

Painting of a Buddhist Figure Accompanied by a Tiger on the Silk Road: Itinerant Monk, Arhat (Nahan) and Sansin

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Following the introduction of Buddhism to China by Xuanzang (玄奘 602-664), the visual tradition of an itinerant monk became a popular subject. This theme developed into a Buddhist figure with an accompanying tiger, especially in Korea where tigers were an object of worship and ritual. This paper examines Korean examples of post-itinerant monk Buddhist figures accompanied by tigers, in particular the portrayal of itinerant monks as *arhats* and *sansins*. The supernatural powers of *arhats* were diverse, and they often tamed the tigers who then accompanied them on their journeys. The *arhat*, who was introduced during the Unified Silla period and gained popularity during the Goryeo period, was loved by the general public during the Joseon Dynasty as a familiar presence that brought good fortune. Special portraits of monks accompanied by a tiger, known as *sansindo* (山神圖), form a unique Korean genre. *Sansin* religious beliefs formed through a fusion of the newly introduced Buddhism and the age-old indigenous worship of sacred mountains and tigers. Most Buddhist temples include a *sansin* shrine containing on altar with *sansin* statues and portraits. Tigers in the portraits of itinerant monks and the stories of Buddhist monks who tamed tigers became famous and widely accepted in Korea, a nation already rich in tiger lore. Folklore and indigenous shamanism contributed to the establishment

of Buddhism in Korea, and tigers played a central role in this.

Keywords: Buddhism, Tiger, Itinerant Monk, Arhat, Sansin

Introduction: Saints and Wild Animals

Religion inevitably fuses with local elements such as ethnic culture and the natural environment during its establishment in a new area. Such traces are most easily found in visual arts. Interestingly, although Christianity and Buddhism differ in origin, overlaps in the geographic areas of their early establishment have produced similarities in portraits of religious figures. The Silk Road served as a stage and a crossroads not only for commercial trade but also for the spread of numerous languages, cultures, and religions. Stories of Christian saints and Buddhist monks who used supernatural powers to tame and make lifelong companions of wild animals have been passed down for generations. Within Western art, the iconography of a Christian saint accompanied by a lion is in many ways similar to the examples of a Buddhist figure accompanied by a tiger.

One such case is that of St. Jerome (Fig. 1), who was painted by Albrecht Dürer, Leonardo Da Vinci, Rembrandt van Rijn, and many other Western painters. The iconography of saints and wild animals is also present in the story of St. Zosimas and St. Mary of Egypt in the legendary trilogy by Emil Nolde (Fig. 2), a German expressionist painter in the early 20th century. Images of adults with wild animals are also widespread in Central Asia. A portrait of Bastami, a Persian Sufi, displayed during the Keimyung University Center for the Silk Road and Central Asia's 2017 Iranian Exhibit in the Isfahan Decorative Museum (Fig. 3), is one such example of an Islamic saint in the region.

Few painters during the Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Baroque times portrayed stories of Christian saints subduing lions, and the topic drew little attention and reaction in the West. Nolde dealt with St. Mary of Egypt because of his great interest in religious myths and legends.¹ Portrayals of nature and religious figures developed differently in the East, with tigers being used instead of lions and depictions of the figure of a missionary monk spreading Buddhism from India to China. This study of Buddhist figures and tigers is limited to *luohan* (*arhat*) and *sansin* in Korea, beginning with the itinerant monk of Dunhuang.

¹ Sieger points out that Nolde would have learned from Rilke's poetry about Egyptian Mary. William B. Sieger, "Emil Nolde's 'Legend: St Mary of Egypt': 'Vita Activa'/'Vita Contemplativa,'" *The Burlington Magazine* 147, no. 1223 (2005): 100.

Itinerant Monk²

In the early 20th century, scholars discovered dozens of pictures depicting monks or storytellers in Dunhuang. The earliest of these portraits, from the 9th century, are now found in museums around the world, such as the Musée Guimet (Figs. 4, 5) and the Korean National Museum (Fig. 8). Itinerant monks were instrumental in the spread of Buddhism. Unlike merchants, they undertook the long, and at times, perilous Silk Road journey alone in search of authentic Buddhist texts. In addition to preaching Buddhism, East Asian itinerant monks also played a critical role in conveying the detailed information needed to construct Indian temples, stupas, and Buddha statues. The famous monk Xuanzang (玄奘 602-664) played this role. Views differ regarding the main character of these portraits, in particular, the identity of the itinerant monk. He has been identified as Dharmatrāta (達磨多羅), one of the eighteen *arhats* from Tibet, who as an itinerant storyteller, performed transformation texts known as *biamwen* (變文). However, he is most commonly identified as Xuanzang, the author of the *Great Tang Records on the Western Regions* (大唐西域記), which describe his travels between 626 and 645. The 14th century Xuanzang painting (Fig. 6) from Japan is very similar to other portraits of the itinerant monk from Dunhuang.

These differing views are illustrated by looking at the titles (Table 1) given to three representative works by three scholars who have studied the itinerant monk. Wong entitled each work, “Pilgrim monk accompanied by a tiger,” while Feltham gave each one a different title.³ The monk in the portrait at the British Museum (Fig. 7) has a large, exotic nose and doesn’t appear to be Chinese, an *arhat*, or a monk, so Feltham entitled the work “itinerant storyteller.”⁴ This paper follows the notation of the most recent researcher Kim, who refers to all the portrayals as “Itinerant Monk.”⁵ Like the monk in the British Museum, the monk in the National Museum of Korea (Fig. 8) wears reed sandals and a hat to block the sun and carries a fly-whisk.⁶ Despite differences in detail, a prominent common feature in each is the accompanying tiger on the monk’s right hand side.

² There are two references that have decisively contributed to this study of the itinerant monk. One is a paper on Xuanzang by Professor Dorothy C. Wong at the University of Virginia, and the other is a work on the Itinerant Monk by Haewon Kim, curator of the National Museum of Korea. Professor Wong examined how Xuanzang-related works evolved and explored how he was transformed into a saint. Dr. Kim analyzed the iconography of itinerant monks in more detail. Dorothy C. Wong, “The Making of a Saint: Images of Xuanzang in East Asia,” *Early Medieval China* 8 (2002): 43-95; Haewon Kim, “Baosheng Buddha, Xingdaoseng, and Clouds: Rereading the Itinerant Monk from Dunhuang” 寶勝如來, 行道僧, 구름 - 敦煌 將來 行脚僧圖, 다시 읽기, *Misul Jaryo* 미술자료 94 (2018): 117-146.

³ Wong, “The Making of a Saint,” 43-95; Heleanor Feltham, “Encounter with a Tiger Traveling West,” *Sino-Platonic Papers* 231 (October 2012): 6-7.

⁴ Feltham, “Encounter with a Tiger Traveling West,” 6-7.

⁵ Haewon Kim, “Mathurā and East Asian Pilgrims” 마투라와 동아시아의 구법승, *Art History and Visual Culture* 미술사와 시각문화 3 (2004): 251.

⁶ It was made of materials such as animal hair and hemp. Although it was a tool used to chase flies and mosquitoes, it was also a religious and symbolic tool to remove the monk’s agony.

| | Musée Guimet (EQ. 1138) | Musée Guimet (EQ. 1141) | British Museum |
|----------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Wong (2008) | Pilgrim monk accompanied by a tiger | Pilgrim monk accompanied by a tiger | Pilgrim monk accompanied by a tiger |
| Feltham (2012) | Missionary monk with a tiger | Pilgrim monk | An itinerant storyteller |
| Kim (2018) | Itinerant monk | Itinerant monk | Itinerant monk |

Table 1) Title by Collection and Author

The iconography of the itinerant monk added other Buddhist elements to the original missionary monk, giving him greater divinity. In most portraits, as in the painting at the Musée Guimet (EQ. 1141) a small image of a transformed Buddha (Baosheng Buddha 寶勝如來) appears in the upper left-hand corner as a guardian deity, looking down on the monk's activities. Kim Haewon identifies the itinerant monk with the Baosheng Buddha and believes that this portrait reflects beliefs prevalent in the Dunhuang area.⁷ In addition, the halo surrounding the head of the itinerant monk emphasizes his divine nature.⁸ The monk is portrayed stepping on a purple cloud pattern, which was a common symbol of the supernatural or transformative events. The cloud provides a sense of speed to the monk, who is on a mission to save the people. Unlike the previous portrayals of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, the picture depicts the itinerant monk with an open mouth, reciting the Buddhist scriptures.

Drawings of itinerant monks predated Xuanzang's appearance,⁹ but as news of his great achievements spread and he became an object of popular worship, portraits of itinerant monks became a standardized genre. Portraits of these itinerant monks, including Xuanzang, allow us to speculate about Korean pilgrimages. In ancient times, Korean monks took pilgrimages from Korea to India, the home of Buddhism. By the time of the Unification of the Three Kingdoms (676), the number of monks going abroad had risen sharply, but most never returned home. Some died in India and others in China on their return, including

⁷ H. W. Kim, "Baosheng Buddha, Xingdaoseng, and Clouds," 126-128.

⁸ Feltham suggested that this monk could be a picture of Dharmatrāta. Feltham, "Encounter with a Tiger Traveling West," 13.

⁹ H. W. Kim, "Baosheng Buddha, Xingdaoseng, and Clouds," 133.

Hyecho, the author of *Wang o cheonbukguk jeon* (往五天竺國傳),¹⁰ who died in Tang China.¹¹ Wong points out that the itinerant monk portrait of Xuanzang helped establish the religious tradition of icons in China, Japan, and Tibet.¹² Xuanzang was deeply revered by pilgrim monks in East Asia and continued to be worshiped by later generations for his contribution to the foundation of Chinese Buddhism. In China, the earlier image of a pilgrim monk with a tiger evolved into one of a sacred monk with supernatural powers accompanied by a monkey, with one of the most famous examples being *Journey to the West* (西遊記), produced during the Ming Dynasty. Worship of Xuanzang was not particularly popular in Korea, however. Even so, in 2008, seven mural scenes (Fig. 9) in a building (Yonghwajeon 龍華殿) at Yangsan Tongdosa Temple were revealed to be from a story from *Journey to the West* (西遊記) rather than from a Buddhist narrative. Although scenes from *Journey to the West* (西遊記) had been carved on stone pagodas in the late Goryeo and early Joseon Dynasties, this was the first example of their use as the subject of a temple mural.

Xuanzang's absence in Korea is likely due to the selective adoption of certain folk elements from Chinese Buddhism. As a familiar sight in Korea, tigers and the monks who tamed them made for more impressive stories than those of Xuanzang. As a result, history books recorded stories about the Chinese monks who tamed tigers and they became one of the more popular Buddhist artistic themes until the end of the Joseon Dynasty

Buddhist Figures with Tigers in Korea

The meaning of the image of a monk with a tiger differed in Korea from China. Whereas animals related to Buddhism such as lions, elephants, and monkeys were relatively common in China, only tigers inhabited Korea. Although China also had a widespread tiger population, Korea was well known for its tigers, which were an object of worship and ritual for ancient Koreans. The Chinese had long referred to Korea as “*Hodamjikuk*” (虎談之國, the country that speaks with tigers).¹³ As the oldest foreign record of Korean tigers, China's *Shanhai*

¹⁰ *Wang o cheonbukguk jeon* (往五天竺國傳, An account of travel to the five Indian kingdoms) is a travelogue kept by Buddhist monk Hyecho, who traveled from Korea to India in the years 723-727/728 CE. Purchased by Pelliot in 1908, it is now owned by the National Library of France.

¹¹ The majority of old East Asian monks who took pilgrimages to India to obtain Buddhist texts from the 3rd to 11th centuries were Chinese. Approximately 170 names of monks were recorded (with 700 names unknown). In both the 5th and 7th centuries, the number reached 100, which indicates great interest in Buddhist scriptures and India during this period. For more information and results from analyzing the records of pilgrim monks, including Yi Jing's (義淨) *Buddhist Pilgrim Monks of Tang Dynasty* 大唐西域求法高僧傳, see Juhyung Rhi, ed., *Pilgrim Monks from East Asia and Buddhist Sites in India* 동아시아 구법승과 인도의 불교 유적 (Seoul: Sahoipyounghon, 2009).

¹² Wong, “The Making of a Saint,” 60-69.

¹³ Yeolsu Yoon, *Handbook of Korean Art Folk Painting*, trans. Wonjun Nam (Seoul: Yekyong Publishing Co., 2012), 215.

jing (山海經) (Fig. 10) states “people in the ‘Land of Gentlemen’ (君子國) [Korea] are neatly dressed, with clothes and hats, and wearing swords. They raise two big tigers with beautiful fur to run errands.”¹⁴ The wife of a missionary in Korea, L. H. Underwood, commented, “there are so many stories of tigers in this nation.”¹⁵ Tigers appear in Korea’s foundation myths, prehistoric petroglyphs, art (Fig. 11), literature, folk tales, and proverbs. In many ways, they represent Korea, and for Koreans have been objects of awe, and at times fear and admiration.

Stories and records of monks with special abilities, which played an important role in the development of Buddhism, include many extraordinary tiger-related anecdotes, such as monks who domesticated tigers, preached to tigers, and dealt with damage wrought by tigers. The ability to tame tigers in itself represented superhuman, divine power, and would have provided these monks with special authority. After the portrait of Dunhuang’s itinerant monk, Buddhist paintings of monks with tigers became more prevalent. Tigers were generally more common in the more secular genres of *luohan* (*arhat*) and *sansin*, however, than in formal Buddhist paintings, such as of the Buddha and of Bodhisattvas.

Arhat (Nahan)

In Buddhism, an *arhat* (阿羅漢) (*nahan* in Korean) is one who has achieved the highest level of Buddhist discipleship.¹⁶ With the establishment of Mahāyāna Buddhism (大乘佛教), followers began to believe in a group of sixteen *arhats* rather than a single one. The original sixteen disciples embodied the concept and character of the *arhat*, and they were independently portrayed and worshiped in temples. Later, two more *arhats* were added, totaling eighteen, and then 500, although the term for 500 *arhats* differed in China and Korea.

Arhats possessed numerous supernatural powers. One *arhat* could prolong his life, another could fly, yet another could transform himself, and another could tame tigers. The East Asian Buddhist story of a tiger-taming monk first appeared in *Memoirs of Eminent Monks* (高僧傳) (6th century) and can be interpreted as part of the process through which the foreign Indian religion of Buddhism was adapted in China. The monk and tiger motif appeared in 9th century paintings, and the iconography of *arhat* with a crouching tiger gained popularity during the Song Dynasty (960-1279).

While the *arhat* concept was established in India, the notion of groups of 16 and 500 *arhats* originated in China. The *arhat* faith began during the Later Tang and the Five Dynasties, during which Zen Buddhism was prevalent, and grew to prominence during the Song

¹⁴ Choe Nam-seon, “Tiger of Korean History and Folklore,” *Dong-A Ilbo*, Jan.-Feb. 1926; Kim Ho-geun and Yoon Yeolsu, *The Korean Tiger* (Seoul: Youlhwadang, 1988), 16.

¹⁵ Kim and Yoon, *The Korean Tiger*, 169.

¹⁶ The word “arhat” means worthy of offerings, not always necessarily a disciple of the Buddha.

Dynasty. The *arhat* faith and Zen were closely related, and the regular presence of *arhat* halls in Chinese Zen temples seems to relate to a common emphasis on ascetic practices.¹⁷ Kin Daiju's (金大受) 12th century Song Dynasty painting *Arhat Taming the Tiger* (Fig. 12) depicts an episode from *Memoirs of Eminent Monks* (高僧傳), in which a tiger came to sit in front of a monk reciting the Buddhist scriptures, leaving after listening to the recital.¹⁸

Introduced to Korea during the Unified Silla period, the *arhat* faith became particularly popular during the Goryeo period. Koreans turned to *arhats* whenever the country faced a crisis, such as during an invasion. While influenced by China, Korean *arhat* paintings had unique features. Fewer paintings were produced than in China and Japan and the Korean paintings show inconsistent variation, and often reflected secular images during the late Joseon Dynasty.

Only 18 Korean *arhat* pictures remain, 15 of which are scattered around the world.¹⁹ The five Lee Sang-Jwa (李上佐) *arhat* paintings from the early Joseon Dynasty (16th century) have been designated as Treasure No. 593. Using only ink lines to depict *arhats*, Lee appears to have drawn 16 *arhats*, each with a number on its head. The fifth, Nakula, according to the Encyclopedia of Korean Culture "looks like an old man, sitting at an angle and stroking the head of a beast with his right hand, with his left hand holding his cane upright" (Fig. 13).²⁰ Lee's icon depicting an *arhat* stroking a prone tiger has been titled *Arhat and Prone Tiger* (伏虎羅漢).

Depictions of animals such as tigers, deer, and cranes were prevalent during the Joseon Dynasty, but no rule determined the combination of different animals with specific *arhats*. A representative example is the Namyangju Heungguksa (興國寺) painting of 16 *arhats* (Fig. 14). An *arhat* sits with his *kāsāya* (袈裟) unwrapped, exposing a bulging belly. A tiger sits to the right in front of a rock with a boy using both hands to spray water into the tiger's mouth. Similar paintings of the 16 *arhat* were common in temples throughout the country, indicating that this icon was in vogue towards the end of the 19th and the early 20th centuries.

While *arhats* in China and Japan emphasized their divinity, *arhats* in Korea were more secular. This is more apparent in sculptures than in paintings, with many humorous depictions of *arhats* with tigers and dragons (Fig. 15), reflecting Korean emotions and aesthetics in the *arhat* faith. The secular tendency grew stronger during the late Joseon Dynasty, and is seen in the small *arhat* statues made of soil portraying friendly, warm and peaceful Korean faces. Not only *arhats* were portrayed with tigers. During the late Joseon Dynasty, Taoist motifs closely related to the *arhat* grew in popularity, in particular the stories of the Chinese Zen master Fenggan (豐干) and his fellow monks Shide (拾得) and Hanshan (寒山) with tigers.

¹⁷ Kwanghee Shin, *Korean Arhat Paintings* 한국의 나한도 (Seoul: Center for Art Studies, 2014), 55.

¹⁸ Shin, *Korean Arhat Paintings*, 57.

¹⁹ Shin, *Korean Arhat Paintings*, 77.

²⁰ *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture*, s.v. "Isangjwa bulhwacheop" (李上佐佛畫帖), accessed December 2019, <http://encykorea.aks.ac.kr/Contents/Item/E0044615>.

Paintings of monks with tigers by famous artists such as Jeong Seon (鄭愼, 1676~1759) (Fig. 16) and Kim Hongdo (金弘道, 1745-?) (Fig. 17) reflect the subject's popularity at the time. Murals of these monks were also painted in temples.

***Sansin* (山神 Mountain God)**

The fact that over 70% of the Korean Peninsula consists of mountainous terrain has profoundly affected the development of Korean culture. In ancient times, Koreans believed that each mountain possessed a “spirit,” which they personified and idolized, and tigers, as the kings of the mountain, also became subjects of worship.²¹ Throughout Korean history, a *sansin*, or mountain spirit, served as the guardian of each village and city. Despite the rapid modernization of the last century, many Koreans still venerate *sansin*.

Buddhism absorbed many aspects of indigenous folklore, including the worship of *sansin* and tigers. Most temples established a *sansingak* (fig. 18) containing a statue and a picture of the *sansin* on an altar. With their doors and outer walls adorned with pictures of tigers (Fig. 19), most *sansingak* are located on the temple's left side, above and behind the main hall. The construction of *sansingak* is believed to date from at least the late 18th century.²²

The *sansin* is generally depicted as a white-haired old man with a cane, a fan, or book, riding or being escorted by a tiger in the mountains. The image of the *sansin* has been handed down in the form of a unique Korean genre, the *shinjungdo* (神衆圖), a painting of Buddhist guardian deities, that merged ancient *sansin* beliefs from the Three Kingdoms era with Buddhism. The *shinjungdo* is uniquely Korean and is not found in India, China, or Japan. A distinctive type of Buddhist painting, the *shinjungdo* depicts various Buddhist gods and Korean folk or shamanic gods together, without the Buddha or a Bodhisattva. These guardian deities of the Buddha are not enlightened beings like Buddhas or Bodhisattvas, but they possess extraordinary abilities that are regenerated through worship. The shaman gods include mountain gods, the dragon king, seven star gods, and gods of the earth, sea, sun, and moon. The dragon king often emerges as an important figure in the center of the painting, reflecting his popularity as a being with the ability to end famines. These gods grew in popularity on the Korean Peninsula during times of extreme natural disasters and famines, such as the period of lower temperatures during the 17th and 18th centuries, which suggests that they may have been the religious choice of the masses.²³

²¹ The rituals of worshipping tigers and serving as gods are also found in vol. 85 (東夷列傳) of *Book of the Later Han* (後漢書) and *Records of the Three Kingdoms* (三國志). Yoon Yeolsu, “A Mountain God Picture and Buddhism in the Late Joseon Dynasty” 조선 후기 산신도와 불교 습합(習合) 신앙, *Bulgyo Munbwa Yeonguso* 불교문화연구소 5 (2005): 205.

²² Cheong Hyo Shim, “A Study on Tigers in Sansindo Mainly Drawn in the Late 19th Century” 19세기 후반 산신도에 표현된 호랑이 연구, *Art History and Cultural Heritages* 미술사와 문화유산 2 (2013): 11, 184.

²³ Yu Won-mo, “Buddhist Painting without Buddha: Shinjungdo” 부처 없는 불화 ‘신중도,’ *dongA.com*, March 14, 2018,

The *sansin* in *shinjungdo* is usually portrayed holding a lingzhi (an immortal mushroom that symbolizes longevity) with a belt of leaves over his shoulder, standing among the various Buddhist guardian deities. Clearly illustrated in the Yongmunsa *shinjungdo* (Figure 20), the *sansin* is the bald old man in the front row of the group on the right, holding a fan and a bunch of lingzhi. The portrayal of *sansin* changed in later paintings and they were often depicted on their own. Different types of fans and objects replaced the leaf-shaped fan and the lingzhi developed into a unique magical cane, which in rare cases was replaced by ginseng. Regardless of what the *sansin* holds, however, he is always accompanied by a tiger.

The *sansin* and his tiger companion are common in the long tradition of mountain worship in Korea. The tiger's posture varies, but is most often in a prone position, while the mountain god rides, stands, or sits next to it (Fig. 21). This prone stance symbolizes "the thoughtfulness of an educated man. In other words, the tiger's posture can be interpreted as not only just lying down but doing a lot of thinking."²⁴ Sometimes a leopard is depicted rather than a tiger. The mountain gods themselves evolved over time into earth-saving gods that people could pray to for fertility and for their deceased parent's entrance into paradise. The *sansin*'s clothing transformed to become Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist, and his expression changed from solemn to humorous.²⁵

Although *sansindo* are found throughout Korea, Gyeongsang Province contains the most remaining paintings. While Gangwon Province is more mountainous, it lost most of its *sansindo* during the Korean War. The majority of Gangwon Province's temples are also located within North Korea, complicating assessment.²⁶ Most *sansindo* paintings in Gyeongsang Province show a *sansin* holding a book, which is often interpreted as depicting an academic god, reflecting strong local Confucian traditions.²⁷

David A. Mason discovered a very unusual *sansindo* (Fig. 22) in Cheoneunsa Temple in Wonju in 1999 which shows the worship of a female *sansin*. Various objects are present to symbolize longevity and to maximize the concept of the "twin," which emphasizes "abundance," the symbol of the female *sansin*. The *sansin* carry fans, immortal mushrooms and roots, ginseng, and even peaches. Twin tigers are depicted, along with nine mountain gods, which may symbolize nine mountains.

In the unusual case of the *sansindo* at Songgwangsa Temple in Suncheon (Fig. 23), a *sansin* wearing a civilian officer's uniform with a rank badge consisting of a pair of cranes holds a cane with a dragon's head at the tip. The dragon-shaped cane quickly transforms the *sansin*, providing him with powers of intelligence and magic. The most valued divine power

<http://www.donga.com/news/article/all/20180314/89086690/1>.

²⁴ Cheong, "A Study on Tigers in Sansindo," 192.

²⁵ Yoon, "A Mountain God Picture," 203.

²⁶ Cheong, "A Study on Tigers in Sansindo," 186.

²⁷ David A. Mason, *Spirit of the Mountains: Korea's San-Shin and Traditions of Mountain-Worship* (Seoul: Hollym Corporation, 1999), 67.

of the *sansin* may have been the dragon's ability to summon rain for commoners. Such a cane also features in the portrait of the mysterious itinerant monk in the Musée Guimet (EQ. 1141) (Fig. 5). Despite resembling a snake, the cane decoration here (Fig. 24) is most likely a dragon. Feltham also subscribes to this view: "[the] very elegant staff terminates in a carved dragon, unlike the rugged tree-branched preferred by all other travelers."²⁸ As in the case of the *sansindo*, this dragon bestows on the Chinese monk the power to summon rain, which he can use to quench his thirst on long pilgrimages through distant deserts. Remarkably, ancient pilgrim monks with dragon-headed canes appear one thousand years later in Korean *sansindo*. More than religion, folk cultural elements such as the dragon-headed cane and the tiger are the key elements connecting the peoples and cultures of the Silk Road.

Conclusion

This paper began with a tiger in Dunhuang on the Silk Road and ended with a tiger in Korea. Dunhuang, which holds the legacy of itinerant monks who sacrificed themselves for Buddhism's early expansion, is also important for the history of Korean Buddhism. The famous Korean monk Hyecho's literary work *Wang o cheonchukguk jeon* (往五天竺國傳) was discovered in Dunhuang. Portraits of itinerant monks such as Xuanzang provide a significant visual record of these early pilgrims and allow Koreans to imagine the early pilgrimages of monks such as Hyecho.

During Buddhism's early development, the stories and iconography of monks accompanied by tigers gained particular appeal in Korea, where tigers served as an important folk symbol. The image of the companion tiger was extended to native *sansin* worship, after first entering the paintings and sculptures of *arbats*. The general public could identify with itinerant monks and *arbats* as real beings in the real world. Although *sansin* were not human, they were considered to be comprised of living energy and not entirely imaginary. At the heart of all of these paintings were tigers, which had long been worshiped in Korea.

While elephants and lions are widely known for their association with Buddhism, tigers are less so. It is thus surprising that tigers are present in such diverse contexts within Korean art. The connection between tigers and Buddhism is a particularly exciting discovery. At least in Korea, tigers occupy pride of place as Buddhism's chief guardian animal, just as they served as guardians for the ancient itinerant monks.

²⁸ Feltham, "Encounter with a Tiger Traveling West," 6.

Illustrations

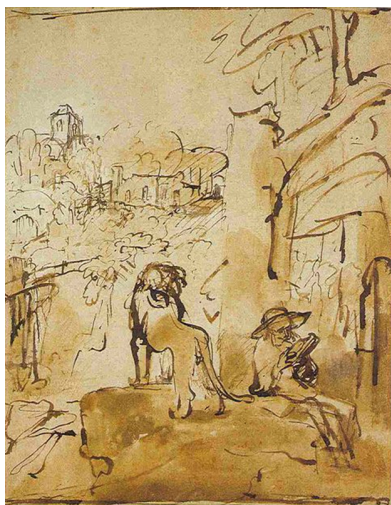


Fig. 1) Rembrandt van Rijn, *St. Jerome Reading in an Italian Landscape*, c. 1652, 25x20.7 cm.
Kunsthalle, Hamburg



Fig. 2) Emil Nolde, *St. Mary of Egypt-Death in the Desert*, 1912, oil on canvas, 86x100 cm.
Kunsthalle, Hamburg



Fig. 3) Ali-Naqi, *Miniature Portrait of Bayazid Bastami*, 1393. Museum of Decorative Arts,
Isfahan



Fig. 4) Itinerant monk, 9-10th century, ink and colors on silk, 79.0x53.0 cm, Dunhuang.
Musée Guimet (EQ. 1138)



Fig. 5) Itinerant monk, 9-10th century, ink and colors on silk, 79.8x54.0 cm, Dunhuang Cave 17. Musée Guimet (EQ. 1141)



Fig. 6) Xuanzang as a pilgrim monk, ink and colors on silk, Japan, Kamakura period, 14th century. Tokyo National Museum



Fig. 7) Itinerant monk, 10th century, color on paper, 41.0x29.8 cm. British Museum



Fig. 8) Itinerant monk, 10th century, color on paper, 49.8x286 cm. National Museum of Korea



Fig. 9) Scene from *Journey to the West* (西遊記), mural painting. Tongdosa Yongwhajeon (通度寺 龍華殿), Yangsan (梁山)



Fig. 10) Illustration of *Shanhai jing* (山海經)



Fig. 11) Anonymous, *Feroocious Tiger*, late Joseon, ink on paper, 96.0×55.1 cm. National Museum of Korea



Fig. 12) Kin Daiju (金大受), *Arbat Taming the Tiger*, 12th century, Song Dynasty, color on silk, (16 *Arbats*) detail, 111.6×50.2 cm. National Museum of Tokyo



Fig. 13) Lee Sang Jwa (李上佐) (attributed), Bokhonahan (伏虎羅漢), 16th century, Joseon, Treasure No. 593. Ink on paper, 50.6x31.1 cm. Leeum Samsung Museum of Art

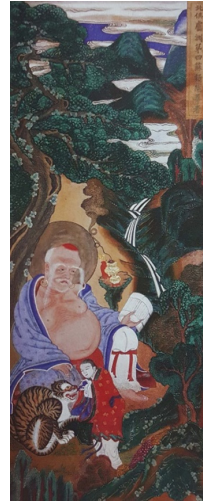


Fig. 14) Bokhonahan (伏虎羅漢), one of 16 Arhats, 1892, color on cotton, each 123x207 cm. Heungguksa, Namyangju



Fig. 15) *A Seated Arhat with a Tiger*, Joseon Dynasty, 19th century. Los Angeles County Museum of Art



Fig. 16) Jeong Seon (鄭歆 1676–1759), *Tiger under the Pine* (松岩伏虎), color on paper, 31.5x51 cm. Kansong Museum



Fig. 17) Kim Hongdo (金弘度 1745-?), *Monk Riding a Tiger* (高僧騎虎), color on paper, 31.8x35.7 cm. Kansong Museum



Fig. 18) Gacamsa Sansingak (開巖寺 山神閣)



Fig. 19) Tiger paintings on the outer walls of *sansingak*, Tongdosa (通度寺 - upper), Ssanggyesa (雙溪寺 - lower)



Fig. 20) *Shinjungdo* (神衆圖 painting of Buddhist guardian deities) (龍門寺 Yongmunsa), 1867, 153x318 cm, color on hemp. Jikji Museum of Buddhist Arts. *Sansin* (detail)





Fig. 21) *Sansindo* (山神圖), late Joseon, color on silk, 122x88 cm. National Museum of Korea



Fig. 22) Nine *sansindo* (九山神圖). Chonunsa (天恩寺), Wonju



Fig. 23) *Sansindo* (山神圖), 1896, color on silk, 95x71 cm. Songgwangsa (松廣寺) Sansingak (山神閣). Suncheon

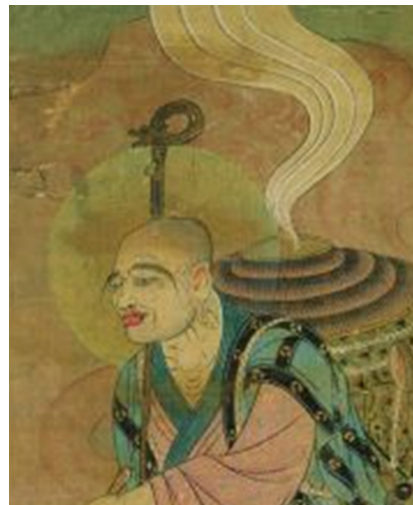


Fig. 24) Detail of Figure 5. Musée Guimet (EQ. 1141)

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