

[Project overview](#)

[Table of contents](#)

[View images](#)

Artist: Anonymous
Title: *Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva*
《南無地藏菩薩像》
Nanwu Dizang Pusa xiang
Dynasty/Date: Northern Song, late 10th–early 11th century
Format: Hanging scroll mounted on panel
Medium: Ink, color, and gold on silk
Dimensions: 106.6 x 58.1 cm (41-15/16 x 22-7/8 in)
Credit line: Purchase
Accession no.: F1935.11
Provenance: Tonying and Company, New York

Object description: Buddhist figures in landscape with donor panel.¹ Four (4) captions. No signature or seals.

Outside label: none²

Painting Captions: (4) – Three on main painting, and one in lower register; each in its own cartouche.

1. Main painting, upper right. Ten characters, running-standard script.

南无地藏菩薩，忌日畫施

Homage to the Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha, painted for the anniversary of death.

2. Main painting, upper right. Four characters, running standard script.

五道將軍

General of the Five Ways

3. Main painting, upper left. Four characters, running standard script.

道明和尚

Monk Daoming

4. Lower register. Sixteen characters, standard script.

故大朝大于闐金玉國天公主李氏供養

Offered by Our Great Dynasty's Deceased Celestial Princess, née Li, of the Great Yutian
Kingdom of Gold and Jade

Colophons: none

Collector seals: none

Materials

1. (R. J. Gettens, 1965: Freer file folder) Although a brief examination was made on April 30, 1954, a more extensive examination was carried out from May to July 1965 at the request of the Director, Dr. John A. Pope, who stated that some questions of authenticity about this painting had arisen, based principally on the fresh appearance of the silk support and also upon some

possible iconographic inconsistencies. A number of pigment samples were taken for microscopical and microchemical examination. At the same time a number of photo-micrographs of the silk support to show the character of the weave were taken by W. T. Chase.

The paint samples taken and the pigments identified in them are as follows:

White: From the lion's claw H: 23.1 cm; W: 19.6 cm

The white pigment is white lead of artificial basic lead carbonate.

Green: Robe of seated figure H: 31.5 cm. W: 39.5 cm

The green pigment is malachite. The particles are finely crystalline; they are not the fibrous kind of malachite often seen in Japanese paintings. There was no evidence of Paris green.

Blue: Brocade of robe H: 44.3 cm; W: 31.9 cm

The blue pigment is natural ultramarine. There is not much evidence of colorless inorganic impurities which often accompany ultramarine, but such colorless impurities are hard to see in the presence of silk fibers which are always difficult to separate in examples taken from thinly painted surfaces.

Blue: From halo H: 78.5 cm; W: 12.8 cm

The blue is again natural ultramarine.

Deep red: On carpet H: 5.2 cm; W: 52.5 cm

The red pigment is a mixture of vermilion and red lead.

Orange-red: Skirt of warrior H: 39.1 cm; W: 41.5 cm

The orange red is red lead.

Yellow: From robe of the warrior H: 13.6 cm; W: 43.4 cm

The yellow is the mineral orpiment, natural arsenic trisulfide.

Brown: From shawl H: 56.9 cm; W: 17.6 cm

The brown pigment seems to be organic in nature. It is destroyed completely when warmed with concentrated nitric acid. It was not identified.

The pigments identified in this painting are practically identical with the pigments identified on another Tun-huang [Dunhuang] painting in the collection [F1930.36]. The presence of natural ultramarine in this painting and in 30.36 seems to tie in with the presumed Central Asian origin of these paintings. On samples of wall painting from Chinese Turkestan previously examined by the writer, the use of ultramarine and the absence of azurite was noted. It has long been felt that the ultramarine used in paintings of Central Asia probably came from the well-known lapis-lazuli mines of Badakshan, which presumably supplied most of the ultramarine pigment for the early paintings of India, Persia, and even Europe. In our experience, ultramarine is very rarely found in paintings from central and eastern China and Japan. The presence of ultramarine would tend to support the Central Asian origin of these paintings.

Orpiment is also usually found only on early paintings, and its presence would support the early origin of this painting.

Note: In the folder sheet note on this painting prepared by J. E. Lodge in 1935, we are informed that the donor of the painting was “the former Royal Princess of the Li family of the great Yu-tien (Khotan) the Kingdom of Gold and Jade”. This is further evidence of the Central Asian origin of these paintings on silk, because natural ultramarine pigment was known to have been available to early artists of Chinese Turkestan.

About the same time in May 1965, W. T. Chase made a study of the silk fabric support of the painting, covering thread count, character of the weave, and the extent of repairs. He found that there are several small holes and tears, especially along the left edge of the painting, and there is a brownish stain along the top edge; but on the whole, the support is in fairly good condition. Examination of the weave shows that the warp, which is double strand, coincides with the vertical direction of the painting. The thread count is:

	<u>Warp</u>	<u>Weft</u>
Threads/inches	86	84
Threads/cms	34	32

Both warp and weft have a slight “S” twist. In ultraviolet light, the unpainted silk gives an overall greenish fluorescence. Examination with aid of the stereomicroscope showed that the ink outlines were applied first and then the color areas were filled in. The gilding on the warrior’s shaft, his shoulder pad, and other places, was applied later.

In some areas the painting pigments are coarsely ground, which is further evidence of early origin.

During this examination, Mr. Chase took several photomicrographs which show the nature of the weave, the character of the paint, and details of stains and repairs.

On purely technical grounds no evidence has yet been uncovered which might cast doubts on the authenticity of the painting. For further details, see Technical Laboratory files [FGA, Department of Conservation and Scientific Research].

2. (J. A. Pope, 1969; Freer file folder, comment 3) In 1966 Miss Pauline Simmons, who had recently retired from the Metropolitan Museum of Art and who is one of the leading experts on Chinese textiles, spent a year studying the Tun-huang [Dunhuang] paintings in the Musée Guimet in Paris. While she was there we sent her photographs showing the silk of this painting and of [F1930.36] in magnification. After thorough study, she found that the silk on [F1935.11] is the same plain weave silk on which thirty-seven of the forty-five Tun-huang paintings in the Musée Guimet are painted.

Traditional Chinese catalogues: none

Selected Bibliography (see also F1930.36, selected bibliography)

Ye Changchi 葉昌熾 (1849–1917). *Yuandulu riji chao* 緣督廬日記鈔. Selections comp. Wang Jilie 王季烈 et al. Shanghai: 1933.

_____. *Yuandulu riji* 緣督廬日記. 11:71b–72a. Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 1964. P. 394 (top and bottom).

Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877–1927). “Yutian gongzhu gongyang Dizang pusa huaxiang ba” 于闐公主供養地藏菩薩畫象跋. In Wang Guowei. *Guantang jilin* 觀堂集林. Wucheng: Jiang shi Miyunlou 蔣氏密韻樓, 1923. 16:23b–26b.

Illustrated Catalogue of Famous Paintings from the Great Collection of the Celebrated Connoisseur of Art, Liang Chang-chü of Foochow. China?: Privately published, 1919?. Plate 3B.³

Hushe yuekan 湖社月刊 38 (January 1931):1. In rpt. of series. 3 vols. Tianjin: Guji shudian, 1992. Vol. 2, 611.

Omura Seigai 大村西崖 (1868–1927). *Chūgoku meiga shū* 中國名畫集. Tokyo: Ryubundo, 1935. Vol. 1, plate 23.

Zhang Guangda 張廣達 and Rong Xinjiang 榮新江. “Les noms du royaume de Khotan: les noms d’ère et la lignée royale de la fin des Tang au début des Song.” In Michel Soymié (1924–2002), ed. *Contributions aux études de Touen-houang*. Vol. 3. Paris: Ecole Française d’Extrême-Orient, 1984. Pp. 23–46, esp. 30–33.



Rong Xinjiang 榮新江. “Ye Changchi: Dunhuangxue de xianxingzhe” 葉昌熾：敦煌學的先行者 (Ye Changchi: Pioneer of Dunhuang Studies). In *IDP News, Newsletter of the International Dunhuang Project* 7 (Spring 1997): 1-5.

Ma De 馬德. “Sancang Meiguo de wujian Dunhuang juanhua” 散藏美國的五件敦煌絹畫. In *Dunhuang yanjiu* 敦煌研究 60 (1999.2): 175.

Notes

¹ This report contains basic Documentation only. A detailed discussion of the theme, dating, and recent provenance history is forthcoming.

² While no label currently accompanies the scroll, an anonymous label similar to that appearing with F1930.36 (elsewhere in this website) was once mounted to the upper right of the painting, according to the earliest published photograph of the work. Written in clerical script, the ten-character text read: 唐畫地藏菩薩，希世神品。 (Tang dynasty painting of Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva, a divine work rarely [seen] in the world.). See *Illustrated Catalogue of Famous Paintings from the Great Collection of the Celebrated Connoisseur of Art, Liang Chang-chü of Foochow* (China?: Privately published, 1919?), plate 3B.

³ Despite misrepresenting the Freer painting as a Tang dynasty work, this English-language publication contains the earliest known photo-reproductions of the painting. The original Chinese text was purportedly written in 1837 by the eminent Qing dynasty collector and connoisseur Liang Zhangju 梁章鉅 (1775–1849). The sinologist Paul Pelliot (1878–1945), who had previously led a French expedition to Dunhuang where he acquired numerous manuscripts and paintings, used the two Freer paintings among other proofs to demonstrate conclusively that none



of the works published in this volume had actually belonged to Liang and that the translated text is a modern fabrication. See Paul Pelliot, “Review of ‘Arthur Waley, *An Index of Chinese artists represented in the sub-department of Oriental prints and drawings in the British Museum*,’” in *T’oung Pao* 21 (1922): 324–30.