

# The Two Bodhisattva Reliefs of Sökkuram Grotto: Identifying the Figures of Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra

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**S**ÖKKURAM 石窟庵 Grotto is an outstanding example of the Korean art of the Unified Silla 新羅 period (668–935) on account of its innovative and detailed construction and because it was made with extraordinary technical and sculptural finesse.<sup>1</sup> As is already well known, Sökkuram is a man-made grotto composed of a rectangular front chamber that is connected to a circular main chamber via a short corridor (fig. 1). The principal statue of the Buddha, seated above a round pedestal, is situated at the center of the main chamber and has a height of 340 centimeters. Surrounding the central statue are fifteen reliefs that portray the figures of Brahmā (Pömch’ön 梵天) (fig. 1, no. 1), Indra (Intūla 因陀羅) (fig. 1, no. 15), ten monks (fig. 1, nos. 3–7, 9–13), and three bodhisattvas (fig. 1, nos. 2, 8, 14).<sup>2</sup> The

THIS WORK WAS supported by the Dongguk University Research Fund of 2019. The author has romanized the names of national heritage sites such as Sökkuram and Pulguksa according to the McCune-Reischauer system for this paper. However, it should be noted that according to the 2014 provisions of the Cultural Heritage Administration, Sökkuram and Pulguksa are romanized as “Seokguram” and “Bulguksa” respectively. For the revised romanization of other terms, please consult Muhwachaech’öng 2014. All photographs and drawings are by the author unless otherwise specified.

<sup>1</sup>The construction of Sökkuram Grotto is dated to approximately the mid to late eighth century during the Unified Silla period based on the *Samguk yusa* 三國遺事 (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms) by Iryön 一然 (1206–1289), the oldest and most detailed historical record on the subject. T no. 2039, 49: 1018a04.

<sup>2</sup> There are also statues of bodhisattvas situated in niches located in the upper portion of Sökkuram Grotto’s main chamber. However, the present text will focus only on the main chamber’s panels of bodhisattva reliefs.

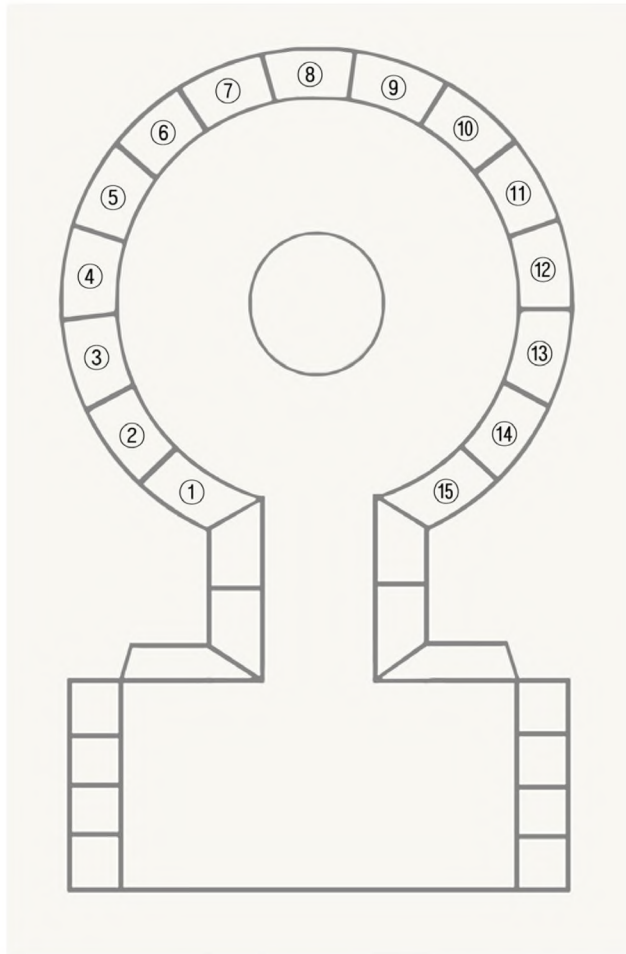


Figure 1. Diagram of the interior of Sökkuram Grotto, mid- to late-eighth century, national treasure no. 24, Kyōngju City, South Korea.

present paper focuses on two of the bodhisattva reliefs, one of which features a figure holding a scripture (fig. 1, no. 2; plate 1), while the other portrays a figure holding a small cup (fig. 1, no. 14; plate 2). If one divides the main chamber lengthwise through the middle, these two bodhisattva reliefs are situated in symmetrically corresponding locations. As for the remaining bodhisattva relief, it is located directly behind the central statue and portrays a figure with eleven heads in its crown (fig. 1, no. 8; plate 3).

This third bodhisattva relief has already been firmly established as portraying the Eleven-Headed Avalokiteśvara (Shibilmyōn'gwanseūmbosal 十一面觀世音菩薩) and thus there is no controversy over this figure's identity.<sup>3</sup> However, this is not the case with the first two reliefs as there are conflicting viewpoints regarding which bodhisattvas are portrayed in

<sup>3</sup> For scholarly research on the subject of the Eleven-Headed Avalokiteśvara of Sökkuram Grotto, see Kang Samhye 2015.

each panel. To clarify, although it is agreed that the bodhisattvas Mañjuśrī (Munsubosal 文殊菩薩) and Samantabhadra (Pohyōnbosal 普賢菩薩) are the two figures in question, there are differences in opinion as to which of the bodhisattvas are featured in the respective reliefs, and these differing views are based on the objects that each figure holds. For example, some scholars identify the bodhisattva holding the “scripture” as Mañjuśrī and the bodhisattva holding the “cup” as Samantabhadra, while the opposite is true for the counter viewpoint.<sup>4</sup> It is difficult to determine which of the two arguments is superior, but there is agreement that the “scripture” and the “cup” are the key pieces of evidence in the identification of the bodhisattvas depicted. The fact that the same approach is taken by both sides reflects the general importance placed on the objects held by bodhisattva figures as important identifying factors.

The array of objects held by the figures of bodhisattvas is diverse. They include precious jewels known as *kunḍikā* (*chōngbyōng* 淨瓶), a monk’s staff, as well as willow branches, lotus buds, and even lotus stems. Accordingly, depending on the period of production, an image of a bodhisattva holding a *kunḍikā* could be recognized as Avalokiteśvara (Kwanseūmbosal 觀世音菩薩), while a bodhisattva image holding a monk’s staff could be representative of Bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha (Cicangposal 地藏菩薩).<sup>5</sup> However, it is definitively more accurate to identify images of bodhisattvas based on the observation of certain characteristics that are unique to each figure rather than to establish an identification that depends solely on the object each figure holds. For example, it is more prudent to identify the figure of Avalokiteśvara by the small image of the Buddha featured in his crown which serves as a distinguishing characteristic. As for the bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha, he is recognized by the presence of a hood or by his

<sup>4</sup> Scholars who identify the “scripture-bearing bodhisattva” in Sōkkuram’s main chamber as the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī include Kim (2003, pp. 292–93) and I Juhyōng (2016, p. 172). Those who hold the opposite view and identify the same image as that of the bodhisattva Samantabhadra include Hwang (1989, pp. 58–61), Mun (2000, pp. 262–64), and Ch’oe Sōngūn (2003, pp. 132–37). The scholar Kang Ubang also considers the “scripture-bearing bodhisattva” to be Samantabhadra but adds that this is not a definitive fact (Kang Ubang 2000, pp. 220–23). In the 2008 exhibition catalogue published by the National Museum of Korea (2008, pp. 138–39), the figures portrayed in the two bodhisattva reliefs are left unidentified. The most recent scholarship to date identifies the “scripture-bearing bodhisattva” as Samantabhadra and the “cup-bearing bodhisattva” as Mañjuśrī (Chu 2015, pp. 116–18).

<sup>5</sup> For scholarly research that regards the presence of a *kunḍikā* as an identifying indicator of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, see Kang Hūijōng 2010, p. 13.

signature bald head. Unfortunately, in the case of Sökkuram's two controversial bodhisattva reliefs, there are no distinct characteristics on which to base an identification. Both figures have similar appearances that are typical of bodhisattva images and are differentiated only by the object each bodhisattva holds. Naturally, scholarship on the subject of the two bodhisattva reliefs has focused on these objects, and thus the "scripture" and "cup" featured in the two images remain important evidence in the ongoing study of the sculpture in Sökkuram Grotto.

As previously established, the focus of this paper is to discuss the two bodhisattva reliefs in Sökkuram's main chamber; each portray a figure holding either a "scripture" or a "cup" in their hand. If even one of the reliefs could be matched to either Mañjuśrī or Samantabhadra, the two candidates that scholars agree upon, this would naturally solve the issue of which bodhisattva is depicted in the remaining relief. However, this has proven to be a difficult task due to a lack of evidence. There are no extant examples of bodhisattva images holding a scripture or a cup from the Silla dynasty outside of those in Sökkuram Grotto, nor are there any references to such images in historical records. Left without a domestic point of comparison, this paper seeks to study examples from other regions of East Asia that are contemporary to the Sökkuram reliefs. The identification of these external examples will provide crucial information that has the potential to solve the controversy over how the figures of the two reliefs in question should be interpreted. But beyond this central issue it is also a priority to evaluate the close relationship between certain bodhisattvas such as Mañjuśrī or Samantabhadra and the types of iconographic representations attributed to them. Moreover, this paper presents an opportunity to observe the various methods that have traditionally been utilized by scholars of Buddhist art history to understand the iconography of Sökkuram and also offers a new perspective in addition to the preexisting interpretive practices.

*An Examination of Sökkuram's Scripture-Bearing and Cup-Bearing Bodhisattva Reliefs*

First, it is necessary to examine the bodhisattva that holds a scripture in his hand. The relief depicting the scripture-bearing bodhisattva is situated next to the relief of Brahmā that is located to the immediate left when entering the main chamber (fig. 1, nos. 1–2; plate 4)—an important physical arrangement that will be further explored later in this article. The bodhisattva stands barefoot on top of a lotus-shaped pedestal while turning his body

to the left towards the interior of the main chamber. The head nimbus is relatively large in comparison to the size of the bodhisattva's head, which is adorned with a tiara decorated in designs of flowers. The figure also wears earrings and a necklace while the area spanning from chest to stomach is covered in beaded decoration. A long, thin garment covers the bodhisattva's entire body, and the figure's right foot steps on a small portion of the fabric. Though the relief is made from durable granite that is difficult to carve, each feature is sculpted in great detail. Most importantly, the figure's left hand is lifted as high as the shoulder and holds a long piece of scripture that is bound differently than the books of China and seems to have been modeled after Indian scriptures.<sup>6</sup> In contrast, the bodhisattva's right hand is empty and hangs down in a rather generic posture, although the third finger provides variation in that it is slightly folded.

Next, the bodhisattva holding a cup must be examined (fig. 1, no. 14; plate 5). The relief of the cup-bearing bodhisattva has been placed next to the relief of Indra (fig. 1, no. 15) that is to the immediate right when entering the main chamber; this layout will also be further discussed later in the article. The bodhisattva stands on top of a lotus-shaped pedestal and is aesthetically similar to the scripture-bearing bodhisattva. However, the tiara belonging to the cup-bearing bodhisattva is of a different shape and is particularly notable for the bird-wing-shaped decorations found on both sides. The bodhisattva's right hand is held to shoulder level and the thumb and index finger are raised to support the small cup in the figure's hand. The object is recognized as either a "cup" or a "bowl" depending on the scholar, but based on form and size it is unlikely that the object is a bowl.<sup>7</sup> In addition to the object being too small to be a bowl, the manner in which the top portion flares slightly outwards is reminiscent of East Asian tea-cups.

Scholars have already reached a consensus on the idea that the two bodhisattva reliefs in Sökkuram's main chamber represent Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra.<sup>8</sup> This agreement is based on the identification of the main chamber's principal statue as being Śākyamuni Buddha (Sökkamonibul

<sup>6</sup> Indian-style sutras are made by drying large tree leaves and cutting them into rectangular shapes to create the pages on which the text is written. Two holes are usually created in the middle of each page and a string is used to tie several pages together.

<sup>7</sup> For many Chinese examples, the object is viewed as a bowl rather than a cup. See An 2007, p. 259.

<sup>8</sup> The scholars referenced in n. 4 all agree that the two bodhisattva images represent Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra.

釋迦牟尼佛) who is depicted holding his hands in *bhūmisparśa* mudra (*hangmach'okchiin* 降魔觸地印). It is typical for Śākyamuni to be accompanied by Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra in sculptural representations, and on this point there has been no contention thus far.<sup>9</sup> As for images of the two bodhisattvas produced during Tang 唐 China (618–907), and thus contemporary to the Sōkkuram reliefs, Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra are portrayed riding a lion and an elephant respectively.<sup>10</sup> It should be noted, though, that none of the reliefs in Sōkkuram portray bodhisattvas riding animals of any kind. This is presumably due to the compositional difficulties of sculpting the appearance of a figure astride an animal in the space provided by each relief panel. The circular main chamber of Sōkkuram is made up of fifteen rectangular slabs that are positioned so that the longer side stands vertically (fig. 1, nos. 1–15). Each slab is about 90 centimeters in width and 220 centimeters in length. Even though only one image has been sculpted on each slab, the vertical slabs lack the space required to fit the forms of a lion or an elephant in addition to that of the bodhisattva figure. Additionally, all the slabs portray standing figures and thus it would have made the most sense to stay consistent in pose in order to achieve a visually balanced sculptural scheme. For these reasons, it is thought that the Sōkkuram sculptors made a conscious decision not to follow the Chinese tradition of portraying Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra astride a lion and an elephant. However, without the presence of a bestial companion, there are no concrete indicators to help the viewer differentiate between two similarly straightforward representations of typical bodhisattvas. Therein lies the source of the controversy in identifying Sōkkuram's reliefs of Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra, as scholars have thus far formed their conclusions based on which of the bodhisattvas holds a scripture and which holds a cup—details that amount only to circumstantial evidence.

<sup>9</sup> There have been different views in the past. For example, based on the existence of sculptural images of the Buddha Amitābha (Amit'abul 阿彌陀佛) in *bhūmisparśa* mudra, the Buddha statue in Sōkkuram has been interpreted as a representation of Amitābha (Hwang 1978). However, because there is no other evidence to support the identification of the principal image as Amitābha, there are no scholars of Buddhist art history that agree with this theory at present.

<sup>10</sup> It should be noted that these examples are infrequent but are also the only iconic images of the two bodhisattvas in attendance on a representation of the Buddha identified based on iconographic evidence alone. Evidence that supports the interpretation of the lion- and elephant-riding bodhisattvas as Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra is typically found in the historical record of *Foshuo tuoluoni ji jing* 佛說陀羅尼集經, T no. 901, 18: 0790a23. For research on images of the animal-riding Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra, see Kojima 1995 and Pak 2004.

As mentioned, scholars have split opinions regarding the identities of the two bodhisattva reliefs. First, the view asserting that the scripture-bearing bodhisattva is Mañjuśrī must be examined.<sup>11</sup> In one of the most representative texts regarding Mañjuśrī, known as the *Wenshushili wen jing* 文殊師利問經 (Sutra of the Questions of Mañjuśrī), it is written that “Mañjuśrī’s right hand holds a Mahayana sutra.”<sup>12</sup> Mañjuśrī is also chief of all of the bodhisattvas, and as such, symbolizes complete wisdom, a characteristic that is appropriately represented by a scripture.<sup>13</sup> In accordance with this view, the cup-bearing bodhisattva naturally represents Samantabhadra, and the round cup itself is interpreted as the harmony symbolized by Samantabhadra, who is often associated with Buddhist practice.<sup>14</sup>

In opposition to this argument, there are many scholars who view the cup-bearing bodhisattva as Mañjuśrī.<sup>15</sup> Although another sutra, the *Foshuo Wenshushili banniepan jing* 佛說文殊師利般涅槃經 (Sutra on Manjusri Bodhisattva’s Nirvana), indeed states that the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī holds a Mahayana sutra in his right hand, it must be noted that it also states that “he holds a bowl in his left hand.”<sup>16</sup> Scholars interpret this to mean that the cup pictured in one of the bodhisattva reliefs is equivalent to the bowl mentioned in the text. Scholars in support of this argument also refer to the wall drawing of the *Thousand Bowl-Bearer Mañjuśrī* (Ch. Qianbowenshu 千鉢文殊; K. Ch’ōnbalmunsu) at the temple Ci’ensi 慈恩寺 in Xi’an 西安 City, China.<sup>17</sup> This drawing of Mañjuśrī by Yuchi Yiseng 尉遲乙僧 (fl. mid. 7th c.) was rather famous at the time, and so it would have been widely known that Mañjuśrī was depicted holding bowls in his hands just as in the Sōkkuram representation of the bodhisattva portrayed holding a cup.<sup>18</sup> Additionally, if the scripture-bearing bodhisattva were to be identified as Mañjuśrī, its placement to the right of the Śākyamuni statue would be problematic (fig.

<sup>11</sup> See n. 4.

<sup>12</sup> *Wenshushili wen jing*, T no. 468, 14: 497c20.

<sup>13</sup> The fact that the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī represents wisdom itself is mentioned in various sutras too numerous to be examined in this paper. Representative examples are the *Wenshushili wen jing*, T no. 468, 14:497c20, and the *Foshuo Wenshushili banniepan jing*, T no. 463, 14: 480c12.

<sup>14</sup> Han’gukpulgyoyōn’guwōn 1997, p. 52.

<sup>15</sup> See n. 4.

<sup>16</sup> *Foshuo Wenshushili banniepan jing*, T no. 463, 14: 480c12.

<sup>17</sup> For evidence that can be found in sutras regarding the *Thousand Bowl-Bearer Mañjuśrī*, see *Dasheng yujia jin’gangxinghai manshushili qianbiqianbo dajiaowang jing* 大乘瑜伽金剛性海曼殊室利千臂千鉢大教王經, T no.1177A, 20: 724b12.

<sup>18</sup> See Zhang 2008, p. 238; this text was edited in the year 847.

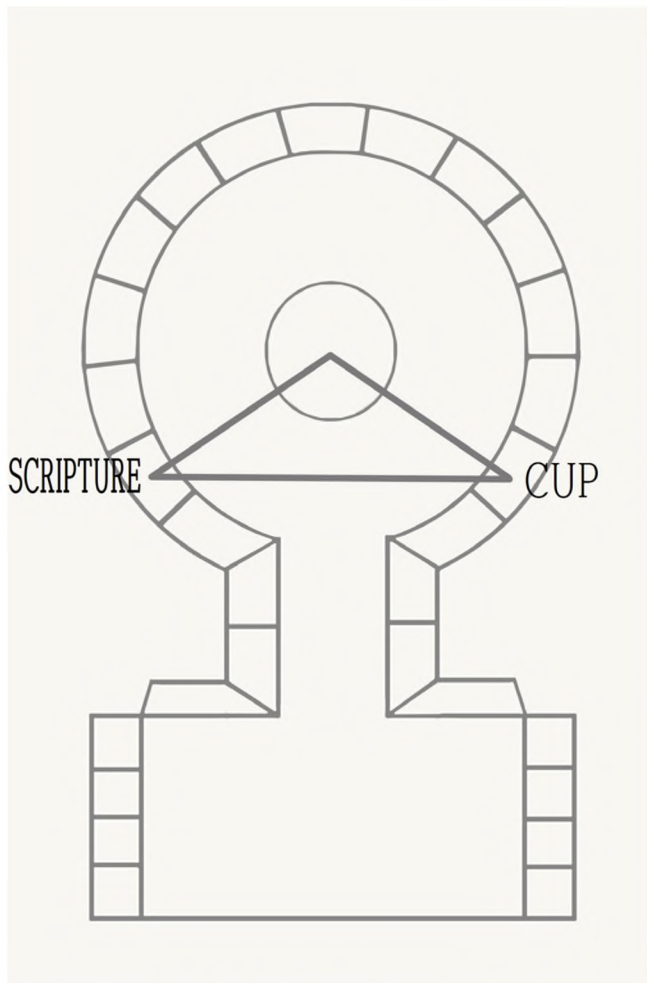


Figure 2. Diagram of the interior of Sökkuram Grotto. The triangle expresses the triad relationship of the principal icon, the scripture-bearing bodhisattva, and the cup-bearing bodhisattva.

2). In East Asia, it is customary for Mañjuśrī to be situated on Śākyamuni’s left-hand side because the bodhisattva symbolizes “wisdom itself” and is consequently considered to be of higher rank than the bodhisattva Samantabhadra, who represents “wisdom in practice.” In general, the left signifies elevated status in comparison to the right, an East Asian concept that will be further explored later in the text.

Unfortunately, there are no sculptural examples of Mañjuśrī or Samantabhadra dating to the Unified Silla period with inscriptions confirming the identity of the subject portrayed. *Samguk yusa* 三國遺事 (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms), the oldest Korean historical record related to Buddhism, does mention both Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra statues, but there is no description of the actual physical form of these examples. There are, however, rare instances of lion-riding Mañjuśrī and elephant-Samantabhadra sculptures dating to the Unified Silla period that still exist on the Korean Peninsula. A representative example dating to the



late Unified Silla period, or ninth century, can be found at Pulguksa 佛國寺 located in Kyōngju 慶州 Province.<sup>19</sup> Instead of Śākyamuni, an image of the Buddha Vairocana takes center place while the bodhisattvas Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra are situated to the left and right as attendant bodhisattvas. Regrettably, these extant sculptures have been significantly damaged and in their present condition only the lion and elephant portions of the statues can be readily observed. The upper portions depicting the forms of Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra have not survived, leaving scholars without a clue as to the original appearance of the statues. Therefore, although it is clear that Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra are the intended subjects of the Pulguksa examples, the general lack of relevant visual evidence in surviving examples of Silla-dynasty Buddhist sculpture does not aid in the task of revealing the identities of the Sōkkuram bodhisattvas.

Returning to the main chamber of Sōkkuram, it should be noted that there is another example of a scripture-bearing bodhisattva located in one of the niches of the chamber's upper wall (plates 6 and 7). There are ten niches in total but only eight contain statues as the two located above the chamber's entrance are presently empty.<sup>20</sup> The niche occupied by the scripture-bearing bodhisattva is located right above the relief of the cup-bearing bodhisattva. The figure inside the niche is seated above a lotus-shaped pedestal, and his right hand holds a scripture while his left hand is placed above the knee. This figure is sometimes identified as Mañjuśrī depending on the scholar, but it is more commonly referred to simply as the "niche bodhisattva sculpture" without any specific identification.<sup>21</sup>

*An Analysis of the Objects Held by Tang-Dynasty Images of Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra*

The concurrence of scripture-bearing and cup-bearing bodhisattva images such as in Sōkkuram's main chamber is a rare occurrence. One of the few confirmed examples can be found on the second door slab of the *digong*

<sup>19</sup> There are a few surviving examples of "lion-riding Mañjuśrī" and "elephant-riding Samantabhadra" found in places such as Pulguksa and Pōpsusa 法水寺, but there are no examples that have survived completely intact. See Mun 1969.

<sup>20</sup> Most scholars agree that the two empty niches were once filled with statues of bodhisattvas that are now lost. However, there is also a recent theory that a small stupa could have also stood in the niche at one point in time. See Han 2015.

<sup>21</sup> There is no agreement of scholarly opinion regarding the scripture-bearing bodhisattva in the niche. There are some who view this figure as Mañjuśrī (Pae 2008, p. 64). It is, however, most common for the image to remain unidentified.

地宮 (underground palace) affixed to the stupa of Famensi 法門寺 in China. Each side of the door slab features a bodhisattva holding either a scripture or a cup (plates 8 and 9).<sup>22</sup> When facing the slab, the left door portrays the cup-bearing bodhisattva while the right door depicts the scripture-bearing bodhisattva. It is highly likely that the bodhisattvas pictured are Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra but the problem remains in deciding which figure is which.<sup>23</sup>

The door slab of Famensi's *digong* was closed in the year 874 and remained so until its first excavation in 1987. It is difficult to determine the exact year when the door was created but based on stylistic characteristics and the door's elaborate storage condition, the ninth century seems to be a reasonable postulation.<sup>24</sup> Besides the Famensi door slab, there are also other instances of the scripture and cup-bearing bodhisattva pair such as the wall murals found in caves 341 and 419 of the Dunhuang 敦煌 Grottoes (plate 10). Notwithstanding these few exceptions, confirmed examples are exceedingly limited in number, indicating that the simultaneous portrayal of scripture and cup-bearing bodhisattvas was not a widely applied subject.<sup>25</sup> Most importantly, none of these examples have been positively matched to Mañjuśrī or Samantabhadra. Furthermore, the right-left placement of scripture and cup-bearing figures differs between the Famensi and Dunhuang cave bodhisattva pairs, an inconsistency that adds to the confusion in identifying Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra.

Next to be examined are the Chinese examples that have been verified as either Mañjuśrī or Samantabhadra because they are portrayed riding a lion and an elephant respectively. Images of the two bodhisattvas astride animals started to appear as a pair around the latter half of the seventh century.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>22</sup> The first scholar to bring attention to the bodhisattva pair of Famensi was Song Chinyōp. Song interprets the scripture-bearing bodhisattva as Mañjuśrī and the cup-bearing bodhisattva as Samantabhadra, and further explores why Samantabhadra holds the object of a cup. Song 2013, pp. 2–4.

<sup>23</sup> Based on the fact that the finger (bone) of Śākyamuni is stored behind the fourth and innermost door, the two bodhisattvas portrayed on the door are viewed as Mañjuśrī and Samanta-bhadra. Wang 2005, p. 104; Song 2013, pp. 10–11.

<sup>24</sup> Shaanxisheng Kaogu Yanjiusuo 2007. In the most recent catalogue of Famensi, the year is given as 874. Jiangqi 2014, p. 13.

<sup>25</sup> The example in Dunhuang cave number 341 was presented and researched in detail by Song (2013).

<sup>26</sup> Kojima 1995, p. 50. There are many examples, including the wall painting of Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra located on the east wall of the main chamber of Dunhuang cave number 331.

Based on excerpts that mention the breeding of lions and elephants,<sup>27</sup> as well as the record stating “the elephant and lion were used as pedestals”<sup>28</sup> in *Luoyang qielan ji* 洛陽伽藍記 (Record of Buddhist Monasteries in Luoyang) compiled in 547 of the Northern Wei period, it is also possible that lion- and elephant-riding images of Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra were already in existence by the sixth century. However, the earliest extant image has been dated to circa the eighth century. The animal-riding images of Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra appear in the form of both sculptures and wall murals, but in the case of sculptural depictions, the hands tend to be the most fragile and are usually the first element to be damaged. As a result, there are very few instances where the objects, if any, held in the hands of the bodhisattvas can be confirmed. This also applies to the earliest statues of animal-riding Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra with a reliable date. Produced in the year 725, the statues are depicted on one of the reliefs of the stone stupa located in Chengwu 成武 County, Shandong 山東 Province, and as mentioned, the hands of both bodhisattva figures along with any objects they may have held have been broken off.<sup>29</sup> There are also statues of animal-riding Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra dated to the year 782 at Nanchansi 南禪寺 of Mount Wutai 五臺. Mañjuśrī holds a *ruyizhang* 如意杖 (*yōūijang*), a wish-granting wand, or scepter, while Samantabhadra holds a scripture.<sup>30</sup> Some scholars utilize the Nanchansi statue of Samantabhadra (plate 11) as crucial visual evidence to support their claim that the scripture-bearing bodhisattva of Sōkkuram is indeed Samantabhadra.<sup>31</sup> However, this is a flawed argument in that the statue’s current appearance is not original on account of the numerous repairs that have been made to it over the centuries.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>27</sup> “There is a place located on the south road of Yongqiao 永橋 where white elephants and lions are raised.” *Luoyang qielan ji*, T no. 2092, 51: 1012a05.

<sup>28</sup> *Luoyang qielan ji*, T no. 2092, 51: 1018b06.

<sup>29</sup> Sun 2007, p. 203, fig. 29.

<sup>30</sup> Among these, the *ruyizhang* is a tool held by a speaker during preaching that is shaped like a back scratcher with a curved end. After the mid-Tang dynasty, there are also examples where the figure holds a lotus flower instead of a *ruyizhang*.

<sup>31</sup> Chu 2015, p. 111.

<sup>32</sup> If the sculpture standing at the Great Buddha Hall of Nanchansi in Shaanxi 陝西 Province reconstructed in 782 is examined, it can be observed that the elephant-riding statue of Samantabhadra holds a scripture. Although lion and elephant-riding images of Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra are found inside of the building, it is highly likely that they were not created in the late eighth century, but instead during the large-scale reconstruction project carried out in 1086 to repair the damage to Nanchansi that occurred because of the great earthquake in 1038 with a strength of 7.5 to 10 (Qi and Chai 1980, p. 61). As there were many more

The wall paintings of the Dunhuang caves provide the greatest number of examples related to the subject at hand. Among these, it is important to focus on the objects held by the eighth- to ninth-century images of bodhisattvas riding a lion and an elephant as these examples can be considered definite representations of Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra. In relation to the objects pictured, the Tang dynasty wall paintings of both bodhisattvas can be categorized into two general types. In the first type, the bodhisattvas do not hold any objects but instead hold their hands together with palms facing each other or with fingers folded and crossed. In the second type, the bodhisattvas hold either a *ruyizhang* or a cup. Wall paintings belonging to the first type are common in the Dunhuang caves but another noteworthy portrayal of empty-handed Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra can be found on the silver *śarīra* reliquary excavated from the *digong* of Famensi.<sup>33</sup> The second type is the most frequently occurring and in these examples Mañjuśrī usually holds the *ruyizhang* while Samantabhadra holds the cup. There are also cases where the opposite is true (plate 12), as well as instances where both bodhisattvas hold identical cups (plate 13). In contrast, images of the scripture-bearing bodhisattva are all but absent from the sculptural and painted schemes of the Dunhuang caves. Furthermore, it can be firmly stated that with the exception of the few examples discussed thus far, portrayals of the pair of scripture and cup-bearing bodhisattvas as exemplified by the Sōkkuram reliefs are extremely rare.

Returning to East Asia, depictions of the scripture-bearing bodhisattva are significantly sparse prior to the ninth century, and there is not enough evidence to confirm that the object of a scripture signifies the figure's identity as Mañjuśrī.<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, there is an abundance of Tang-dynasty images of cup-bearing bodhisattvas. Interestingly enough, the cup-bearing bodhisattvas are oftentimes clearly identified by an accompanying cartouche or by the appearance of an animal, but the cup also appears in a variety

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repairs completed after this as well, the present state of the sculpture is most likely not that of the original appearance. For these reasons, scholars cannot rely on the objects held by both bodhisattvas as evidence in support of their arguments.

<sup>33</sup> For a sketch of this reliquary, see Shaanxisheng Kaogu Yanjiusuo 2007, vol. 1, plates 93–94.

<sup>34</sup> The scripture-bearing bodhisattva that appears in depictions of the Eight Great Bodhisattvas such as the mandala wall painting (761–781) on the east wall of cave no. 25 of Yulin 榆林 Grotto or in the early ninth-century “Eight Great Bodhisattvas” mandala (color on silk, 95 x 63.5 centimeters) in the British Museum’s Stein collection is interpreted as Mañjuśrī.



Plate 1. Scripture-bearing bodhisattva (detail), Sökkuram Grotto, height of relief 202 cm, mid- to late-eighth century.



Plate 2. Cup-bearing bodhisattva (detail), Sökkuram Grotto, height of relief 202 cm, mid- to late-eighth century.



Plate 3. Eleven-Headed Avalokiteśvara, Sökkuram Grotto, height of relief 220 cm, mid- to late-eighth century.



Plate 4. Brahmā (left) and scripture-bearing bodhisattva (right), Sökkuram Grotto, height of Brahmā relief 214.4 cm, mid- to late-eighth century.

Plate 5. Indra (right) and cup-bearing bodhisattva (left), Sökkuram Grotto, height of Indra relief 211 cm, mid- to late-eighth century.



Plate 6. Interior of Sökkuram Grotto, mid- to late-eighth century.



Plate 7. Niche sculpture of scripture-bearing bodhisattva, Sökkuram Grotto, height 86 cm, mid- to late-eighth century.



Plate 8. Second door slab from the *digong* (underground palace) of Famensi, ca. ninth century, height of slab 90–91 cm. From Jiangqi 2014, p. 75.

Plate 9. Rubbing of the second door slab from the *digong* (underground palace) of Famensi, ca. ninth century, height of slab 90–91 cm. From Shaanxisheng Kaogu Yanjiusuo 2007, plate 17.

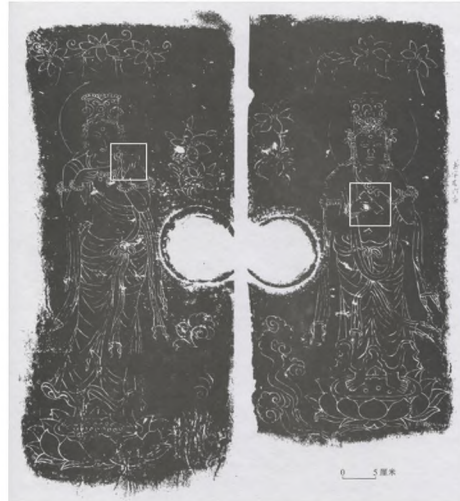


Plate 10. Buddha assembly, mural painting, eastern wall of Mogao cave 341, early Tang dynasty. Scripture-bearing and cup-bearing bodhisattvas pictured to the far left and right. From Dunhuang Yanjiyuan 2003, plate 14.



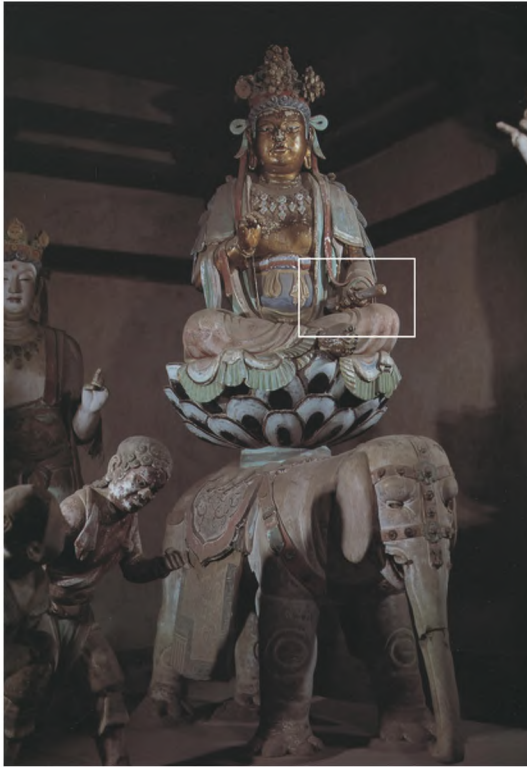


Plate 11. Statue of Samantabhadra, Nanchansi, Mount Wutai, Shanxi Province, China. From *Zhongguo Siguan Diaosu Quanji Bianji Weiyuanhui* 2003, vol. 1, plate 225.

Plate 12. Mañjuśrī (right) and Samantabhadra (left), High Tang period, Dunhuang cave 159. From *Dunhuang Wenwu Yanjiusuo* 1982–87, vol. 5, edited versions of plates 80 and 81.



Plate 13. Cup-bearing bodhisattva images to the left and right. From *Whitfield and the British Museum* 1982, plate 197.



Plate 14. Hemp painting of Avalokiteśvara, 166 x 52 cm. The State Hermitage Museum, Russia. From State Hermitage Museum of Russia 1997–98, vol. 1, plate 101.



Plate 15. Bodhisattva Moon-store, ink and colors on a silk banner, tenth c., 63.5 x 31.8 cm. Guimet Museum. From Gies 1995, plate 41.



Plate 16. Mañjuśrī (right) and Samantabhadra (left), full image of plate 12, High Tang period, Dunhuang cave 159. From Dunhuang Wenwu Yanjiusuo 1982–87, vol. 5, edited versions of plates 80 and 81.



Plate 17. Image of Brahmā located below Mañjuśrī (detail of plate 16), High Tang period, cave no. 159. From *Zhongguo Dunhuang Bihuaquanji Bianji* Weiyuanhui 2006, vol. 7, plate 105.

Plate 18. Image of Brahmā with inscription of “Brahmā” in Yulin Grotto cave no. 16. From *Zhongguo Dunhuang Bihuaquanji Bianji* Weiyuanhui 2006, vol. 9, plate 112.





Plate 19. Sculptural images of the *vajrapāni* (detail), A (left) and B (right) in fig. 4. Sōkkuram Grotto, mid- to late-eighth century.



Plate 20. Sculptural images of the *vajrapāni* (detail), Hōryūji. From Nara Rokudaiji Daikan Kankōkai 2001; edited versions of plates 130 and 131.

of other forms.<sup>35</sup> Besides Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra, the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara and the bodhisattva Moon-store (K. Wōlchang bosal 月藏菩薩; Ch. Yuecang pusa) are also portrayed holding cups (plates 14, 15). As referenced earlier, there are also images that depict Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra each holding cups in their hands simultaneously (plate 13). Accordingly, as there are many types of bodhisattvas that are pictured holding cups, the object of a cup by itself is an insufficient signifier of Mañjuśrī. The cup, like the scripture in East Asia, cannot be considered a special object exclusive to any one bodhisattva, and thus should not be the only characteristic used to identify a bodhisattva image.<sup>36</sup>

The object of a scripture appears in the hands of both Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra, while the cup can be found in the hands of the bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara, Moon-store, Mañjuśrī, and Samantabhadra.<sup>37</sup> It follows that there is no absolute rule that dictates the attribution of specific objects to certain bodhisattvas; thus, another means of identifying the Sōkkuram reliefs of Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra is required.

*Exploring the Concepts of “Left,” “Right,” and Circumambulation in Buddhist Art*

If the bodhisattvas Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra cannot be identified by the objects they hold, the focus must be shifted to how they are positioned.<sup>38</sup> In East Asia, Mañjuśrī, the chief of bodhisattvas, is usually placed to the Buddha’s left while Samantabhadra is found to the Buddha’s right (fig. 3). This is due to the fact that after China’s Northern and Southern

<sup>35</sup> Details regarding cup-bearing bodhisattvas can be found in Song 2013.

<sup>36</sup> The cup held by the bodhisattva is also sometimes identified as a depiction of glass cups popular during the Tang dynasty. Taking into consideration that glass cups were excavated from Famensi, this seems to be a reasonable assumption. Chu 2015, p. 109, n. 24; Song 2013, p. 47.

<sup>37</sup> As was already examined in the examples of Koryō Buddhist paintings, the Chosōn-period examples of the scripture-bearing bodhisattva are not always Mañjuśrī. There are also instances where Samantabhadra is holding a scripture. There is no particular reason that the scripture-bearing bodhisattva is required to represent a specific bodhisattva and be given a special name. I Juhyōng 2015, p. 127.

<sup>38</sup> The left-right images of Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra in the Great Vairocana Image Shrine (Ch. Da Lushena Xiang Kan 大盧舍那像龕) of Fengxiansi 奉先寺 Grotto in Longmen 龍門 illustrate the difficulty in distinguishing between, and recognizing the proper identity of, each bodhisattva portrayed. For the most comprehensive scholarship regarding the Great Vairocana Image Shrine, see McNair 2007, pp. 111–22.

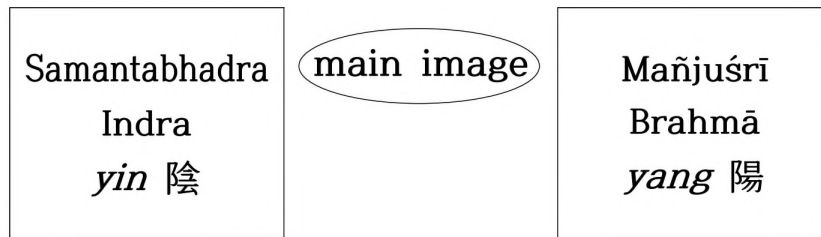


Figure 3. Diagram of Buddha triad layout.

dynasties, convention dictated the left to be of higher status than the right.<sup>39</sup> A similar context can be found in the Tang dynasty *Foshuo tuoluoni ji jing* 佛說陀羅尼集經 (Collection of Spells), a version of the *Dhāraṇī-samuccaya Sutra* translated by Adiqu duo 阿地瞿多 (Skt. Atikuṭa) in 654. There it is written: “Portray Mañjuśrī bodhisattva to the left [of the Buddha] and portray Samantabhadra to the right [of the Buddha],” and as such, the position of the bodhisattvas is regulated.<sup>40</sup> The placement of Mañjuśrī to the left and Samantabhadra to the right is a convention that can be confirmed in the Koryō 高麗 period (918–1392); in Buddhist paintings as well as in other genres of East Asian Buddhist art, however, this placement is not entirely consistent. Although rare, there are instances where the bodhisattvas are depicted in opposite positions.<sup>41</sup> Despite the existence of a few exceptions, the general rule is for Mañjuśrī to be placed to the left of the principal icon while Samantabhadra is placed to the right. Furthermore, when naming the two bodhisattvas, Mañjuśrī is first. Some scholars use this reasoning to argue that the cup-bearing bodhisattva to the left of the principal icon of Sōkkuram Grotto is Mañjuśrī (fig. 2).<sup>42</sup>

At this juncture it is necessary to discuss the positions of the Brahmā and Indra reliefs inside the main chamber of Sōkkuram. An early sutra states,

<sup>39</sup> In East Asia, whether the right or left is superior is different according to the time period. Thus, while there is no absolute standard, the left was still more commonly considered to be higher-ranking than the right. During the Qin 秦 (221 BCE–206 BCE), Han 漢 (202 BCE–220 CE), and Yuan 元 (1271–1368) dynasties, the use of the right hand was very important due to the emphasis on *wen* 文 (literary arts). In contrast, there were also periods where the concept of *wu* 武 (martial arts) were emphasized, and so the left was more important (I Ŭnju 1997, p. 48). During the Han dynasty the right-hand side was more important, but as Buddhist art became more Chinese in nature, the left-hand side emerged as the higher-ranking position.

<sup>40</sup> *Foshuo tuoluoni ji jing*, T no. 901, 18: 790a23.

<sup>41</sup> In the case of the Eleven-Headed Avalokiteśvara statue in cave no. 9 of the Tianlongshan 天龍山 Grotto, the opposite is true as Mañjuśrī is positioned to the right of Avalokiteśvara.

<sup>42</sup> See n. 4.

“Brahmā is to the Buddha’s right and Indra is to the left.”<sup>43</sup> Gandhāran and other Indian depictions of the two figures typically follow this written standard but the same cannot be said of East Asian images. Brahmā is considered to be of higher status, and as such, it is more common to see Brahmā placed to the left of the Buddha and Indra placed to the right. This is reflective of the East Asian view that the left-hand side is more prominent and of an elevated position in comparison to the right-hand side. This notion is also present when naming the two entities and thus Brahmā precedes Indra. This positional hierarchy is similar to the one observed between Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra. However, in the main chamber of Sōkkuram, the rule has not been applied to the reliefs of Brahmā and Indra. Breaking from the pattern, the relief of Brahmā is located to the right of the principal icon—an inconsistency that requires further explanation.

One of the main arguments of this paper is that the main chamber of Sōkkuram should be understood differently from the concept of a Dharma Hall (*pōptang* 法堂). This is particularly evident in the path circling the principal icon that is created by the circular layout of the space. The intended circulation of the room and the arrangement of the sculptures suggests that the chamber was planned around the *yojap* 遶匝 (circumambulation around the image of the Buddha; Skt. *pradakṣina*) ritual that took place during prayer services (fig. 4).<sup>44</sup> Based on the grotto’s plan, routine worship of the various sculptures, including the central Buddha statue, would have taken place in the front chamber while the *yojap* ritual would have been carried out through a procession around the circular main chamber. The ritual would have consisted of walking clockwise around the principal icon and then pausing in front of the icon to bow three times. This custom of walking around a subject of veneration three times in a clockwise fashion was an ancient, preexisting practice already popular at the time of Śākyamuni Buddha. References to the circumambulation of the Buddha can be found in various texts such as the *Zengyi ahan jing* 增壹阿含經 (Numbered Discourses), where it is written that, “In order to accept the teachings of various monks, one bowed so that the head touched the floor in worship of the Buddha’s legs, circled the Buddha three times to the right, and went on one’s way.”<sup>45</sup> Another states that, “In fear that the Buddha would not recognize

<sup>43</sup> “Brahmā is to the Buddha’s right while Indra, who holds a *çauri* (*pulcha* 拂子; fly whisk), is to the Buddha’s left.” *Zengyi ahan jing* 增壹阿含經, T no. 125, 2: 663b24.

<sup>44</sup> Other scholars have also agreed that Sōkkuram Grotto is a space for the *yojap* ritual. See Kang Hūijōng 2011, p. 149; I Kisōn 2007, pp. 1003–6.

<sup>45</sup> *Zengyi ahan jing*, T no. 125, 2: 684c162.

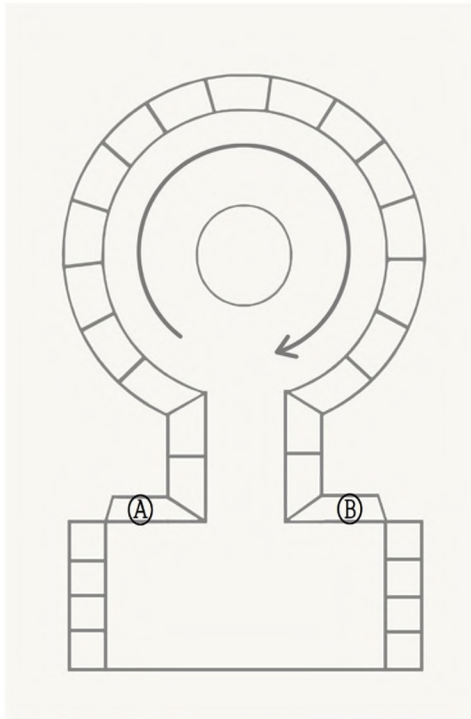


Figure 4. Diagram of the interior of Sökkuram Grotto with line indicating circumambulation around the Buddha image.

him, [the king] completed the ritual by bowing so that his head touched the floor in worship of the Buddha's legs and proceeding around to the right three times."<sup>46</sup> There are also many passages related to the circumambulation of stupas, such as, "One must circle the stupa to the right";<sup>47</sup> or, "If one circles the stupa to the left, the deity guarding the stupa will be filled with wrath."<sup>48</sup>

The circumambulation of stupas and buddha statues was clearly widely practiced in ancient Korea. There is a record stating that the Silla-dynasty monk T'aehyön 太賢 (n.d.) circled the central buddha figure of Yongjangsa 茸長寺 in Namsan 南山, Kyōngju Province, as an act of worship in the twelfth year of King Kyōngdök 景德 (r. 742–765; d.753), the same period as Sökkuram's construction.<sup>49</sup> Thus, it seems that at the very latest, *yojap* was widely practiced during the time of King Kyōngdök, a perception that is evident in the circular layout of the main chamber of Sökkuram. Taking this into account, the arrangement of the sculptures in Sökkuram can be reinter-

<sup>46</sup> *Zhong benqi jing* 中本起經, T no. 196, 4: 52b02.

<sup>47</sup> *Yourao fota gongde jing* 右繞佛塔功德經, T no. 700, 16: 801c03.

<sup>48</sup> *Shifenlu* 四分律, T no. 1428, 22: 930c07. The same context can be found in the *Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林: "If one circles the stupa to the left one will be rebuked by the deity." T no. 2122, 7853:582c06.

<sup>49</sup> *Samguk yusa*, T no. 2039, 49: 1009c25.



puted so that the relief of the scripture-bearing bodhisattva one sees upon entering the main chamber and turning to the left is understood to represent the chief bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, and the relief of the cup-bearing bodhisattva one sees on the way out of the chamber after circling the principal icon is Samantabhadra. Here Mañjuśrī symbolizes the wisdom of Śākyamuni after enlightenment, while Samantabhadra represents the aspiration to attain the station of bodhisattva and the practice of wisdom. In the main chamber of Sōkkuram, one starts at the wisdom of Mañjuśrī and finishes at the practice of Samantabhadra. The procession through Sōkkuram can be understood according to the same context found in the sixty-volume *Huayan jing* 華嚴經 (Flower Ornament Sutra), which describes the fulfillment of the wishes of Sudhanakumāra (Sōnjaedongja 善財童子), beginning with an encounter with Mañjuśrī and ending with a meeting of Samantabhadra.<sup>50</sup>

The location of the Brahmā relief alongside the scripture-bearing bodhisattva plays an important role in identifying the figure holding the scripture as Mañjuśrī. In the previously discussed Dunhuang wall paintings, there were many instances where depictions of Brahmā and Indra were found underneath the bodhisattvas Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra as accompanying figures. Mañjuśrī is coupled with Brahmā while Samantabhadra is seen with Indra. There are, however, scholars who view the figure accompanying Mañjuśrī while holding a “short-handled fan” as Indra instead of Brahmā (plates 16, 17). Regardless of the disparate opinions, there is an image of a figure holding a short-handled fan located in cave 16 of the Yulin 榆林 Grotto that has a cartouche containing the name of Brahmā, thus confirming its identity (plate 18). Based on this identification, the figure accompanying Mañjuśrī can only be Brahmā.<sup>51</sup>

In the study of Sōkkuram the same pattern can be observed. At the entrance of the main chamber, the bottle-bearing Brahmā is situated next to Mañjuśrī while Indra, bearing a *vajra* (*kūmgangjō* 金剛杵), stands next to Samantabhadra. As is already well known, Brahmā is frequently portrayed as an ascetic holding a bottle, while Indra often appears holding the

<sup>50</sup> Related material can be found in *Huayan jing*, T no. 278, 9: 688b11, 783a07. For a noteworthy, recently published study that examines Sōkkuram in relation to Hwaōm 華嚴 (Ch. Huayan) thought, see Ch’oe Yōnsik 2015.

<sup>51</sup> The figure depicted in Dunhuang caves 159 and 468 holding a “round short-handled fan” situated below Mañjuśrī is identified by some scholars as Indra (see Zhongguo Dunhuang Bihuaquanji Bianji Weiyuanhui 2006, caption for plates 105 and 152 [vol. 7]). However, based upon the existence of the inscription *namo dafanwang* 南無大梵王, “Homage to Brahmā,” on the cartouche, this figure can be confirmed to be Brahmā.

*vajra*, a symbol for lightning; this is a tradition that started in India but is also evident in many East Asian representations of the two figures.<sup>52</sup> It follows that one could positively identify the visually correlative figures of Sökkuram Grotto's main chamber in the same way; the figure holding the bottle is Brahmā, and the figure holding the *vajra* is Indra.<sup>53</sup> There is a parallel as Brahmā is the highest-ranking of the devas and accompanies Mañjuśrī, the chief of the bodhisattvas. Taking into account the fact that there is a hierarchy of sacred images in Buddhism, the only procession that makes sense would be for one to enter Sökkuram's main chamber and first encounter Brahmā and Mañjuśrī, then to continue on by circumambulating the principal image of Śākyamuni and end up at the reliefs of Indra and Samantabhadra before exiting. In light of this interpretation, the departure from convention in the left-right placement of Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra is understood as a meaningful design rather than an irregularity.

The new theory proposed here is further supported by the two images of the *vajrapāni* (*kūṃgangyōksa* 金剛力士; *vajra* warriors) placed outside of the main chamber of Sökkuram. When facing the entrance of the grotto's inner chamber, the *vajrapāni* to the left has an open mouth while the one to the right has a closed mouth (fig. 4, A, B; plate 19). This type of arrangement, like many other components of Sökkuram, is atypical of East Asian representations of the *vajrapāni*. From the perspective of the viewer facing the image, the placement of the *vajrapāni* images in the exemplary East Asian temples is customarily reversed. In India, a *vajrapāni* was originally a guardian figure, and thus its image was placed next to its ward, a buddha.<sup>54</sup> However, as the images of *vajrapāni* spread to China, their portrayal changed to include not one, but two, *vajrapāni* figures in a single representation. Additionally, the Chinese portrayals of the two *vajrapāni* differ from their Indian counterparts in that the two figures appear next to temple doors as protectors of the site rather than in attendance on a buddha. In other words, with the reassignment of *vajrapāni* from being a single guardian of a lone buddha to being protector of the temple, the number of depicted figures changed from one to two. Accordingly, with the occurrence of *vajrapāni* as a pair in China, the traditional Chinese concepts of *yin* 陰 and *yang* 陽 developed as additional components of *vajrapāni* identity.<sup>55</sup> In this man-

<sup>52</sup> *Foshuo tuoluoni ji jing*, T no. 901, 18: 805b.

<sup>53</sup> For research on the images of Brahmā and Indra of Sökkuram Grotto, see Hō 2005.

<sup>54</sup> Im (Lim) 2007.

<sup>55</sup> For a discussion of the *vajrapāni* images as a pair symbolizing yin and yang, including that of Sökkuram Grotto, see Im (Lim) 2008.

ner, the open-mouthed *vajrapāni* represents “yang” and the closed-mouthed *vajrapāni* is associated with “yin,” as is also evident in the examples from Sökkuram Grotto.<sup>56</sup>

Thus, when facing East Asian examples of the *vajrapāni* pair, an open-mouthed *vajrapāni* is located to the right while a closed-mouthed *vajrapāni* is usually placed to the left (plate 20). Seen from the perspective of the image itself, though, the most typical depiction would place the open-mouthed *vajrapāni*, which represents “yang,” to the principal image’s left-hand side (the viewer’s right) and the closed-mouthed *vajrapāni*, which represents “yin,” to the principal image’s right-hand side (the viewer’s left) (fig. 3).<sup>57</sup> That the opposite is true for Sökkuram only reinforces the notion that we have here an instance of circumambulation around the principal image where the open-mouthed *vajrapāni* is the starting point and the closed-mouthed *vajrapāni* marks the end point. To summarize, the worshiper is greeted outside the entrance by the open-mouthed *vajrapāni*, views the reliefs of Brahmā and Mañjuśrī once inside the main chamber, circles around the principal image of Śākyamuni, observes the reliefs of Indra and Samantabhadra on the way out, and ends the procession at the image of the closed-mouthed *vajrapāni*.

Although there are no East Asian examples with layouts identical to that of Sökkuram Grotto, it is necessary to discuss other instances where the concept of circumambulation is employed. Notable examples include Kanjingsi 看經寺 in the Longmen 龍門 Grottoes and cave no. 33 of the Guangyuan Qianfoya 廣元千佛崖 of Sichuan 四川 Province. Of these, the Kanjingsi Grotto is seen as a representative example of circumambulation as it contained a central statue of a seated buddha in addition to twenty-nine arhat (*luohan* 羅漢) images on the lower portion of the cave’s encircling walls. However, although the arhat images have survived to the present day, the central buddha statue is presently missing and its existence can only be confirmed through a photograph taken in 1941.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, the statue cannot be examined and the possibility remains that the statue was not an original element of the cave, in which case the layout of Kanjingsi Grotto cannot be considered an example of circumambulation. As for cave no. 33

<sup>56</sup> It is customary to view the open-mouthed image as the start and the closed-mouthed image as the end, but this paper seeks to extend this understanding to include the concepts of yin and yang as applied to the open-mouthed and closed-mouthed *vajrapānis* respectively. See too Im (Lim) 2009, pp. 284–87.

<sup>57</sup> Im (Lim) 2009, pp. 284–87.

<sup>58</sup> Mizuno 1941, vol. 3, plate 108. The whereabouts of the missing buddha statue are currently unknown, though the cave has been recently restored.

at Guangyuan Qianfoya, statues of a buddha and bodhisattvas are situated on the central pillar, creating a layout wherein the visitor is clearly meant to worship by circling the images in order to accumulate good karma. Such practices of worship via circumambulation were already being observed from the fourth century in the “pillar caves” of China and the “Western regions” (India and Central Asia). Though these “pillar caves” have layouts distinct from that of Sökkuram, their religious function remains fundamentally the same.

### *Conclusion*

There have been various conflicting interpretations concerning the scripture-bearing and cup-bearing bodhisattva reliefs found in the main chamber of the Sökkuram. This paper has attempted to solve the controversy over the identities of both bodhisattvas, which have thus far been identified according to the objects held in each figure’s hand.<sup>59</sup> Identification via such objects has been an especially persistent approach used by scholars of Buddhist art history because the two figures have no other special characteristics distinguishing them from images of other bodhisattvas other than the “cup” and the “scripture” pictured in each relief. In truth, the use of objects as visual evidence in the investigation of a bodhisattva’s identity is only the first step of many in the process of art historical research. Despite this, the method was considered worthwhile if it could reveal the identities of the two bodhisattvas as such a discovery would also shed light on other important aspects of Sökkuram, such as the original intent of the grotto’s creator. Ultimately, the objects, and thus the methods utilized by scholars, have proved insufficient to the task of determining the identities of the bodhisattvas.<sup>60</sup> This has been primarily due both to the discrepancies between the visual images and what was found in the historical records, as well as to the inconsistencies in the images themselves.<sup>61</sup>

For these reasons, this study has shifted the focus from the objects held by the bodhisattvas to the arrangement and position of the two bodhisattva

<sup>59</sup> For a viewpoint that asserts that images can be distinguished through the observation of special objects or images, see McArthur 2002, pp. 26–41, 110–17.

<sup>60</sup> Yang Hǔijǒng agrees with the sentiment that a bodhisattva’s identity cannot be determined solely by the presence of an object. However, Yang argues the case for this through a study of a Koryŏ-period painting of Amitābha and the Eight Great Bodhisattvas. See Yang 2008, p. 78.

<sup>61</sup> I Juhyŏng 2011, p. 220.

reliefs as well as to the rituals that would have taken place in Sökkuram at the time of their production. The layout of Sökkuram's main chamber is designed so that a visitor could practice circumambulation of the principal image of Śākyamuni and in so doing earn merit. As a rule, circumambulation of Buddhist images or stupas occurred three times in a clockwise direction. Taking this into consideration, the point of entry is the most appropriate location for images of the high-ranking Brahmā and Mañjuśrī while the exit is the suitable location for the images of Indra and Samantabhadra. In conclusion, the principal statue of Śākyamuni in the center, and the two reliefs of Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra to the Buddha's left and right, should not be viewed as the formation of a buddha triad similar to the arrangements found in a Dharma Hall. Rather, the placement of all three images is reflective of *yojap*, or circumambulation, of the principal image that starts with Mañjuśrī, the symbol of wisdom, and ends with Samantabhadra, who is representative of wisdom in practice. Thus, in answer to the ongoing question of how to identify the two bodhisattva reliefs located in Sökkuram's main chamber, the scripture-bearing bodhisattva is Mañjuśrī and the cup-bearing bodhisattva is Samantabhadra.

## ABBREVIATION

- T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經. 85 vols. Ed. Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡辺海旭. 1924–35. Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924–32.

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