

# Power of Compassion: Paths of Transmission of Avalokiteśvara across Asia

Humanities

College and Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

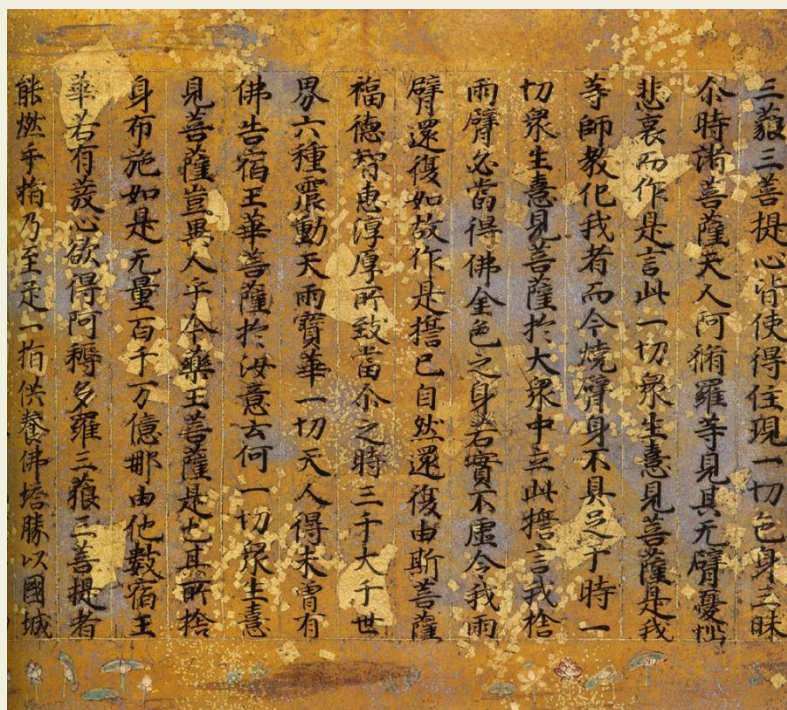
Art Department, East Asia Center, Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities

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## Description of Project:

The Avalokiteśvara Digital Project will build and populate a detailed catalog of art objects and texts, accompanied by scholarly research and analysis, that will support conceptual understanding of the spread of the cult of Avalokiteśvara – arguably one of the most popular Buddhist mythic figures in all of Asia – as well as spatial and temporal patterns of this transmission through Asia. This focus on a specific devotional cult will shed light on both religious and artistic practices and on the particular manifestations of this cult in local social and cultural contexts. <http://silkroad.iath.virginia.edu/>



Lotus Sutra (detail), Japanese, 12<sup>th</sup> century  
ink on gold & silver decorated paper



Avalokiteśvara  
Chinese, 8<sup>th</sup> century  
gilt-bronze



**Project Director:** Dorothy Wong  
**Project Co-directors:** Daniel Pitti, Worthy Martin (IATH)  
**Graduate assistants:** David Hsu (2008-09), Yoko Hara (2009-10)

## Project Activities to Date:

**Workshop on Digital Projects in Asian Art and Humanities, March 13, 2010**

Held in conjunction with the “Cultural Crossings: China and Beyond in the Medieval Period” international conference:  
<http://www.virginia.edu/artmuseum/culturalcrossings/>

**Workshop on Image Analysis, December 10, 2010**

**Workshop on Textual Analysis, February 18, 2011**

### Partner Institutions:

Academia Sinica, Taipei  
Asia Society Museum, New York  
British Library, London  
Columbia University, New York  
Dharma Drum Buddhist College, Taipei  
El Colegio de México, Mexico City  
Freer and Sackler Galleries, Washington, D.C.  
Kyoto University, Kyoto  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York  
Newark Museum, New Jersey  
University of Texas, Austin  
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond  
Walters Art Museum, Baltimore

**Participants:** Marcus Bingenheimer, Shu-chen Chen, David Germano, Luis Gómez, Paul Groner, Yoko Hara, David Hsu, Ven. Huimin, Margaret Lally, Karen Lang, Denise Patry Leidy, Janice Leoshko, Worthy Martin, Katherine Anne Paul, Daniel Pitti, Adriana Proser, Jann Ronis, Kurtis Schaeffer, Juying Shih, Jeffrey Smith, Beth Turner, Daisy Wang, Sarah Wells, Susan Whitfield, Christian Wittern, Dorothy Wong, Hiram Woodward, Chün-fang Yü

**Sponsors:** Buckner W. Clay Endowment for the Humanities, Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange (Taiwan), Dharma Drum Buddhist College (Taipei), East Asia Center, Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities, McIntire Department of Art, Page-Barbour Endowment, Ellen Bayard Weedon Foundation

Twelve-armed Avalokiteśvara, Indian  
8<sup>th</sup> century, stone

## Key features:

- Create a collection of digital images of two- and three-dimensional art objects depicting Avalokiteśvara.
- Provide access to selected canonical Buddhist texts that describe the abilities and iconographic features of the deity.
- Develop a catalog of the art objects and texts that will enable tracing the dissemination and transformation of the cult throughout Asia.
- Develop a public interface for accessing the art images and texts, and allows for sophisticated queries and displays.
- Collaborative research with individuals and institutions.

## Impact:

- An innovative, dynamic approach to the study of the movement and subsequent evolution of ideas.
- Will influence the conceptual understanding of, and methods for studying, the transmission of other kinds of cultural artifacts and data, including movements of peoples in both temporal and spatial dimensions.
- A valuable resource and research tool for scholars and students of Buddhism and Buddhist art, religious studies, art history, literature, history, linguistics, cultural anthropology, and sociology.