

## Book Reviews

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*Efficacious Underworld: The Evolution of Ten Kings Paintings in Medieval China and Korea.* By Cheeyun Lilian Kwon. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2019. 224 pp. (ISBN-10: 0824856023; ISBN-13: 978-0824856021) doi: 10.18399/acta.2020.23.2.007

Through a multifaceted and in-depth examination of the *Ten Kings* scrolls in the collection of the Seikadō Bunko Art Museum, Cheeyun Kwon's monograph offers a comprehensive and useful exploration of the cult of the Ten Kings and their images from their origins in medieval times in East Asia. Focusing on the Seikadō *Ten Kings* scrolls, *Efficacious Underworld* examines the history of Ten Kings images through the complex geography of East Asian ritual practices. The book is a delightful contribution to the field of Buddhist studies as well as East Asian art history. Since the publication of Stephen Teiser's *The Scripture on the Ten Kings and the Making of Purgatory in Medieval Chinese Buddhism* in 1994,<sup>1</sup> only a few English monographs have been written about the study of the Ten Kings. Kwon's book broadens our understanding of Ten Kings worship by illuminating its spread to the Korean Peninsula and the new types of paintings that it engendered during the Koryō dynasty (高麗, 918-1392).

*Efficacious Underworld* consists of three parts subdivided into ten chapters. The relatively short length of each chapter helps readers easily digest the book despite its complicated contents. The book's first two parts trace the origin of Ten Kings paintings in China and the development of the Ten Kings cult in Koryō. They prepare the reader for Kwon's careful analyses of the Seikadō *Ten Kings* scrolls, which are presented in the last part of the book. The Seikadō scrolls have been a conundrum for art historians. Among the surviving paintings of the Ten Kings in East Asia, the Seikadō set is the most complicated one in terms of the number of kings' retainers and the intricate details. At the same time, the Seikadō paintings exhibit many characteristics that are not shared by typical paintings of the Ten Kings produced in East Asia, which makes them difficult to securely locate in the history of East Asian Ten Kings paintings. Prior to Kwon's study, scholars suggested provenances for the Seikadō *Ten Kings* scrolls as diverse as early Ming (明, 1368-1644), Yuan (元, 1279-1368), and Koryō.

Through extensive interregional research and an interdisciplinary approach, *Efficacious Underworld* contends that the Seikadō *Ten Kings* are works from the mid Koryō period that

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Teiser, *The Scripture on the Ten Kings and the Making of Purgatory in Medieval Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994).

reflect painting styles transmitted from the Northern Song (960-1127). Kwon's arguments are built upon her deep knowledge of Buddhist and secular paintings, including landscape and figure paintings, as well as medieval Chinese and Korean Buddhist ritual practices. Having received her PhD from Princeton University, which boasts a strong tradition in the history of Chinese painting, Kwon's analyses of the landscape and flower motifs included in the Seikadō *Ten Kings* are unusually insightful and profound, adding to the strength of her arguments. Based on her examination of the paintings' composition, iconography, and style, Kwon reveals that the Seikadō *Ten Kings* adopted various motifs and styles from China but included many modifications added during the Koryō period.

Among hundreds of Ten Kings images that Kwon examines in her study, the work that is most useful for illuminating the Seikadō paintings' link with Koryō is the illustrations from a scripture in the collection of Haeinsa 海印寺. Entitled *The Scripture Spoken by the Buddha on Preparing the Ten Kings Ritual for Rebirth after Seven Days* (佛說預修十王生七經), the scripture and its illustrations were published in woodblock print in 1246 under the patronage of Chōng An (鄭晏, ?-1251), an official of Koryō. Made as a supplement to the *Second Koryō Tripitika*, it is the earliest known woodblock rendition of this scripture. Its illustrations show characteristics unprecedented in Chinese paintings but shared by the Seikadō *Ten Kings*, suggesting a clear link between the Seikadō scroll and Koryō.

The first part of *Efficacious Underworld*, entitled "Evolution of Ten Kings Paintings in China," consists of four short chapters. Chapter one, "Images of the Ten Kings," explores early Ten Kings images of the tenth century, when they began to appear in scripture illustrations and murals. Chapter two, "Transitional Link from Handscroll to Individualized Hanging Scrolls," examines the Ten Kings paintings from the former Packard Collection. Unlike previous examples produced as handscroll illustrations or murals, the Packard paintings were produced as ten separate hanging scrolls, portraying each king in an independent hanging scroll. Kwon convincingly suggests that this format was a result of a new ritual space in which the paintings were hung on either side of a statue of Kṣitigarbha bodhisattva enshrined in a temple building. Based on comparisons with the tenth-century paintings, Kwon further argues that the Packard paintings are probably from the Northern Song period (960-1127), while not ruling out the possibility that they might be late Koryō works reflecting earlier traditions. If so, they serve as an important link between tenth-century Ten Kings images in scripture illustrations and the twelfth-century hanging scrolls that were produced in large numbers in the Ningbo area of China. Chapters three and four, "Full Efflorescence in Southern Song Ningbo" and "Post-Song Variations," explore paintings produced in China and later exported to Japan during the Southern Song dynasty and later periods.

The two chapters comprising the second part of *Efficacious Underworld*, entitled "The Ten Kings Cult in Koryō," investigate Ten Kings images and relevant textual records from the Koryō era. Chapter five, "Buddhist Rituals and the Ten Kings Paintings in Koryō," based on *Koryōsa* 高麗史 records, claims that the Ten Kings cult was interwoven with the ancestral worship of the Koryō royal family and aristocrats; it also offers a succinct introduction to the paintings of Kṣitigarbha and the Ten Kings from Koryō. Through close analyses of the

aforementioned woodblock illustrations from the Haeinsa collection, Chapter six, “*The Scripture on the Ten Kings* from Haeinsa (1246),” prepares readers to delve into the dense discussions of the Seikadō *Ten Kings* in the following chapters.

The last part of the book, “The *Ten Kings* from the Seikadō Bunko Art Museum,” is the most important part of *Efficacious Underworld*. After briefly introducing the Seikadō *Ten Kings* in Chapter seven, Kwon carefully compares the composition and style of the Seikadō paintings with Chinese and Korean examples in the following chapters. In Chapter eight, “The Seikadō *Ten Kings* as Iconic Images,” Kwon points out that the “iconic” mode of the Seikadō *Ten Kings*, in which the Ten Kings take a static and solemn pose rather than dynamic actions, has no precedent in previous Chinese paintings. This “iconic” mode observed in the Seikadō paintings continued to the Haeinsa illustrations of the Koryŏ period and then to the Ten Kings paintings of the Chosŏn dynasty (朝鮮, 1392-1910), forming a painting tradition unique to Korea. According to Kwon, such an “iconic” mode originated from the ritual environment of Koryŏ where the Ten Kings cult was a strictly Buddhist practice, unlike China where the cult became popularized and Ten Kings rituals were practiced primarily outside of Buddhist circles. Chapter nine, “Northern Song Figure-Painting Styles in the Seikadō *Ten Kings*,” offers a thorough examination of the kings, their courtiers, guardians, demon-kings, and messengers, as well as the textile patterns on their clothing. While the title of the chapter gives a misleading impression that the chapter focuses on Chinese influences on the Seikadō *Ten Kings*, much of the chapter reveals the painting’s uniquely Korean features, such as the unusually large number of retainers of the Ten Kings and the inclusion of the “demon-kings” – characteristics shared by the Haeinsa illustrations. Chapter ten, “Northern Song Landscape- and Flower-Painting Styles in the Seikadō *Ten Kings*,” examines landscape and flower-and-bird paintings depicted inside the painted screen behind each of the Ten Kings. Since the publication of Wu Hung’s *The Double Screen: Medium and Representation in Chinese Painting* (1996),<sup>2</sup> the images located inside the painted screen have become an important subject of art history analysis. With her expertise in Chinese secular paintings, Kwon carefully traces the stylistic origins of the Seikadō paintings’ landscape and flowers, many of which derived from Northern Song paintings. The last chapter, “Ritual Context,” briefly suggests the possibility that the paintings may have been somehow related to the ancestral ritual of the Koryŏ rulers, although it does not argue that the paintings were actually used for such rituals.

*Efficacious Underworld* makes a good contribution to the field of Buddhist art as well as Korean art history. It offers the most extensive study of the Seikadō *Ten Kings* yet. Some might find fault with Kwon’s tracing of the Seikadō *Ten Kings*’ stylistic origins to Northern Song and Tang paintings, instead of comparing them with earlier Korean examples. However, the lack of comparable paintings from the early- and mid-Koryŏ period leaves the author little choice other than to trace their origins to previous Chinese paintings. The rather weak explanations of the ritual context of the Seikadō *Ten Kings* are also an inevitable result of the scanty records of Koryŏ rituals in surviving historical documents. In addition, some of the

<sup>2</sup> Wu Hung, *The Double Screen: Medium and Representation in Chinese Painting* (London: Reaktion Books, 1996).

unique features that suddenly appeared in the Seikadō *Ten Kings* and the Haeinsa illustrations might have come from the Liao Empire of the Khitan people (遼, 907-1125), which had many cultural exchanges with the Koryŏ court, but it remains an open question until more Liao paintings are excavated from tombs and pagodas in the future. *Efficacious Underworld* is a welcome English-language addition for those who are interested in Ten Kings worship. Hopefully, *Efficacious Underworld* will also serve as a catalyst promoting intellectual exchange between art historians both inside and outside of Korea.

## References

- Hung, Wu. *The Double Screen: Medium and Representation in Chinese Painting*. London: Reaktion Books, 1996.
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*Korea's Premier Collection of Classical Literature: Selections from Sŏ Kŏjŏng's Tongmunŏn*. Translated, annotated, and with an introduction by Xin Wei and James B. Lewis. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2019, 244 pp. (ISBN: 9780824877309) doi: 10.18399/acta.2020.23.2.008

The *Tongmunŏn* 東文選 is the largest anthology of classical Korean writings composed in literary Sinitic, presenting the works of prominent writers from the late Three Kingdoms through the early Chosŏn 朝鮮 periods. The compilation of 130 *kwŏn* 卷 was created in 1478 on the orders of King Sŏngjong (成宗, r. 1469-1494) under the leadership of the prominent scholar-official Sŏ Kŏjŏng 徐居正, and was followed by a succeeding anthology, the *Sok Tongmunŏn* 續東文選, in 1518. In their book, Wei and Lewis introduce the first English translation of four books (*kwŏn* 96-99) from the 1478 anthology and offer an extensive introductory essay on the *Tongmunŏn*.

In English language scholarship on classical Korean literature, the *Tongmunŏn* has been commonly referred to as "Anthology of Korean Literature." Rather than adopt this established English title, Wei and Lewis propose a new translation, calling it "Selections from Refined Literature of Korea." This new title reflects their conscious attempt to highlight the *Tongmunŏn*'s connection to the sixth-century Chinese anthology *Wen Xuan* 文選, which has been widely referred to as "Selections of Refined Literature," following the leading *Wen*