



Chinese Wood Sculptures of the 11th to 13th centuries: Images of Water-moon Guanyin in Northern Chinese Temples and Western Collections

By Petra Rösch

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Chinese Buddhist wooden sculptures of Water-moon Guanyin, a Bodhisattva sitting in a leisurely reclining pose on a rocky throne, are housed in Western collections and are thus removed from their original context(s). Not only are most of them of unknown origin, but also lack a precise date. Tracing their sources is difficult because of the scant information provided by art dealers in previous periods. Thus, only preliminary investigations into their stylistic development and technical features have been made so far. Moreover, until recently none of the Chinese temples that provided their original context, i.e. their precise position within those temple compounds and their respective place in the Buddhist pantheon, have been examined at all. In her study, Petra H. Rösch investigates these very aspects, including questions about the religious position and function of the sculptures of this special Bodhisattva. She also looks at the technical construction, the collecting of Chinese Buddhist sculptures in general and those made of wood in particular. She uses a combination of stylistic, iconographical, buddhological, as well as technical methodologies in her investigation of the Water-moon Guanyin images and sheds light on the Buddhist temples in Shanxi Province, the works of art they once housed, and the religious practices of the eleventh to thirteenth centuries connected with them.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Petra H. Rösch received a PhD in East Asian Art History from Heidelberg University. She is Research Fellow of the Interdisciplinary Research Centre "Dynamics of Ritual" at Heidelberg University and is currently working on a book on confession rituals at Chinese Buddhist cave temples of the 6th to 8th century.

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