
PAGODA RED



KOREAN BUDDHIST GUARDIAN MURAL TAENGHWA PAINTING

\$8,800

c. 1800 • Cotton, Paint, Pigment • Collection #CEC001

W: 42.0" D: 42.0" H: 1.0"

Evolving from the Korean tradition of tomb mural painting came the Buddhist practice of “taenghwa,” or hanging-painting, a form of religious painting that included hanging scrolls, framed paintings and wall murals. Influenced by Chinese and Central Asian Buddhist art, taenghwas were painted with Buddhist iconography and were used in Buddhist temples as visual aids during rituals and meditation. The earliest surviving examples of taenghwa date to the early 13th century and were composed of silk gauze and mineral colors. These paintings would portray images of prominent Buddhas and bodhisattvas or depict stories from Buddhist scripture. Continued...



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This example dates to the later Joseon dynasty (1392-1910), a period wherein the presiding Confucian government gradually suppressed Buddhist institutions, resulting in a stylistic shift in taenghwa painting towards brighter colors, smaller scales and simpler materials.

This example is a form of shinjung taenghwa (신중탱화), which loosely translates to “altar painting of guardian deities,” or “guardian mural” for short. The central figure, wearing a feathered headdress and illuminated by a halo, is Tongjin Posal, or Skanda, a bodhisattva charged with protecting the Lotus Sutra of the True Law, one of the most revered of all Mahāyāna Buddhist texts. Typically placed above the middle altar of a Buddhist temple, the shinjung taenghwa houses the lesser deities and Tongjin Posal is commonly positioned in the center as their defender. The figures surrounding Tongjin Posal are various heavenly gods and goddesses who together comprise the sinjung, or Host of Spirits. Painted with gouache pigments in a dark palette of red, green, brown and blue, this taenghwa is a beautiful example of this traditional art form, composed with incredible movement, intricate detailing and rich symbolism.

Gouache paint on cotton. Framed.

Significant fading due to age. Some creasing.

