

## Abstract

### **Painting of a Buddhist Figure accompanied by a Tiger on the Silk Road: Itinerant Monk, Luohan(Arhat) and Sanshin**

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It is inevitable for a religion to fuse with local elements, such as ethnic culture and natural environments, during its establishment in a new area. Such traces are most easily found in visual arts. The Silk Road was a crossroad not only of commercial trade but also of stories of Christian saints and Buddhist monks, who made lifelong companions with desert wildlife and Mother Nature using their supernatural powers, that have been passed down for generations.

Portraits of the Itinerant Monk, believed to have been made in the 9th and 10th centuries, depict a missionary monk or a storyteller who carried sutras on his back and journeyed from place to place, spreading Buddhism. Although there are differences in detail, a prominent common feature is the image of a monk walking with an accompanying tiger on his right side. The monk is generally known as Xuanzang (玄奘 602-664) who spread Buddhism to China. After his field activities, visual traditions of the Itinerant Monk as a subject matter appeared to have been popular. It is noteworthy that, unlike Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, a living figure, such as Xuanzang, created a genre. Following the Itinerant Monk, the theme of a Buddhist figure with an accompanying tiger developed further in East Asian countries, especially in Korea.

In this research the examples of post-Itinerant Monk of a Buddhist figure accompanied by a tiger are limited to the Korean examples, and the scope of the research will be expanded later on. The subject of the post-Itinerant Monk examination is Arhat(阿羅漢). In early Buddhism, an ascetic who attained the highest state, the arhatship, that Buddhist ascetics strove for, was designated Arhat, also called Luohan in East Asia. Supernatural powers of Arhats were diverse, and there existed Arhats who subjugated tigers to accompany them. The Luohan belief, introduced during the Unified Silla period and having gained popularity during the Goryeo period, was loved by the general public as a familiar presence that brought fortune during the Joseon Dynasty.

Lastly, Sanshindo(山神圖), a special portrait with an accompaniment of a tiger, is a very unique Korean genre. Koreans have long ago not only believed that every mountain has a 'spirit' but also personified and idolized it, and tigers, the king of the mountain, were also the subject of idolatry. Sanshin is a fusion of Buddhism during the establishment and the age-old indigenous religion that idolized famous mountains and tigers. Most Buddhist temples have enshrined Sanshin statue and portrait on an altar by building a Sanshin shrine. Sanshin was depicted with an image of a white-haired old man guarded by a tiger in a deep mountain, holding items such as a cane, fan, and book.

Tigers in the portraits of the Itinerant Monk and the stories of Buddhist monks who subjugated tigers during the establishment of Buddhism have drawn attention and became accepted especially in Korea, already rich in tiger folklores, among the East Asian countries. It is no coincidence that the story of the Chinese Zen master Fenggan(豐干) with the tiger and his friend monks Shide(拾得) and Hanshan(寒山) was widely spread, especially among the major painters of the late Joseon Dynasty. In conclusion, folklores and indigenous shamanism contributed to the establishment of Buddhism in Korea, and tigers, very special to Koreans, also played a role.