

Anonymous, 14th century

無名氏

"The Fourth Lohan"

第四羅漢圖

Hanging scroll, ink on silk  
118.2 x 44.2 cm (46 1/2 x 17 3/8 in.)

Inscription:

"The Fourth Lohan, Su-p'in-t'o (Subhinda)."

Published:

Suzuki Kei: *Comprehensive Illustrated Catalogue of Chinese Paintings* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1983), vol. 4, JP14-011, p. 256.

Recent provenance:

Yūji Eda, Tokyo

A monk sits on a grass mat placed over a rock beside a container and an incense burner. His holy stature indicated by the mandorla around his head, he holds a sutra volume in his left hand, the right raised to his mouth in a gesture of some complexity. The original sixteen (subsequently eighteen and then even more) *lohan* (Sanskrit *arhat*, Japanese *rakan*) were the personal disciples and worthies of Buddha who had been enlightened and attained perfection. In China their images were introduced into Buddhist halls of worship where they were regarded as exemplars, patrons, guarantors, and guardians of the Buddhist faith. The inscription on the present painting makes clear that originally it was one of a set of sixteen, since in later series the fourth *lohan* was identified by another name. Su-p'in-t'o (Sub-



Fig. 1. Kuan-hsiu, attributed: "Lohan", after Jan Fontein & Money L. Hickman: *Zen Painting et Calligraphy*, Boston, 1970, cat. 2, p. 5.

hinda), the fourth *lohan*, is usually represented, as here, as a venerable sage holding a sutra in his left hand, an alms-bowl and an incense burner beside him, while he snaps the fingers of his right hand so as to indicate the rapidity of the process by which he attained enlightenment.

While the exotic face, arms, and feet of the figure are rendered in some detail by fine and controlled lines, the draperies have thick and heavy contours and rough and simplified brushwork. These stylistic characteristics are held to have originated with the 10th century master Kuan-hsiu, whose "untrammeled" approach to the painting of *lohan* (fig. 1) was especially popular during the Yuan era, the period to which the present painting may be assigned on the basis of style.