

7. BODHISATTVA

Copper alloy with remains of lacquer gilding
Chinese
Yuan, early 14th century
Height: 24.5 cm (9.64 in.)

Seated in *vajraparyankasana* on a double lotus pedestal and holding the stalk of a lotus with buds in each hand, this finely cast image of a Bodhisattva¹ is stylistically closely related to a small group of slightly larger, recently published metal sculptures which have been attributed to the Yuan period.² The deity wears a loose fitting *dhoti* with elegant drapery and a broad shawl over the shoulders with long, draped sashes ending at the front of the base. The rich jewelry seen on this figure consists of armlets, bracelets and anklets made of simple strings of pearls and a circular ornament. Further strands of pearls with circular pendants are worn on the upper body with a well modeled depiction of a lotus flower at the center of the chest.³ The hands with their long curved fingers are both held in *vitarka mudra* – a feature not uncommon on Chinese sculpture of the Yuan period; while the right is raised, the left hand is resting on the lap.⁴ The lotus flowers attached to the upper arms both carry identical attributes in the form of books.⁵ The delicately cast openwork crown can be compared to a diadem-shaped headdress of a large gilt copper alloy statue of a Manjushri seated on a lion which is kept in the Kimbell Art Museum (Fort Worth, Texas) and dated to the 13th century.⁶

Whether the lacquer gilding preserved on some parts of the figure is contemporary to the date of production or whether it was added later, cannot be determined at this time.

NOTES:

1. The result of a TL-Analysis (no. OSZ877) performed by Szeged University (Hungary) on January 30, 2014 is consistent with the dating of this figure.
2. See Bigler 2015, pp.22, nos.2, 3.
3. This specific and prominent depiction of a lotus flower can also be found on a large Yuan Qingbai porcelain figure of a Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara in his manifestation of the "Water-Moon Guanyin" held in the Capital Museum, Beijing; illustrated in: Li Xu 2013, pp.52; Li Fei 2008, pp.240.
4. See a carved image of a seated Buddha in cave 82 at Feilai Feng attributed to the Yuan period. Illustrated in Gao Nianhua (ed.) 2002, p.147, no.116; for a gilt bronze figure of a Bodhisattva see Christie's Hong Kong, Masterworks of Chinese Art, 5/6 November 1997, lot-no.1069.
5. The presence of two identical attributes in the shape of books might suggest that the figure could be interpreted as an unusual form of Manjushri; a stone sculpture of a Bodhisattva holding his hands in *dharmacakya mudra* in front of the chest and with similar attributes in grotto no.87 at Feilai Feng has been identified as being a manifestation of Tara; see Gao Nianhua (ed.), op. cit., p.185, no.155.
6. Published in Singer/Denwood 1997, pp.46, no.23 (inv.-no.AP 1987.05 a,b); this large and impressive group is described as being either from the Southern Song (1127-1279) or from the Jin dynasty (1115-1234); on stylistic grounds a dating to the mid or even second half of the 13th century seems more convincing.



