



Trad. attrib. to: Liang Kai 梁楷 (late 12th–early 13th century)  
Title: *Bodhidharma Crossing the Yangzi on a Reed*  
*《達摩渡江圖》*  
*Damo dujiang tu*  
Dynasty/Date: Southern Song, mid-13th century  
Format: Hanging scroll mounted on panel  
Medium: Ink on silk  
Dimensions: 46.7 x 26.0 cm (18-5/8 x 10-1/4 in)  
Credit line: Gift of Charles Lang Freer  
Accession no.: F1907.141  
Provenance: Count Akimoto Okitomo 秋元興朝 (1857–1917), Tokyo<sup>1</sup>

**Object description:** One (1) signed inscription, with two (2) seals. Eight (8) accompanying paper documents, all Japanese.

**Painting Inscription:** Donggu Miaoguang 東谷妙光 (?–1253)<sup>2</sup>

7 columns, standard script. Poem (4x4 + 7).

折一莖葦，航千仞淵，腳頭腳尾，此土西天，浩浩江湖盡浪傳。 萬壽東谷妙光敬贊。

He plucked a single reed stalk  
To sail the thousand-fathom deep,  
Foot on prow and foot on stern  
This land, to the Western Heaven:



Far and wide o'er river and lake, all a tale on the waves.

Encomium respectfully [written] by Donggu Miaoguang of Wanshou [Temple, Suzhou].<sup>3</sup>

Signature: 東谷妙光

Date: none

Seals: (2)

*Miao[guang]* 『妙[光]』 (circle relief, right half)

*Dong[gu]* 『東[谷]』 (square intaglio, right half)

**Accompanying documents:** (8) – All Japanese, pasted into file folder

1. Anonymous label slip. Red and black ink on paper. 2 columns, running script. [Not transcribed or translated].
2. Anonymous authentication? – first page only. Ink on folded paper. 9 columns, running-cursive script. [Not transcribed or translated].
3. Kohitsu Ryōchū 古筆了仲 (1656–1736). Ink on paper. 7 columns, running script. [Not transcribed or translated].
4. Muro Jōsei 室常清 (17th–18th century)  
Ink on folded sheet of paper.



1 column, small standard script, with katakana (written on outside of folded paper; visible backwards); plus 16 columns, standard script, with some katakana; plus 2 columns, running and standard script, with hiragana (not transcribed or translated).

室常清ヨリ來

梁楷：五百廿年絶，宋嘉泰年中人，日本土御門建仁ノ比。

淨慈自得慧暉禪師，宋淳熙年中，五百五十年絶。 自得ノ弟子，華藏明極慧祚禪師。 明極ノ弟子，東谷妙光禪師。 東谷ノ弟子，天童直翁德舉禪師。 直翁ノ弟子，建長東明慧日禪師，花園延慶二年來朝，四百廿六年。

xxxxx 東谷禪師五百 xx と xxx

From Muro Jōsei (early 18th century):

Liang Kai lived 520 years ago during the Jiatai reign-period [1201–04] of the Song dynasty, which corresponds to the Kennin reign-period [1201–03] of Emperor Tsuchimikado [reigned 1198–1210].

. Chan-master Zide Huihui [1097–1183], [abbot] of Jingci Temple [Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province], lived during the Chunxi reign-period [1174–89] of the Song dynasty, 550 years ago.

. Zide’s disciple was Chan-master Mingji Huizuo [mid-12th–early 13th century], [abbot] of Huacang Temple [Changzhou, Jiangsu Province].

. Mingji’s disciple was Chan-master Donggu Miaoguang [died 1253].

. Donggu's disciple was Chan-master Zhiweng Deju [13th century], [abbot] of Tiantong Temple [Ningbo, Zhejiang Province].

. Zhiweng's disciple was Chan-master Dongming Huiji [1272–1340], [abbot] of Kenchō-ji [Kamakura, Japan], who came to our country in the second year of the Enkyō reign-period [1309] of Emperor Hanazono [reigned 1308–18].

5. Anonymous transcription of poem and seals of Donggu Miaoguang, with Japanese grammatical markers and occasional Japanese translation. Ink on one folded sheet of paper. 9 columns, standard script.

6. Gion Yoichi 祇園餘一 (unidentified, 18th century). Ink on four (4) sheets of paper. 29 columns, running-cursive script. [Not transcribed or translated].

7. Gion Yoichi 祇園餘一 (unidentified, 18th century)

Ink on folded sheet of paper.

1 column, small standard script, with katakana; plus 7 columns, large and medium standard script, with katakana

祇園餘一ヨリ來。

梁楷。《圖繪寶鑑》等書ニ傳記有リ，繪ハ上ノ部ナリ。宋ノ寧宗ノ嘉泰年中為ル畫院待詔ト(エカキノ官)。

右ハ日本土御門院ノ建治年中ニ當ル，今マテ五百五十六年ニナル。

□□。

From Gion Yoichi [unidentified, 18th century].

Liang Kai. His biography [appears] in the *Tuhui baojian* [Precious Mirror for Examining Painting] and other books, which include his paintings in the top category.<sup>4</sup> During the Jiatai reign-period [1201–04] of Emperor Ning of the Song dynasty, he served as an Attendant-inwaiting in the [Imperial] Painting Academy, an official rank for painters. [The date given] at right corresponds to the Kenji period [see below] in the reign of Emperor Tsuchimikado, which was some 550–60 years before today.

8. Anonymous emendation of previous document (1735) – or same hand as above (?)

Ink on one strip of paper.

3 columns, standard script, with katakana.

建治ハ(九十代)後宇多院ノ年號也。(八十三代)土御門院ノ時代ナラハ建仁タルヘシ。建治元乙亥ヨリ享保二十乙卯マテ四百六十一年。建仁元辛酉ヨリ享保二十乙卯マテ五百三十五年。

Kenji was the name of a reign-period [1275–77] under Emperor Go-uda [reigned 1274–87], the nintieth in succession. If [Liang Kai lived] during the time of Emperor Tsuchimikado [reigned 1198–1210], the eighty-third in succession, then [the reign-period] must be Kennin [1201–03]. It is the four-hundred and sixty-first year from *yihai*, the first year of Kenji [1275], to *yimao*, the twentieth year of Kyōhō [1735]. It is the five-hundred and thirty-fifth year from *xinyou*, the first year of Kennin [1201], to *yimao*, the twentieth year of Kyōhō [1735].

### Selected Bibliography:

Gookin, Frederick William (1854–1936), comp. *The Art Institute of Chicago: Catalogue of a Loan Exhibition of Ancient Chinese Paintings, Sculptures, and Jade Objects from the Collection Formed by Charles Lang Freer*. November 15 to December 8, 1917. Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1917. P. 34, no. 55.

Shimada Shūjirō 島田修二郎 (1907–1994). *Zaigai hihō* 在外秘宝. Tokyo: Gakushū kenkyū sha 学習研究社, 1969. Vol. 2, part 1, plate 69, and part 2, 95.

Ebine Toshirō 海老根聰郎. *Mokkei, Gyokkan* 牧谿、玉澗 (Muqi, Yujian). In Toda Teisuke 戸田禎佑, ed.. *Suiboku bijutsu taikei* 水墨美術大系. Vol. 3. Tokyo: Kodansha, 1975. Pp. 97 (plate 56) and 168–69 (entry).

Tanaka Ichimatsu 田中一松, comp. *Kaō, Moku-an, Minchō* 可翁、默庵、明兆. In *Suiboku bijutsu taikei* 水墨美術大系. Vol. 5. Tokyo: Kodansha, 1974. P. 189 (no. 5).

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> While the Freer files only identify the source of this painting as “Count Akimoto, Tokyo”, given the date of purchase (1907), the most likely individual is Akimoto Okitomo 秋元興朝 (1857–1917), who at the time held the hereditary rank of viscount (*shishaku* 子爵).

<sup>2</sup> As recorded in museum files, Charles Lang Freer purchased this painting in Tokyo in 1907 through an agent working for Count Akimoto. At the time, the painting was attributed to

Liang Kai 梁楷 (late 12th–early 13th century), a renowned Southern Song dynasty court artist, and later practitioner of Chan, who was highly regarded for his ink paintings of related Buddhist subjects done in a spontaneous style. In 1917, Freer queried whether the painting could be Japanese, rather than Chinese, a question that was probably raised by Mr. S. Ma, one of his Chinese assistants, who noted: “Inscription at top of picture is in Chinese but written by a Japanese monk, „Bantsutokonoku“ [Donggu Miaoguang], which means „The light of the eternal cave of the

East“.” Commenting in 1921, John Lodge stated: “Not unskillful, but looks to me like a copy of something. Can it be Yuan? Very likely Ming.” In 1959, Howard P. Stern changed the attribution from “Chinese, Ming” to “Japanese,” and in 1976 added that “it is now determined to be Ashikaga, 15th century; Muromachi-Suiboku school; artist unknown.” This is the current listing for the painting in museum files.

As no art historical argument was advanced to warrant the changes in attribution listed above, it should be noted that the current museum attribution makes no mention of, and fails to consider, the eight authenticating documents in Japanese that accompanied the painting at the time of acquisition, one of which clearly identifies the writer of the encomium (*zan* 贊) inscribed at the top of the painting as Donggu Miaoguang 東谷妙光 (?–1253), a Chinese abbot and member of the Caodong 曹洞 lineage of Chan 禪 (see also note 3 below). As it was Mr. Ma’s initial misidentification of Donggu Miaoguang as a Japanese monk that prompted consideration of the painting as a Japanese work, with this mistake now corrected and no evidence advanced to demonstrate that either the painting or inscription were produced by fifteenth-century Japanese hands, a second reevaluation of the work is called for.

While there are no other known inscriptions by Donggu Miaoguang with which to compare the writing seen here, the general style is not out of character with other Chan painting inscriptions of the late Southern Song dynasty, as noted in 1969 by Shimada Shūjirō, who also



commented that the painting is thoroughly Southern Song in style and execution. With no evidence to the contrary, there is no reason, therefore, not to accept the inscription at face value. Accepting the calligraphy and two accompanying seals as genuine, and assuming that Donggu Miaoguang added his inscription to a contemporary work, one must conclude that the painting is: Chinese, Southern Song dynasty, mid-13th century, artist unknown. (SDA)

<sup>3</sup> While the exact dates are unclear at present, Donggu Miaoguang was apparently abbot of Wanshou Temple 萬壽寺, in the city of Suzhou 蘇州, during the early to mid-1240s.

<sup>4</sup> See Xia Wenyan 夏文彥 (14th century), *Tuhua baojian* 圖繪寶鑑 (preface 1365), 4:18a, in WSKQS.