

### 13. GREEN TARA

Copper alloy with glass inlays  
Tibeto-Chinese  
Yuan, early 14<sup>th</sup> century  
Height: 20 cm (7.87 in.)



Within the Sakya tradition of Vajrayana Buddhism, three deities are particularly prominent during the Yuan period and accordingly enjoyed enormous popularity: Mahakala, Manjushri and Green Tara. While Mahakala was considered to be the foremost of the protectors of the Mongol empire, Manjushri, especially performing the *dharmacakra mudra*, was believed to embody the ultimate perfection of wisdom and knowledge. Green Tara (Tib. *sGrol ma ljang*; Chin. *lü dumu*) was worshipped as a liberator, the “Mother of all Buddhas” and savior; acting only to benefit her devotees, she was thought to be swift in her actions.<sup>1</sup> It should therefore not be surprising that statues of Green Tara were included in the canon of Vajrayana deities that were cast in various

workshops in China during the Mongol rule; within the limited corpus of metal icons of the Yuan period, images of Green Tara are among the most numerous.<sup>2</sup>

Although of slightly larger size, this finely cast figure of the goddess is very closely related to the previous example and shares all the iconographic details, such as the style of the five-leaf crown, the large circular earrings, the distribution of the jewelry, the stylized “v”-shaped knot at the back of the neck and even the treatment of the petals on the lotus base. In consequence, the present sculpture can be safely dated to the early 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup>

An interesting feature is the execution of the borders seen on the *dhoti*: in addition to the characteristic scroll motif, two other and different geometrical designs have been engraved with great precision that can also be found on Himalayan icons of the same period.

#### NOTES:

1. On the symbolism of the Green Tara see Mull 2004, pp.11 and Liebert 1986, p.292.
2. For further examples see Bigler 2015, pp.84, no.19 and pp.96, no.22.
3. The result of a TL-Analysis (no. OSZ1179) performed by Szeged University (Hungary) on January 12, 2016 is consistent with the dating of this figure.

