

in his future research, Sanft capitalizes on the present excellent study to develop a synthetic, bottom-up perspective on early imperial China as experienced by the communities that empires encountered, transformed, or created.

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Efficacious Underworld: The Evolution of Ten Kings Paintings in Medieval China and Korea. By Cheeyun Lilian Kwon. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2019. Pp. viii + 211. \$72,00.

In her book, Cheeyun Lilian Kwon describes how pictures of the Ten Kings of the Underworld first appeared in the Dunhuang caves in China, reached Korea in the Koryŏ dynasty (918–1392) and developed here into an outstanding genre of religious painting, frequently used as parts of funerary rituals.

The Ten Kings cult originated in medieval China, where the existing cult surrounding death was combined with imported South Asian and Central Asian ideas to form a unique vision of the afterlife. According to this doctrine, ten infernal kings who each assessed the sins of the dead ultimately judged every action in life. This unique system of thought, which combined existing Buddhist, Taoist, and Confucian beliefs, took on concrete forms in ninth-century China and soon after spread to Korea and Japan. The earliest images of the Ten Kings are found in the tenth-century sutra, *The Scripture of the Ten Kings* (*Shiwang jing* 十王經), known to be the work of the monk, Zangchuan 藏川.

In the first part of *Efficacious Underworld*, “Evolution of Ten Kings Paintings in China,” the author shows that from the tenth century on we have numerous records of the Ten Kings depicted together with Kṣitigarbha, who originated in India and is the bodhisattva saving those in hell. Some of the existing examples from these early times are printed in the book, including pictures from the Stein Collection (British Museum), the Pelliot Collection (Bibliothèque de France), the Musée Guimet in Paris, as well as from the Dunhuang caves.

Another category of Ten Kings paintings emerged in the tenth century: handscroll illustrations in the narrative mode, based on the Ten Kings sutra. These handscrolls were unrolled and shown to the public to instruct or entertain them. The author also describes the former Packard Set, a set of the Ten Kings painted on ten hanging

scrolls, which are considered to be a missing link between the tenth-century handscroll representations and the twelfth-century hanging scroll paintings from Ningbo.

These paintings of the Ten Kings were produced during the Southern Song dynasty (1126–1279) in the port city of Ningbo (China), from where most of the scrolls were exported to private collectors and temples in Japan and Korea. More than three hundred Ten Kings paintings from the Southern Song dynasty are extant and constitute the largest surviving body of such paintings from medieval China. Studies of these paintings can be found, for example, in Lothar Ledderose's book *Ten Thousand Things*.¹

In part two of the book, "The Ten Kings Cult in Koryŏ," the author investigates the existence of the early paintings in Korea. The Koryŏ dynasty proclaimed Buddhism as the official state religion in which the king, the royal family, and the elite were involved directly in the affairs of the monastic community. Numerous sets of paintings of the Ten Kings were ordered, and while earlier paintings may have been destroyed during the Mongol invasion (1231–1259), most of the remaining ones date back to the late thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries. There is a small mistake on page 43: Kṣitigarbha, the deity shown on the left page, is described as "bear-headed," instead of "bare-headed."

In this part of the book, the author also examines *The Scripture of the Ten Kings* from Haensa (1246)—a set of twenty-four woodblock prints: nine blocks make up an illustrated front piece, seven make up the text, and eight make up the illustrated courts of judgement. Large parts of this set are printed in the book and thus give a good impression of the detailed structure of the *Scripture*. The author also explains the provenance of this set and shows how the illustrative details have been used in other contexts, such as the rolling acanthus leaves on a twelfth-century roof tile.

In the third part of the book, the author turns to her most important subject: the Ten Kings hanging scrolls at Tokyo's Seikadō Bunko Art Museum—a set of most resplendent renderings of the Buddhist Underworld. The author reveals the singular position of Ten Kings paintings and their value as a significant repository of lost medieval artistic traditions. Designated as an "Important Art Object" by the Japanese government, the paintings have a bejewelled and pristine quality that places them among the most revered Ten Kings paintings in East Asia. The paintings, still preserved in their original wooden cases, measure 142.8 by 61.2 cm each. Initial speculations had it that the paintings belonged to the Lu Xinzong 陸信忠 School in China and that they date back to the early Ming dynasty. In 1972, Toda Teisuke 田禎佑 was the first to suggest that the paintings might be Korean, based on the

¹ Lothar Ledderose, *Ten Thousand Things: Module and Mass Production in Chinese Art*, A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

Kṣitigarbha and the Ten Kings. Toda attributed them to the Koryŏ period and surmised that their prototype could be a painting in the Northern Song painting tradition. For all its implications, however, Toda's succinct claim remained unexplored in any further detail.

In this book, Cheeyun Lilian Kwon further substantiates her former articles and proves that the Ten Kings paintings can be placed in the twelfth or early thirteenth century, rendering them among the oldest and most significant surviving examples of Koryŏ Buddhist Painting. She does this first by comparing the Seikadō Ten Kings paintings with more than five hundred works within the existing painting tradition, as well as by a detailed survey of the relevant textual, scriptural, archaeological, and visual materials from East Asia. She underlines her statement in the following chapters by comparing the Ten Kings paintings with the Northern Song (960–1127) visual arts and culture that was imported to Korea during the Koryŏ dynasty.

The author wrote her Ph.D. in 1999 at Princeton University, has published different articles on the subject, and is currently teaching at Hongik University, Seoul. She is now a recognized specialist in this genre of paintings of the Ten Kings. It is, therefore, not surprising that this book is a masterpiece: knowledgeable and full of interesting details, yet written in a very elegant style that is easy to follow. The book is enriched by many excellent photos.

The title of the book *Efficacious Underworld*, at least to the Western reader, might seem surprising, but, as Ledderose (Chapter 7, “The Bureaucracy of Hell,” in his *Ten Thousand Things*) and others already pointed out, the court of justice in the underworld is the exact counterpart to that on earth. A judge is sitting behind a table, flanked by his two assistants, with writing brushes, inkstones, and the dossier of the accused person in front of him. As for the term “(the) Underworld,” there are different translations: in Chinese, it is *diyu* 地獄 (lit. earth prison), and the term chosen in Western languages ranges from “hell” (Goodrich,² Ledderose) and “hades” (Vidor³) to “(the) underworld,” as in this book.

It is Cheeyun Lilian Kwon's main achievement that through her book, she sheds light on the Ten Kings' painting tradition, a subject in East Asian culture which is not well known to the public: few pictures have been handed down to our century and almost none remains in China. These paintings were traditionally considered craftwork, not art, and thus they did not find their way into the collections of art

² Anne Swann Goodrich, *The Peking Temple of the Eastern Peak: The Tung-yüeh Miao in Peking and Its Lore, with 20 Plates* (Nagoya, Japan: Monumenta Serica, 1964).

³ *Shidian yanwang: Wei Boru juanzeng* 十殿閻王：魏伯儒捐贈 (Ten Kings of Hades: The Vidor Collection) (Taipei: Guoli lishi bowuguan, 1984).

museums. In Chinese temples, these religious paintings, once they were old and torn, were burnt in ritual sessions and replaced by new ones, while many remaining paintings might have been regarded as superstition and therefore destroyed in Mainland China during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). Some paintings were traded on the market in Taiwan during the second half of the twentieth century and bought mainly by Western collectors, which possibly prompted the National Museum of History in Taipei to start its collection. This collection of nineteenth- and twentieth-century paintings of the Chinese underworld was widely enlarged by the donation of the collection of Paul Vidor, an Austrian expert in Chinese Art.

The book, *Efficacious Underworld: The Evolution of Ten Kings Paintings in Medieval China and Korea* by Cheeyun Lilian Kwon, is not only for specialists in and students of East Asian art, but for everybody who is interested in East Asian religious beliefs and in concepts of the netherworld. The clear structure of the book, the beautiful pictures, and the well-defined description and analysis of the paintings and their context make the book easy to understand and a joy to read and to look at. It will certainly become a standard for future research on the concept of the underworld in China, Korea, and Japan, and especially on the set of the Seikadō Ten Kings paintings.

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