

In the exhibition *Oosterse schatten: 4000 jaar Aziatische kunst* (Eastern Treasures: 4000 Years of Asian Art) at the Rijksmuseum from 3 July to 10 October 1954, the painting was also displayed as one of a very few Chinese Song paintings.¹⁰ Around 1970 the former curator of East Asian art at the Rijksmuseum, Jan Fontein (1927-2017), identified it as a Chinese Buddhist painting of the Ningpo school and dated it to the fourteenth century during the Yuan Dynasty.¹¹

In 1985, when the Rijksmuseum published its catalogue of the Asian art collection, Fontein re-identified this painting as Korean for the first time and dated it to the first half of the fourteenth century on the basis of its similarity to a painting dated 1323 in the Kōyasan collection.¹² The painting he referred to is most likely the *Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara* painted by Sō Gugang 徐九方 (fl. fourteenth century) now in the collection of the Sen'oku Hakukokan Museum in Kyoto (fig. 2).¹³ However, the style and iconography of the Rijksmuseum *Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara* and the Kōyasan *Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara* are completely different. The only similarity shared by the two works is the depiction of an arabesque medallion pattern on the garment. This similarity was probably why the Rijksmuseum's *Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara* was identified as Korean Goryeo painting rather than as Chinese Song or Yuan painting.

Fontein's opinion set the tone for the reception of the Rijksmuseum *Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara* as a Korean Goryeo Buddhist painting from the first half of the fourteenth century. And in 2014 the Overseas Korean Cultural Heritage Foundation published the Rijksmuseum *Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara* in their annual

Fig. 2
SŌ GUGANG,
*The Water-Moon
Avalokiteśvara*,
Korea, 1323.
Hanging scroll,
ink and colours on
silk, 166.3 x 101.3 cm.
Kyoto, Sen'oku
Hakukokan Museum.
Photo: from exh. cat.
Kyoto (Museum
Sen'oku Hakukokan)
2016 (note 2), p. 63.



report as a Korean Goryeo painting, describing it as a finding of their cultural heritage in overseas collections.¹⁴

The shifts in the reception and identification of the Rijksmuseum *Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara* are symptomatic of the changing understanding of Goryeo Buddhist painting in the field of East Asian art history since the nineteen-seventies. However, I believe that the style and iconography of the Rijksmuseum *Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara* are actually much more complex than they seem.

The Iconography and Style of the Rijksmuseum

Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara

Avalokiteśvara (chi. Guanyin; jpn. Kannon; kor. Gwaneum) is a bodhisattva who embodies the great compassion of all Buddhas. Associated with mercy, Avalokiteśvara is one of the favourite deities in the Buddhist pantheon, particularly in the cultural circle of East Asia. One of the best known subjects of Goryeo Buddhist paintings is the representation of Avalokiteśvara. The Chapter Universal Gate of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva (chi. *Guanshiyin pusa pumen pin* 觀世音菩薩普門品) in the *Lotus Sūtra* (san. *Saddharma Puṇḍarīka Sūtra*; chi. *Maijofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經) is commonly known as the *Sūtra of Avalokiteśvara* (chi. *Guanyinjing* 觀音經). Devoted to Avalokiteśvara, it describes him as a compassionate bodhisattva who hears the cries and prayers of sentient beings. He aids and rescues those who call his name in the appearances of a total of thirty-three manifestations to suit the minds of various beings.

The deity Bodhisattva Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara does not exist in the Buddhism of India. It is a Chinese form which evolved after Buddhism was introduced into China.¹⁵ The iconography is based on and derives from the Chapter on Entry into the Realm of Reality (chi. *Ru fajie pin* 入法界品)

in the *Flower Garland Sūtra* (san. *Avatamsaka Sūtra*; chi. *Huayan jing* 華嚴經); this is one of the most influential Mahayana *Sūtras* in East Asian Buddhism. In it Avalokiteśvara dwells on Mount Potalaka by the sea, and he welcomes the boy-pilgrim Sudhana, who went on a journey to seek enlightenment.

In his book *On Famous Paintings through the Ages* (*Lidai minghua ji* 歷代名畫記), Zhang Yanyuan 張彥遠 (815-907) wrote that the iconography of the Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara was 'brilliantly created' by the painter Zhou Fang 周昉 (fl. late eighth to early ninth century).¹⁶ Zhou Fang's image of the Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara is unfortunately no longer extant. However, based on Zhang Yanyuan's record, it is still possible to visualize Zhou's representation:

Temple of Holy Light (Shengguang si)
... In the precinct south-east of the pagoda is the protecting screen of a Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara painted by Zhou Fang. The halo of the Bodhisattva and the bamboo both all finished in colour by Liu Zheng.¹⁷

Based on Zhang Yanyuan's account, Zhou Fang's representation of the Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara contains two important iconographic elements: a halo behind the Bodhisattva and bamboo surrounding the deity.

After Zhou Fang 'brilliantly created' the iconography of the Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara, painters such as Zuo Quan 左全 (fl. ninth century) and Fan Qiong 范瓊 (fl. ninth century), Huang Jucai 黃居寀 (933-?), Wang Qihan 王齊翰 (fl. tenth century), Wu Zongyuan 武宗元 (c. 980-1050) and Wang Shen 王詵 (1036-c. 1093) all painted images of the Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara.¹⁸ Although Zhou Fang and his followers' representations of the deity have not survived, an image of the Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara appears in the right lower corner of the *Thousand-*



Fig. 3
 'The Water-Moon
 Avalokiteśvara',
 detail of *The
 Thousand-Armed
 Avalokiteśvara*,
 China, 943.
 Ink and colours
 on silk.
 Paris, Musée Guimet,
 inv. no. MG. 17775.

Armed Avalokiteśvara discovered in Dunhuang dated to 943, now in the collection of the Musée Guimet (fig. 3), and three other works dated in the tenth century, now in the British Museum, can serve as references.¹⁹ It should be noted that these are slightly later than Zhou Fang's time. All these images show a representation of the deity sitting on a rock in half-lotus pose (*san. ardhapadmasana*) with one leg crossed and the other dangling (unlike the conventional lotus pose (*san. padmasana*) with a double cross-legged pose of a Buddha), a huge halo at his back, and surrounded by a bamboo grove. Scholars believe these images closely follow the iconography created by Zhou Fang.²⁰

The same pose also appears in most of the representations of the Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara in Korean Goryeo Buddhist paintings from the fourteenth century. As Kikutake Jun'ichi has pointed out, unlike Chinese or Japanese Buddhist paintings, within the twenty-seven extant Korean

Goryeo paintings of the Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara, only one painting portrays the bodhisattva in a standing pose and in four paintings he is seated in a double cross-legged pose.²¹ The Goryeo pictorial representation of the Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara tends towards greatly limited iconography and the copying of previous models.²² Scholars think that the Korean Goryeo representation of the Water Moon Avalokiteśvara actually followed the early painting tradition established by Zhou Fang and his followers – a painting tradition established from the late Tang Dynasty in the late eighth century to the Northern Song Dynasty in the eleventh century.²³ However, the posture of the Rijksmuseum *Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara* is royal ease, which is unique among the existing Goryeo Buddhist paintings; this suggests another pictorial representational and iconographic tradition.

The iconography of the Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara in the pose of royal ease

first appeared in the Song Dynasty around the eleventh century in two forms: in both the deity is depicted seated, with one arm supporting his body while the other rests on a raised knee; they differ in that in one form the other leg is left hanging and in the other both legs are crossed. This representation can be seen in surviving wooden sculptures from the Song, Liao (916-1125) and Jin (1115-1234) dynasties from the eleventh to the thirteenth century.²⁴ Examples include a wooden sculpture of the Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara dated to the eleventh century in The Metropolitan Museum of Art and another dated to the twelfth century in the Rijksmuseum (fig. 4).²⁵ It is worth noting that in the mural painting in Cave 431 at Dunhuang – located at the crossroads of the ancient Southern Silk Route where there are a number of Buddhist cave sites – there are two representations of the Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara: one in half-lotus pose (fig. 5) and the other in royal-ease pose (fig. 6). Cave 431 was first built during the Northern Wei

Fig. 4
The Water-Moon
Avalokiteśvara, China,
c. twelfth century.
Willow and paulownia
wood with painting
and gilding,
117 x 110 x 74 cm.
Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum,
inv. no. AK-MAK-84;
on permanent loan
from the Vereniging
van Vrienden der
Aziatische Kunst.



Fig. 5
The Water-Moon
Avalokiteśvara,
Cave 431 of
Dunhuang, China,
Song Dynasty
(960-1279).
Photo: from Duan
1990 (note 26), pl. 159.

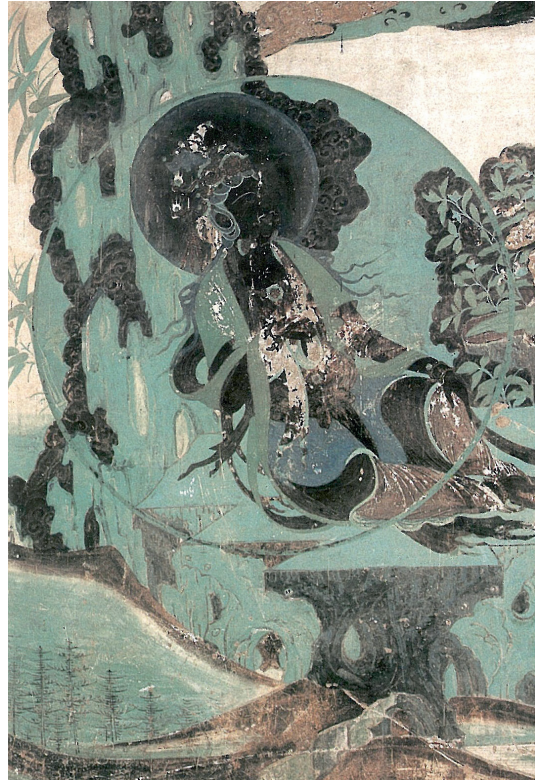
Fig. 6
The Water-Moon
Avalokiteśvara,
Cave 431 of
Dunhuang, China,
Song Dynasty
(960-1279).
Photo: from Duan
1990 (note 26), pl. 158.

Fig. 7
The Water-Moon
Avalokiteśvara,
Cave 237 of
Dunhuang, China,
twelfth century, Xixia
Kingdom (1038-1227).
Photo: from Lin 2005
(note 28), p. 536.

Fig. 8
The Water-Moon
Avalokiteśvara,
Cave 2 of Yulin
Grottoes, China,
twelfth century, Xixia
Kingdom (1038-1227).
Photo: from
Dunhuang yanjiu yuan
2000 (note 28), p. 109.

period (384-534) and restored twice in the early Tang Dynasty (618-907) and the early Song period; the two Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara mural paintings are on the west wall of the front room and according to the inscription were added in the fifth year of Taiping Xingguo reign 太平興國五年 (981) of the Song period.²⁶ It is by far the earliest pictorial representation of the Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara in the posture of royal ease.

The examples in Cave 431 signify an iconographic shift of the image of the Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara in China, that is to say, the iconography of the Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara in royal-ease pose first appeared in the late tenth century and the depiction of the deity in half-lotus pose in China seems to end at around this time. In Cave 237 at Dunhuang (fig. 7) and Cave 2 of the Yulin Grottoes (fig. 8) dated to around



the twelfth century, as well as in silk paintings excavated at Khara Khoro of the Tangut Kingdom²⁷ (Xixia 西夏, 1038-1227) dated to around the twelfth to the thirteenth century, the deity is depicted in a pose of royal ease.²⁸

It was around the eleventh century that the iconography of the Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara merged with the White-Robed Avalokiteśvara (chi. Baiyi Guanyin 白衣觀音) in

China – another indigenous iconography that did not exist in India but was created in Chinese Buddhism and favoured by the *Chan* 禪 (jpn. *Zen*) monks and literati and later on circulated widely in East Asian cultural circles.²⁹ What is notable here is that the depiction of the Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara at Cave 237 also shows a merging with the iconography of the White-Robed Avalokiteśvara; it should

Fig. 9
‘The Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara’, in *Besson zakkī*, vol. 22, Japan, twelfth century, h. 31.6 cm. Kyoto, Ninna-ji Temple. Photo: from exh. cat. Nara (Yamato Bunkakan) 2006 (note 31), p. 33.



Fig. 10
 'The Water-Moon
 Avalokiteśvara', in
Besson zakki, vol. 22,
 Japan, twelfth century,
 h. 31.6 cm.
 Kyoto, Ninna-ji
 Temple.
 Photo: from exh. cat.
 Nara (Yamato
 Bunkakan) 2006
 (note 31), p. 34.

be considered in the context of the reception of the Chinese Buddhist iconography in the Tangut Kingdom.

Interestingly, the representation of the Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara in royal-ease pose, while it does appear in Goryeo Buddhist sculptures and can also be seen incised on bronze mirrors, does not appear in Goryeo Buddhist painting.³⁰ Scholars suggest that this phenomenon is evidence that the iconography

of Goryeo Buddhist painting, at least in the case of the representation of the Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara, follows a much earlier iconographic tradition. On the other hand, the iconography of the Rijksmuseum *Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara* follows the later tradition that was established in China around the late tenth century and flourished from the eleventh century onwards.

It is worth considering that both iconographic representations of the Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara are documented in the *Miscellaneous Records on Specific Deities* (jpn. *Besson zakki* 別尊雜記), a Japanese handbook of esoteric Buddhist iconography dated to the twelfth century during the Heian period (794-1185). One image depicts the Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara facing towards the left and seated on a rock in half-lotus pose, holding a *kundika*-vase in his right hand, welcoming the boy-pilgrim Sudhana in a setting surrounded by ocean waves, bamboo and clouds, with a heavenly palace appearing through the mist in the distance (fig. 9). The other depicts him seated in a rocky cave surrounded by ocean waves, bamboo and mist, in royal-ease posture, looking down into the water, with a small halo behind his head, and a huge halo at his back (fig. 10).³¹ This image is a copy of a Song painting. According to the date of the inscription transcribed on the upper left corner of the manuscript, the original painting was brought to Japan no later than 1088.³² The other inscription noted in red at the lower left side of the manuscript is interesting:

The holy body is [coloured in] white, hair in dark blue, crown in gold, outer garment on the body in red, necklace in gold, veil in silver-blue, clothes in red-yellow, I noted down the colours in accordance with a copy made at that time.³³

The colours documented here correspond to those in the Rijksmuseum





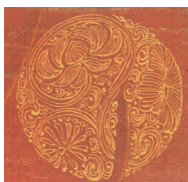


Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara, as do the composition and iconography. This explains why the painting was regarded as a Song painting in the early twentieth century; in other words, the Rijksmuseum *Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara* is in the manner of Chinese Song Buddhist painting.

However, the arabesque medallion pattern decorating the garment of the Rijksmuseum *Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara* is significant. It is one of the most characteristic signatures of Korean Goryeo Buddhist painting. As Chung Woothak pointed out, it is the pattern used most frequently and the one that has the most diverse shapes and the use of it is unique to Korean Goryeo Buddhist painting of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Since it is used with such consistency it offers valuable clues for identifying and dating Goryeo Buddhist paintings. This is why the Rijksmuseum *Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara* cannot be a Chinese painting.³⁴

But is the Rijksmuseum *Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara* really a Korean Goryeo Buddhist painting? If one examines the arabesque medallion pattern more closely there appears to be no clear sequence of design or order; instead the medallion was executed with a round outline and the design was randomly filled. This differs from the arabesque medallion patterns that commonly appear in Goryeo Buddhist paintings; these show a clear S-shaped structure (see table 1). That is to say the painter (or painters) of the Rijksmuseum *Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara* was copying the Goryeo arabesque medallion pattern but did not clearly understand the configuration and the construction of the design.

Table 1
Comparison
of arabesque
medallion patterns

1		Detail of the Rijksmuseum <i>Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara</i> (fig. 1).
2		Detail of the <i>Amitābha</i> , Korea, Goryeo Dynasty, 1306. Tokyo, Nezu Museum, inv. no. 10398. Photo: from exh. cat. Kyoto (Museum Sen'oku Hakukokan) 2016 (note 2), p. 37.
3		Detail of the Rijksmuseum <i>Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara</i> (fig. 2).
4		Detail of the <i>Amitābha Triad</i> , Korea, Goryeo Dynasty, fourteenth century. Tokyo, National Museum, inv. no. TA-59. Photo: from exh. cat. Seoul (National Museum of Korea) 2010 (note 2), p. 95.
5		Detail of Illustration of the <i>Sūtra on the Descent of Maitreya</i> , Korea, Goryeo Dynasty, fourteenth century. Kyoto, Chion-in Temple. Photo: from exh. cat. Seoul (National Museum of Korea) 2010 (note 2), p. 55.
6		Detail of the <i>Amitābha Triad</i> , Korea, Goryeo Dynasty, fourteenth century. Seoul, Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, National Treasure no. 218. Photo: from exh. cat. Seoul (National Museum of Korea) 2010 (note 2), p. 92.
7		Detail of the <i>Amitābha with Eight Great Bodhisattva</i> , Korea, Goryeo Dynasty, fourteenth century. Kyoto, Jokyo-ji Temple. Photo: from exh. cat. Seoul (National Museum of Korea) 2010 (note 2), p. 106.
8		Detail of the <i>Amitābha</i> , Korea, Goryeo Dynasty, fourteenth century. Kyoto, Shōbō-ji Temple. Photo: from exh. cat. Seoul (National Museum of Korea) 2010 (note 2), p. 251.

In addition to the arabesque medallion, the colouration of the Rijksmuseum *Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara* also differs from that usually found in Korean Goryeo Buddhist painting. Goryeo Buddhist painting used red, green and blue as the principal colours. Few pigment types were used, and colours were used in their pure original form without others mixed in. This avoids the loss of colour saturation that occurs when pigments are combined. In Goryeo Buddhist painting, moreover, one type of pigment is rarely applied with variation in saturation or luminosity, in other words the colour has the same hue and intensity in a single painting, even when applied to different parts of it.³⁵ The colouring method of the Rijksmuseum *Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara* differs from Goryeo Buddhist painting. For example, the red garment worn by the deity was executed by adding yellow to a red pigment to create a different colour value and intensity. Another significant stylistic character of Goryeo Buddhist painting when representing the Avalokiteśvara is to use minute lines of white pigment to create the texture of a thin transparent veil. This does not appear on the Rijksmuseum *Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara* at all. Taking all the different representational mannerisms together, we can conclude that the Rijksmuseum *Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara* is not a product of Korean Goryeo painting.

The method used to portray volume in the red garment in the Rijksmuseum *Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara* is interesting. It is executed by using ink wash to fill in the receding areas in contrast to the forward parts of the drapery, while the most prominent parts are highlighted in yellowish-red. This application differs from the Chinese approach of adding ink wash or darker colour along the contour lines of the fabric. One example is a Chinese version of the *Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara* dated to the late thirteenth and early four-



teenth century. Here we see that the transparent veil worn by the deity was also created by adding ink wash along the outlines (fig. 11). The same method of using colour or ink tone to contrast the folds of drapery and create volume in a garment can be found in Japanese Buddhist painting in the Kamakura period (1192-1333): one extreme example is the *Bhaiṣajyaguru and Twelve Divine*

Fig. 11
The *Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara*, China, late thirteenth to early fourteenth century. Hanging scroll, ink and colours on silk, 111.2 x 76.2 cm. Kansas, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, inv. no. 49-60.



Fig. 12
*Bhaiṣajyaguru
 and Twelve Divine
 Generals*, Japan,
 thirteenth century.
 Hanging scroll, ink
 and colours on silk,
 166.1 x 120.9 cm.
 Kyoto, Yōchi-in
 Temple.
 Photo: from exh. cat.
 Kyoto (Kyoto National
 Museum) 2003
 (note 36), p. 173.

Generals dated to the thirteenth century now in the Yōchi-in Temple collection.³⁶ In this painting, red pigment (instead of ink) was filled in on the depressions and the most prominent parts are highlighted with white (fig. 12).

Furthermore, the painter of the Rijksmuseum's *Water-Moon*

Avalokiteśvara used the stylistic device of repeated wavy lines in the outlines of the garment to represent the end of the drapery. This stylistic trick appears in the painting *Śākyamuni Descending from the Mountain*, attributed to court painter Liang Kai 梁楷 (c. 1140-c. 1210) from the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279), now in the collection of



Fig. 13
Sixteen Arhats,
 second in a series of
 eight paintings, Japan,
 c. fourteenth century.
 Hanging scroll, ink
 and colours on silk,
 143.9 x 83 cm.
 Kanagawa, Kenchō-ji
 Temple collection,
 Kanagawa.
 Photo: from exh. cat.
 Yokohama (Kanagawa
 Prefectural Museum
 of Cultral History)
 2007 (note 37), p. 99.

the Tokyo National Museum, as well as the famous Buddhist series of paintings *Daitokuji Five Hundred Arhats* produced by the local professional Buddhist painting workshops in Ningpo, Zhejiang province. The same outlines and the same method of building the volume in the garment were appropriated by Japanese

painters: an example can be found in a painting series of *Sixteen Arhats* dated to the Muromachi period (1336-1573), around the late fourteenth century, now in the Kenchō-in Temple collection (fig. 13).³⁷ The method of using a red line to re-contour the face, hands and feet after the colour was applied and has covered the original ink



Fig. 14
Nyoirin Kannon,
Japan, fourteenth
century.
Hanging scroll, ink
and colours on silk,

121.2 x 56.4 cm.
Shiga, Hōgon-ji
Temple.
Photo: from Epprecht
2007 (note 39), pl. 22.

contour lines, applying blue on the eyebrows, using red to directly depict lips and drawing an ink line between the lips to depict the corners of the mouth have also been conventions of Japanese Buddhist painting since the Heian period. The depiction of the deity's face in the Rijksmuseum *Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara* corresponds to this approach (see table 2).³⁸ Alongside these stylistic characteristics, the same style of rocks appears in the Rijksmuseum *Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara* and also in the *Nyoirin Kannon* now in the Hōgonji Temple collection, dated to the fourteenth century (fig. 14).³⁹ To sum up, on the basis of style it is much more appropriate to identify the Rijksmuseum *Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara* as a Japanese painting and date it to the early Muromachi period (1336-1537), in the second half of the fourteenth century.

In Conclusion

It is now clear that the Rijksmuseum *Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara* is neither a Chinese Song or Yuan painting nor a Korean Goryeo painting, but a late fourteenth-century Japanese hybrid creation. It is a mixture of Chinese Song and Korean Goryeo Buddhist painting characteristics: the Japanese painter (or painters) appropriated the Chinese iconography of the *Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara*, applied colour according to the conventional Chinese prototype, but added the Korean Goryeo arabesque medallion pattern as decoration.

The hybrid nature of the style of the Rijksmuseum *Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara* indicates a trans-cultural interaction in East Asian Buddhist painting and opens up avenues for further research into its broader historical, cultural, religious and social contexts. The way Chinese Song and Yuan Buddhist painting and Korean Goryeo Buddhist painting were received in Japan merits further research. We know the Chinese Song and Yuan Buddhist

		
<p>1</p> <p>Detail of the Rijksmuseum <i>Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara</i> (fig. 1).</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Detail of the <i>Shakyamuni Rising from the Golden Coffin</i>, Japan, eleventh century. Kyoto, Kyoto National Museum, inv. no. A甲373. Photo: from Yoshitaka 1991 (note 38), p. 13.</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Detail of the Buddha <i>Amitābha</i>, Japan, twelfth century. Kyoto, Jingo-ji Temple. Photo: from Yoshitaka 1991 (note 38), p. 13.</p>

paintings were imported into Japan during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and both Chinese Buddhist paintings and Korean Goryeo Buddhist paintings existed in Japan in great quantities at this time and both were constantly copied.⁴⁹ On the other hand, there is little surviving documentation through which the specific contexts for the importation of Korean Goryeo

Buddhist painting into Japan can be traced. This is why the Rijksmuseum *Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara* appears to be extraordinarily significant. Not only it is an astonishing case that demonstrates how Chinese and Korean influences worked in fourteenth-century Japanese Buddhist painting, it also reveals new perspectives on the interactions in East Asian Buddhist painting.

Table 2
Comparison of several faces

ABSTRACT

In the Rijksmuseum collection there is a painting depicting the Buddhist deity Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara. The identification and dating of this painting are complex. It had long been considered to be a Chinese work of the Song Dynasty and dated to the twelfth century; later it was regarded as a Chinese work from the Yuan Dynasty and dated to the fourteenth century; more recently opinion shifted and it was seen as a Korean Buddhist painting from the Goryeo Dynasty and dated to the first half of the fourteenth century. This essay aims to serve as a fundamental research by examining the iconography and style of this painting in detail. The author argues on the basis of style that this painting is a late fourteenth-century Japanese hybrid creation that combines both Chinese iconography and the colouring of Chinese Song Buddhist painting with decorative elements of Korean Goryeo Buddhist painting. In light of the recent research into the inter-regional connection of East Asian Buddhist image production, the Rijksmuseum *Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara* provides an example of the artistic interactions between China, Korea and Japan in the fourteenth century.

- * My deepest gratitude goes to Professor Chung Woothak of Dongguk University, Seoul, and Professor Jeong-hee Lee-Kalisch of the Freie Universität Berlin; I would not have been able to complete this article without their kind guidance. I would also like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their insightful and helpful remarks.
- 1 The exhibition was staged from 18 October to 19 November 1978, curated by Yoshida Hiroshi. For the catalogue of this exhibition, see Yamato Bunkakan 大和文華館 (ed.), *Tokubetsuten Kōrai butsuga: Waga kuni ni shōraisareta ringoku no konjiki no hotoketachi* 特別展高麗仏画：わが国に請来された隣国の金色の仏たち [Special exhibition of Goryeo Buddhist painting: The Golden Buddhas Brought from a Neighbouring Country to our Country], exh. cat. Nara (Yamato Bunkakan) 1978.
 - 2 For the exhibition catalogues see *Goryeo – Yeongwonhan mi: Goryeo bullhwa teukbyeoljeon* 高麗・영원한美：高麗佛畫特別展 [Special Exhibition of Goryeo Buddhist Painting], exh. cat. Seoul (Ho-Am Art Museum) 1993; Kumja Paik Kim et al., *Goryeo Dynasty: Korea's Age of Enlightenment, 918-1392*, exh. cat. San Francisco (Asian Art Museum) 2003; *Koryō purhwa taejōn* 高麗佛畫大展 [Masterpieces of Goryeo Buddhist Painting], exh. cat. Seoul (National Museum of Korea) 2010; Sen'oku Hakukokan 泉屋博古館 and Nezu Bijutsukan 根津美術館 (eds.), *Korai butsuga–Kaoritatsu soshokubi* 高麗仏画–香りたつ裝飾美 [The Fragrant Sublime: Goryeo Buddhist Paintings], exh. cat. Kyoto (Museum Sen'oku Hakukokan) 2016. There was no publication accompanying the exhibition *Goryeo Buddhist Painting: A Closer Look* in the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington (DC), from 25 February to 28 May 2016. For comprehensive research on the subject of Goryeo Buddhist painting, see Kikutake Jun'ichi 菊竹淳一 and Yoshida Hiroshi 吉田宏志 (eds.), *Kōrai jidai no butsuga* 高麗時代の仏画 [Buddhist Painting of the Goryeo Period], Tokyo 1980; Kikutake Jun'ichi and Chung Woothak 鄭于澤 (eds.), *Goryeo sidae ui bullhwal* 高麗時代佛畫 [Buddhist Painting of the Goryeo Period], Seoul 1997. For a historiography of research into Goryeo Buddhist painting, see Yukio Lippit, 'Geryeo Buddhist Painting in an Interregional Context', *Ars Orientalis* 35 (2008), pp. 193-232. For an overview of the Goryeo Buddhist painting, see Ide Seinosuke, 'The World of Goryeo Buddhist Painting', in Kim et al. 2003 (note 2), pp. 34-47; Chung Woothak, 'Iconography, Technique, and Context in Koryō Buddhist Painting', in Youn-Mi Kim (ed.), *New Perspectives on Early Korean Art: From Silla to Koryō*, Cambridge (MA) 2013, pp. 11-71.
 - 3 Chung Woothak, 'The Sublime Beauty of Silent Dignity: Goryeo Buddhist Painting', in Sen'oku Hakukokan and Nezu Bijutsukan 2016 (note 2), p. 205.
 - 4 For example, as this article concerns the Goryeo Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara, see Youngsook Pak, 'Naksan Legend and Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara (Suwōl Kwanūm) of the Koryō Period (918-1392): The Role of Legend in Koryō Iconography (II)', in Naomi Noble Richard and Donald E. Brix (eds.), *The History of Painting in East Asia: Essays on Scholarly Method*, Taipei 2008, pp. 198-222. In her article, she addresses the intricate interaction of text, image and function, as well as legend, miracle and politics in the context of the Goryeo Dynasty.
 - 5 H.F.E. Visser, *Asiatic Art in Private Collections of Holland and Belgium*, Amsterdam 1948, p. 58. However, the painting had an old Japanese mount, which is why it was remounted in Japanese style when the painting was restored in 2011. For Jörg Trübner, see Otto Kümmeel, *Jörg Trübner zum Gedächtnis: Ergebnisse seiner letzten chinesischen Reisen*, Berlin 1930, pp. 5-9.
 - 6 K.W. Lim, *Legaat Verburgt (Bulletin van de Vereniging van Vrienden der Aziatische Kunst* s. 3, no. 19/20), coll. cat. Amsterdam (Museum van Aziatische Kunst/ Rijksmuseum) 1970, no. 1, p. 7, and pl. 1, p. 17.
 - 7 For G. J. Verburgt and the history of vvak, see Maartje Draak, 'Chronicle of the Vereniging van Vrienden der Aziatische Kunst', in Pauline Lunsingh Scheurleer (ed.), *Asiatic Art in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam*, coll. cat. Amsterdam (Rijksmuseum) 1985, pp. 9-27. The vvak collection has been on permanent loan to the Rijksmuseum since 1972.
 - 8 Vereniging van Vrienden der Aziatische Kunst, *Catalogus der tentoonstelling van Aziatische kunst in particuliere en openbare collecties in Nederland*, exh. cat. Amsterdam (Stedelijk Museum) 1936, pl. 5, no. 80, p. 29.
 - 9 Visser 1948 (note 5), p. 58.
 - 10 Jan Fontein, *Oosterse schatten: 4000 jaar Aziatische kunst*, exh. cat. Amsterdam (Museum van Aziatische Kunst/ Rijksmuseum) 1954, pl. 15, no. 143, p. 34.
 - 11 Amsterdam 1970 (note 6), no. 1, p. 7.
 - 12 Jan Fontein, 'Avalokiteshvara in Potalaka', in Scheurleer 1985 (note 7), pp. 130-31.

- 13 This painting used to be in the collection of the temple of Kongō Sanmai-in 金剛三昧院 at Mt. Kōya (Kōyasan), see Kikutake Jun'ichi and Yoshida Hiroshi 1980 (note 2), p. 51.
- 14 Overseas Korean Cultural Heritage Foundation, 2014 *Annual Report: Beyond Time and Space, Finding Korea in the Wider World*, Seoul 2014, p. 12.
- 15 For the representation of the Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara, see Matsumoto Eiichi 松本榮一, *Tonko ga no kenkyū* 敦煌畫の研究 [Research on Paintings in Dunhuang], Tokyo 1937, pp. 344-54; Yamamoto Yōko 山本陽子, 'Suigetsu kannon tzu no nato ni kansuru ichi kōsatsu 水月觀音圖のなとに関する一考察 [The Formation of the 'Water and Moon' Guanyin Image]', *Bijutsushi* 美術史 [Journal of the Japan Art History Society] 125 (1989), pp. 28-38; Chün-fang Yü, *Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokiteśvara*, New York 2001, pp. 233-47; Petra Rösch, *Chinese Wood Sculptures of the 11th to 13th Centuries: Images of Water-Moon Guanyin in Northern Chinese Temples and Western Collections*, Stuttgart 2007, pp. 19-54.
- 16 Zhang Yanyuan 張彥遠, *Lidai minghua ji* [On Famous Paintings through the Ages], Beijing 2005, vol. 10, p. 201.
- 17 Original text: '勝光寺 [.....] 塔東南院周昉畫水月觀自在菩薩掩障。菩薩圓光及竹並是劉整成色。' Zhang 2005 (note 16), vol. 3, p. 62; the English translation cf. William R.B. Acker, *Some T'ang and Pre-T'ang Texts on Chinese Painting*, Leiden 1954, p. 293.
- 18 Matsumoto 1937 (note 15), pp. 349-50.
- 19 For the illustrations and discussion of the Guimet and British Museum's Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara, see Matsumoto 1937 (note 15), pp. 344-54, and pls. 97a, 97b, 98a, 98b; Roger Whitfield, *The Art of Central Asia: The Stein Collection in the British Museum*, Tokyo 1982, vol. 2, pls. 18, 21, 25; Jacques Giès, *Les arts de l'Asie centrale. La collection Pelliot du Musée Guimet*, Tokyo 1994, vol. 1, pls. 72, 73.
- 20 Matsumoto 1937 (note 15), pp. 345-46.
- 21 Kikutake Jun'ichi, 'Kōrai jidai kannon gazō no hyōgen 高麗時代觀音画像の表現 [The Pictorial Representation of the Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara in the Goryeo Period]', in *Higashi Ajia no kōko to rekishi: Okazaki Takashi Sensei taikan kinen ronshū* 東アジアの考古と歴史: 岡崎敬先生退官記念論集 [East Asian archaeology and history: in honour of the retirement of Professor Okazaki Takashi], Kyoto 1987, pp. 572-93.
- 22 Matsumoto 1937 (note 15), pp. 353-54; Chung 2013 (note 2), pp. 28-40.
- 23 Hayashi Susumu 林進, 'Kōrai jidai no Suigetsu kannon tzu nitsuite 高麗時代の水月觀音圖について [On the Suigetsu Kannon Paintings of the Goryeo Period]', *Bijutsushi* 102 (1977), pp. 101-17; Ide Seinosuke, 'The Reception of Northern Sung Artistic Practice in Goryeo Buddhist Painting: The Representation of Mt. Potalaka in the Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara of the Kagami Shrine', *National Palace Museum Bulletin* 39 (2006), pp. 53-80; Shih Shou-chien 石守謙, 'Yuan Wenzong de gongting yu beisong dianfan de zhaisheng 元宗的宮廷與北宋典範的再生 [The court art of Tugh Temür and the regeneration of Northern Song paradigms]', *Zhongguo wenhua yanjiusuo xuebao* 中國文化研究所學報 [Journal of Chinese Studies] 65 (2017), pp. 109-12.
- 24 For the Chinese wood sculptures of the Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara during the eleventh to the thirteenth century, see Petra Rösch 2007 (note 15); Qu Lian 瞿煉, 'Jin Yuan shiqi jinnan 'fenhe mudiao liupai' de fengge ji yanbian 金元時期晉南·汾河水雕流派的風格及演變 [The Style and Evolution of Fenhe River School of the Chinese Wooden Sculpture of the Buddhas in Southern Shanxi Province During the Jin-Yuan Dynasties]', *Gugong bowu yuankan* 故宮博物院刊 [Journal of the Palace Museum] 190 (2017), pp. 71-80.
- 25 New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. no. 28.56. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. AK-MAK-84; this sculpture sustained damage, repairs and alterations to the wooden body; originally the left leg was hanging, see Aleth Lorne, Petra Rösch and Pauline Lunsingh Scheurleer, 'The Chinese Wooden Sculpture of Guanyin', *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 50 (2002), no. 3, pp. 364-89.
- 26 Dunhuang yanjiu yuan 敦煌研究院 (ed.), *Dunhuang shiku neirong zonglu* 敦煌石窟內容總錄 [Index of the Grottoes in Dunhuang], Beijing 1996, pp. 176-77; Duan Wenjie 段文杰 (ed.), *Zhongguo bishua quanji* 中國壁畫全集9 [Collected Works of Chinese Wall-Paintings, vol. 9], Shenyang 1990, pls. 158-159.
- 27 The Tangut Kingdom was founded by the Tibeto-Burman-speaking peoples, in the areas which are now the northwestern Chinese provinces of Ningxia, Gansu, eastern Qinghai, northern Shaanxi, northern Xinjiang, southwest Inner Mongolia and southernmost Outer Mongolia.
- 28 Cave 237 at Dunhuang and Cave 2 of the Yulin Grottoes, see Dunhuang yanjiu yuan 1996 (note 26), pp. 93-94, 204; Lin Baoyao. In the Hermitage collection there are three Xia silk paintings of the Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara:

- inv. no. Kh-2439, dated to the twelfth century;
inv. no. Kh-2438, dated to the end of the
twelfth to the early thirteenth century and
Kh-2437, dated to the beginning of the
thirteenth century, all depicting the Water-
Moon Avalokiteśvara in royal-ease pose.
For the illustrations and discussion regard-
ing these three paintings, see Michail
Pjotrowskij (ed.), *Die Schwarze Stadt an
der Seidenstrasse: Buddhistische Kunst aus
Khara Khoto (10. – 13. Jahrhundert)*, exh. cat.
Berlin (Museum für Indische Kunst, Staat-
liche Museen zu Berlin) 1993, nos. 46-48,
pp. 198-205. For Kh-2438 and Kh-2437,
see also Arnoud Bijl and Airgit Boelens
(eds.), *Expedition Silk Road: Journey to the
West*, exh. cat. Amsterdam (Hermitage
Amsterdam) 2014, nos. 9-10, pp. 107-08.
For Dunhuang in general, see Dunhuang
yanjiu yuan (ed.), *Zhongguo Dunhuang
中國敦煌* [Dunhuang of China], Nanjing
2000; Lin Baoyao 林保堯 (ed.), *Dunhuang
yishu tudian 敦煌藝術圖典* [The Art Illustrative
Records of Dunhuang], Taipei 2005.
- 29 For the formation of the iconography of
the White-robed Avalokiteśvara in China,
see Yü 2001 (note 15), pp. 247-62.
- 30 For example, a gilt bronze sculpture now in the
collection of the National Museum of Korea,
inv. no. D801, dated in the fourteenth century,
see Kim et al. 2003 (note 2), pp. 156-57;
Jeong-hee Lee-Kalisch (ed.), *Korea: Die Alten
Königreiche*, exh. cat. Essen (Villa Hügel,
Kulturstiftung Ruhr Essen) 1999, pp. 233-35;
and a gilt bronze sculpture dated in the
mid or late fourteenth century, now in the
Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, see Kim et
al. 2003 (note 2), pp. 154-55; *Leeum, Samsung
Museum of Art: Traditional Art Collection*,
coll. cat. Seoul (Leeum, Samsung Museum of
Art), 2011, pp. 324-25; and a gilt bronze from
the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century
in the collection of National Museum of
Korea, see Judith G. Smith et al., *Arts of
Korea*, exh. cat. New York (The Metropolitan
Museum of Art) 1998, pp. 156-57.
- 31 *Kyōzō no bi: Kagami ni kizamareta hotoke
no sekai 鏡像の美：鏡に刻また仏の世界*
[The Beauty of Mirrors: The World of
Engraved Buddhas on the Mirrors], exh. cat.
Nara (Yamato Bunkakan) 2006, pp. 33-35,
115-16.
- 32 The original text of the inscription: ‘大宋國泉
州清信梯 [弟]陳成宗為小男訪所祈求平安，
彩畫觀音菩薩一幀。拾得前項良門山中大
殿，求充供養。時代辰寬治二年十一月初九
日唐釋謹題云云。’
- 33 The original text of the inscription: ‘御身白
色、髮紺青、寶冠金色、頂上佛袈裟赤色、
纓絡金色、天衣銀青、裳赤黃色、私依當時
寫本，其彩色可尋之。’
- 34 Chung 2013 (note 2), p. 56.
- 35 Chung 2013 (note 2), pp. 50-52.
- 36 *Kūkai to Kōyasan 空海と高野山* [Kūkai
and Mount Kōya: Treasures of a Sacred
Mountain] exh. cat. Kyoto (Kyoto National
Museum) 2003, pp. 173, 295.
- 37 *Sō Gen butsu ga 宋元仏画* [Buddhist Paintings
of Song and Yuan Dynasties] exh. cat.
Yokohama (Kanagawa Prefectural Museum
of Cultral History) 2007, p. 99.
- 38 For the painting techniques in the Japanese
Buddhist painting, see Yoshitaka Ariga
有賀祥隆, *Butsuga no kanshō kiso chishiki
仏画の鑑賞知識* [Fundamental Knowledge
of Connoisseurship of Buddhist Painting],
Tokyo 1991.
- 39 Katharina Epprecht (ed.), *Kannon: Göttliches
Mitgefühl – Frühe buddhistische Kunst aus
Japan*, exh. cat. Zürich (Museum Rietberg)
2007, pp. 22-23, pl. 22.
- 40 For the import of Chinese Buddhist painting
into Japan, see Shih Shou-chien, ‘Guchuan
reben zhi nansong renwuhua de huashi yiyi
—jianlun yuandai de yixie xiangguan wenti
古傳日本之南宋人物畫的畫史意義—兼論元
代的一些相關問題 [The significance of
Southern-Song figure paintings transported
to Japan in the thirteenth and fourteenth
centuries]’, *Meishushi yanjiu jikan 美術史研
究集刊* [Taida Journal of Art History] 5
(1998), pp. 153-82. For Chinese and Korean
influences on Japanese Buddhist art, see
*Nihon Bukkyō bijutsu no genryū 日本仏教美
術の源流* [Origin of Japanese Buddhist art],
exh. cat. Nara (Nara National Museum) 1984.
For the interaction between Japanese,
Chinese and Korean Buddhist painting, see
Ide Seinosuke 井手誠之輔, *Nihon no Sōgen
butsuga 日本の宋元仏画* [Song and Yuan
Buddhist painting in Japan], Tokyo 2001.

