



國空奇授

業且惟幽

慈如河象

贊最不休

李錦眉山画題



李錦眉



Mu-an Hsing-t'ao (1611-1684)

木庵性瑠

"Kuan-yin"

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper
83 x 31 cm. (32 5/8 x 12 1/4 in.)

Inscription:
"Mu-an."

Artist's seal:
Mu-an

Colophon by Yuan-hsien:

"Leaning on the round window,
her thoughts can only be profound;
Showing compassion and mercy to all within the seas,
demonstrating this through actions without ceasing.

Mei-shan, called Chin-lung, inscribed this painting." Seals: Seng Yuan-hsien ("The Monk Yuan-hsien");
Mei-shan

A figure with reserved, even poignant expression rests her arms against what appears to be the curving frame of a circular window or balustrade. Calligraphic lines define the robe and hood-like head covering, contrasting with the darker areas of hair and border of her garment. The eyes are downcast and suggest inner meditation while the hint of red on her lips anchors her to the present world.

Kuan-yin was the most important and popular deity of the Pure Land sect of Buddhism; the name means "One who Hears the Sounds" of prayers offered by the faithful in times of need. Originally a male deity, Kuan-yin became thought

of as female, the Goddess of Mercy and protectress of women and children.

Mu-an Hsing-t'ao (1611-1684) was a Buddhist monk who in 1654 followed his master, Yin-yuan Lung-ch'i, to Japan, where they founded the Obaku Zen school with headquarters at Manpuku-ji in Uji. Mu-an (J: Mokuan) succeeded his master as head of the temple (fig. 1) and in 1671 established another temple, the Zuisho-ji, at Shirokane in Edo. Although known today primarily as a calligrapher, an art in which he was highly skilled, Mu-an was also a fine painter, with most extant examples still at Manpuku-ji (fig. 2). Yuan-hsien was also Chinese, born in Fukien province, and presumably came to Japan at the same time as Mu-an.



Fig. 1. Anonymous: "Portrait of Mu-an," after <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muyan>



Fig. 2. Mu-an: "Hotei, Bamboo, Orchids, Chrysanthemums," after Suzuki Kei, ed.: *Comprehensive Illustrated Catalogue of Chinese Paintings*, Tokyo 1983, vol. 4, p. 151, no. JT-178-006.