

A SEATED WOODEN BODHISATTVA IN THE MUSEUM RIETBERG

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The Museum Rietberg in Zurich Switzerland is renowned for its excellent collection of Asian art, including its collection of Japanese art work. Several of these works have previously been introduced to the public, but the piece addressed in this study has not been introduced in Japan.

This statute of a seated bodhisattva measures approximately 90 centimeters in height. The pedestal, hand-held attributes, and nimbus have been lost, but the condition of the main body is excellent. The work is assumed to be an image of Ākāsagarbha bodhisattva (Jpns., Kokūzō Bosatsu) given the position of the hands and its half-lotus meditating posture, which are described in the *Qiuwen yigui* (Jpns., *Gumon giki*). Although there is no inscription, from the form of the topknot, tied in a floral shape, the form of its ample body, and the absence of inlaid eyes, it can be surmised that it is a work of a sculptor working in the tradition of the celebrated, early-Kamakura era sculptor Unkei. There is evidence that the sculpture once sat on a pedestal, and it appears that the piece likely contained enshrined objects on the basis of the hollowed out interior and the depth of the precisely incised chiseling. This work cannot be overlooked in any future consideration of the history of Japanese sculpture and particularly that of the middle ages.