

## 25. BUDDHA AMITABHA

Copper alloy with remains of lacquer gilding  
Chinese  
Ming, ca. second quarter of the 15<sup>th</sup> century  
Height: 28.7 cm (11.39 in.)

Wearing a long garment with elegant drapery and covering both shoulders, this figure of a Buddha is seated in *vajraparyankasana* on a double lotus base. The hands resting on his lap in the gesture of meditation (Skt. *dhyanasana*) identify the image as being that of Amitabha (Chin. *Amituo*), the Buddha of “Infinite Radiance”, who presides over the Pure Land known as Sukhavati, “the Blissful [Land]” (Chin. *jile*).<sup>1</sup> Devotion to this Buddha and the desire for rebirth in Sukhavati have a long history in China and have been a major component of the Pure Land tradition in Chinese Mahayana Buddhism since at least the sixth century AD.<sup>2</sup>

Certain idioms – such as the facial features and the long curved fingers – clearly indicate that the style of the present figure is entirely Chinese and compares well to icons produced in the imperial workshops during the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The finely modeled broad petals on the double lotus base for instance, are found on metal sculptures from the Xuande period (1426-35) onward.

It is noteworthy that a clear stylistic distinction between those based on Indo-Himalayan imagery and those relying on Chinese traditions, was and had to be made for icons produced in China already during the Yuan period. This can be particularly well observed when the images of Buddha are compared: while such sculptures in the Indo-Tibetan style are usually depicted with their right shoulder bare, figures in the Chinese style tend to wear a garment covering both shoulders.<sup>3</sup>

### NOTES:

1. Bhattacharyya 1987, p.49; Suchan 2003, pp.393.
2. See Leidy/Strahan 2010, p.88, no.13.
3. Good examples for stone sculptures of Buddhas dating to the Yuan period and depicted in different styles side by side are found at Felai Feng; see Linrothe 2009, pp.84, fig.11.



