Born in a Golden Light: Omens, Art, and Succession in the Southern Song (1127-1279)

Cathy Muyao Zhu

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy under the Executive Committee of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

2022
Abstract

Born in a Golden Light: Omens, Art, and Succession in the Southern Song (1127-1279)

Cathy Muyao Zhu

In 1126, the Song Dynasty (960-1279) was faced with an exigent political crisis: after testing the borders for years, the neighboring Jin state marched its armies south, destroyed the capital city Bianjing, and reduced its territories by half. The dynasty’s collapse and reconstitution in southern China has prompted ongoing scholarly debate about what types of political, economic, and cultural differences emerged between the Northern and Southern Song periods. My project uses the narrative handscroll *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses* to study the development of the imperial cult and images of rulership in the Southern Song.

It is the first monograph length study of the scroll since it was rediscovered in 2009 and examines how the reigning Zhao house effectively used visual and material culture to argue for its legitimacy, employing the rhetoric of moral justice and acculturation, rather than overt depictions of military dominance, to describe the establishment of the Southern Song and its first ruler. Works such as *Illustrations* demonstrate that the sophistication of court-based art was not destroyed along with its physical structures. Rather, with the move south artists became essential to promoting the political aims of the court: using cultural legacy as the most expedient way to purchase political legitimacy in a time of uncertainty. *Illustrations* acts as an expertly articulated defense of the court’s right to rule, echoes of which have filtered through the late imperial period and can be seen in how China positions itself in relation to the world today.
# Table of Contents

List of Illustrations .................................................................................................................. iii

Acknowledgments ..................................................................................................................... xii

Introduction .............................................................................................................................. 1

Chapter 1: The Twelve Omens ............................................................................................... 13

1.1 Cao Xun’s Life and Career .............................................................................................. 13

1.2 Conflict and Uncertainty in the Early Southern Song ..................................................... 15

1.3 The Twelve Scenes .......................................................................................................... 18

1.4 Qianlong’s Foreword and Questions Raised ...................................................................... 32

Chapter 2: A Tale of Two Robes in Gaozong’s Succession .................................................. 38

2.1 Prince Kang’s Dream ....................................................................................................... 38

2.2 Rebuilding the Song Imperial Collection ........................................................................ 39

2.3 Purchasing from Public Markets .................................................................................... 43

2.4 Circulating Omens and Legitimation Debates ................................................................ 46

2.5 Cao Xun & the Five Agents Theory ................................................................................ 56

Chapter 3: Omen Images since the Han and Interpretive Claims .......................................... 67

3.1 Han through Six Dynasties Omen Images ...................................................................... 68

3.2 Song Omen Images ........................................................................................................ 80

3.3 Pictorial Hagiographies & Narrative Immersion .............................................................. 86
Chapter 4: Authorship of *Illustrations* and the Song Royal Image ................................................. 97

4.1 Song Sources and the Xiao Zhao Attribution ................................................................................. 97

4.2 Xianying guan (Temple of Manifesting Responses) ...................................................................... 108

4.3 Imperial Likenesses, Imperial Icons ......................................................................................... 116

4.4 The Song Imperial Collection during the Yuan Dynasty ............................................................... 125

Chapter 5: Recovering the “Ancestors’ Old Things”: Ming Copies and Composites ............... 130

5.1 Wu Kuan on Gaozong’s Legacy and the Role of Omens .............................................................. 130

5.2 The Taipei “Li Song” Scroll and Ming Discourses of the Foreign ............................................. 137

5.3 The Scroll Reproduced in Xie Zhiliu’s *Tang Wudai Song Yuan mingji* .................................. 149

5.4 The Tianjin Museum Scroll ........................................................................................................ 151

5.5 The Qiu Ying Scroll in Beijing .................................................................................................. 155

5.6 The Later History of the Shanghai Scroll .................................................................................. 159

Conclusion ........................................................................................................................................ 164

Illustrations ......................................................................................................................................... 167

Bibliography ..................................................................................................................................... 278

Appendix A: Long Museum Handscroll Texts ............................................................................... 306

Appendix B: A Comparison of Encomiums .................................................................................... 314
List of Illustrations

Figure 1 (introduction). *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, early 1170s, handscroll, ink, color, and gold on silk, Long Museum West Bund.

Figure 1.1. Section one of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 1.1. Section two of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 1.3. Li Gonglin 李公麟 (ca. 1041-1106), *The Classic of Filial Piety*, ca. 1085, handscroll, ink and color on silk, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Figure 1.4. Section three of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 1.5. Section four of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 1.6. Detail of section five of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 1.7. Detail of section five of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 1.8. Detail of section six of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 1.9. Detail of section six of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 1.10. Section seven of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 1.11. Section eight of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 1.12. Detail of section thirteen, *Eighteen Songs of a Nomad Flute* 胡笳十八拍圖, 12th c., handscroll, ink, color, and gold on silk, Museum of Fine Arts Boston.

Figure 1.13. Section nine of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 1.14. Section ten of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 1.15. Section eleven of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 1.16. Section twelve of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.
Figure 1.17. Detail of section twelve of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 1.18. Detail of frontispiece, Qianlong Emperor 乾隆 (r. 1735-1796), *Illustrations*, Long Museum.

Figure 2.1. Detail of section twelve, *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, early 1170s, handscroll, ink, color, and gold on silk, Long Museum West Bund.

Figure 2.2. Detail of section twelve of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 2.3. Detail of section twelve of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 2.4. Detail of section twelve of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 2.5. Detail of section twelve of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 2.6. Table of the Five Elements: Cycles and Corresponding Colors. Reproduced from Yuan Chen, “Legitimation Discourse and the Theory of the Five Elements in Imperial China,” 2014, 327.

Figure 2.7. Anonymous, 12th c., Seated Portrait of Emperor Song Gaozong, hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, National Palace Museum. Image from museum website.

Figure 3.1. Detail of section four of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, early 1170s, handscroll, ink, color, and gold on silk, Long Museum.

Figure 3.2. Detail of section four of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 3.3. Detail of section four of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Fig. 3.4. Detail of Divination by Astrological and Meteoromatic Phenomena天文氣象雜占, Mawangdui Tomb #3, early Western Han Dynasty (206—168 BCE), ink and color on silk, Hunan Provincial Museum. Reproduced from Qiu Xigui, ed., *Changsha Mawangdui Han mu jianbo jicheng* 長沙馬王堆漢墓簡帛集成, vol. 1 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2014), 204.

Fig. 3.5. Detail of *Divination by Astrological and Meteoromatic Phenomena*, Hunan Provincial Museum. Reproduced from Qiu Xigui, ed., *Changsha Mawangdui Han mu jianbo jicheng* 長沙馬王堆漢墓簡帛集成, vol. 1 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2014), 205.

Fig. 3.6. Detail of *Divination by Astrological and Meteoromatic Phenomena*, Hunan Provincial Museum. Reproduced from Qiu Xigui, ed., *Changsha Mawangdui Han mu jianbo jicheng* 長沙馬王堆漢墓簡帛集成, vol. 1 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2014), 207.
Fig. 3.7. Detail of *Divination by Astrological and Meteoromatic Phenomena*, Hunan Provincial Museum. Reproduced from Qiu Xigui, ed., *Changsha Mawangdui Han mu jianbo jicheng* 長沙馬王堆漢墓簡帛集成, vol. 1 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2014), 206

Fig. 3.8. “Intertwining Trees,” Wu Liang shrine omen slab 2, second century CE, reconstructed rubbing of stone carving, Shandong Province. Reproduced from Lippiello, *Auspicious Omens and Miracles in Ancient China*, 70.

Fig. 3.9. Detail of Dunhuang star atlas, manuscript Or.8210/S.3326, early Tang dynasty, ink on paper, British Library. Image provided by the British Library through the International Dunhuang Project (IDP).

Fig. 3.10. Detail of manuscript P.2683, late 6th c., ink and color on paper, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.

Fig. 3.11. Detail of manuscript P.2683, Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Fig. 3.12. Plate from *Shan hai jing* 《山海經》 (*Guideways through Mountains and Seas*), 1597 edition, reproduced from Richard E. Strassberg, *A Chinese Bestiary: Strange Creatures from the Guideways through Mountains and Seas*, 98.

Fig. 3.13. Emperor Huizong (r. 1100-1125), *Five-colored Parakeet on a Blossoming Apricot Tree* 五色鸚鵡圖, 1110’s, ink and color on silk, Museum of Fine Arts Boston. Image from www.mfa.org.

Fig. 3.14. Detail of *Five-colored Parakeet on a Blossoming Apricot Tree*, Museum of Fine Arts Boston. Image from www.mfa.org.

Fig. 3.15. “Birds Joined at the Wings,” Wu Liang shrine omen slab 2, second century CE, reconstructed rubbing of stone carving, Shandong Province. Reproduced from Lippiello, *Auspicious Omens and Miracles in Ancient China*, 71.

Fig. 3.16. Emperor Huizong (r. 1100-1125), Auspicious Cranes 瑞鶴圖, 1112, ink and color on silk, Liaoning Provincial Museum.

Fig. 3.17. Emperor Xuanzong (r. 685-762), *Ode on Pied Wagtails* 鶺鴒頌, 719, ink on paper, National Palace Museum.

Fig. 3.18. Banner, 9th C., ink, color, and gold on silk, Mogao Cave 17, Dunhuang, British Museum, 1919,0101,0.99.

Figure 3.19. Detail of section one, *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 3.20. Banner, 9th C., ink and color on silk, Mogao Cave 17, Dunhuang, British Museum, 1919,0101,0.91.
Figure 3.21. Detail of section two, *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 3.22. Detail of Siddartha shootings arrows, Yanshan si, Mañjuśrī Hall, 1167, mural painting, Fashi County, Shanxi. Reproduced from Chang Le, *Yanshansi xiang shi*, 65.

Figure 3.23. Banner, ca. 701-850, ink and color on silk, Mogao Cave 17, Dunhuang, British Museum, 1919,0101,0.88.

Figure 3.24. Detail of section two, *Eighteen Songs of a Nomad Flute* 胡笳十八拍圖, early 15th c. copy of a 12th c. work, handscroll, ink, color, and gold on silk, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Figure 3.25. Anonymous, detail of *Illustrations of the Imperial Guard of Honor* 大駕鹵簿圖書, ca. 1053-1065, handscroll, ink and color on silk, Museum of Chinese History, Beijing.


Figure 3.27. Detail of *Qingming shanghe tu*, Palace Museum, Beijing. Image from Asia for Educators, Columbia University website, http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/song-scroll/song.html.


Figure 3.29. Detail of section six, *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 3.30. Detail of section six, *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 3.31. Detail of section five, *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 3.32. Detail of section six, *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 3.33. Anonymous, 12th c., *Seated Portrait of Emperor Song Xiaozong* 蕭照 (fl. 1130-1162?) , Travelers in a Mountain Pass 《關山行旅》, likely Ming work, album leaf, ink and colors on silk, National Palace Museum. Image from museum website.

Figure 4.1. Attributed to Xiao Zhao 蕭照 (fl. 1130-1162?) , *Travelers in a Mountain Pass* 《關山行旅》, likely Ming work, album leaf, ink and colors on silk, National Palace Museum. Image from museum website.

Figure 4.2. Anonymous, inscribed by Emperor Gaozong 高宗 (r. 1127-1162), *Autumn River in Twilight* 《秋江暝泊圖》, fan mounted as album leaf, ink and colors on silk, Palace Museum.

Figure 4.3. Xiao Zhao, *Temple on the Mountainside* 《山腰樓觀》, mid-12th c., hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, National Palace Museum.
Figure 4.4. Detail of Xiao Zhao, *Temple on the Mountainside*, National Palace Museum.

Figure 4.5. Detail of Xiao Zhao, *Temple on the Mountainside*, National Palace Museum.

Figure 4.6. Detail of section six from *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, early 1170s, handscroll, ink, color, and gold on silk, Long Museum.

Figure 4.7. Map of West Lake and the capital, 《（咸淳）臨安志》, woodblock print book, 1868 reprint of 13th c. edition.

Figure 4.8. Su Hanchen 蘅漢臣 (active 1120s-1170s?), *Lady at Her Dressing Table in a Garden*, mid 12th c., fan painting remounted as album leaf, ink, color, and gold on silk, Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Image from www.mfa.org.

Figure 4.9. Detail of Su Hanchen, *Lady at Her Dressing Table in a Garden*, Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Image from www.mfa.org.

Figure 4.10. Detail of Su Hanchen, *Lady at Her Dressing Table in a Garden*.

Figure 4.11. Detail of section four from *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*.

Figure 4.12. Detail of section nine from *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 4.13. Detail of Li Tang 李唐 (ca. 1070s-1150s), *Duke Wen of Jin Recovering His State* 晉文公復國圖, handscroll, ink and color on silk, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Figure 4.14. Detail of section eleven from *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 4.15. Detail of section 5 from *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 4.16. Detail of Su Hanchen, *Lady at Her Dressing Table in a Garden*, Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Image from www.mfa.org.

Figure 4.17. Detail of Su Hanchen, *Lady at Her Dressing Table in a Garden*, Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Image from www.mfa.org.

Figure 4.18. Detail of section six of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 4.19. Detail of section one of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 4.20. Detail of Su Hanchen, *Lady at Her Dress Table in a Garden*, Boston MFA.

Figure 4.21. Detail of section seven of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 4.22. Map of major temples in Kaifeng with portraits of Song emperors, reproduced from Ebrey, “Portrait Sculptures in Imperial Ancestral Rites in Song China,” 44.
Figure 4.23. Detail of section eleven of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 4.24. Anonymous, 12th c., detail of *Seated Portrait of Emperor Song Gaozong*, hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, National Palace Museum.

Figure 4.25. Anonymous, 12th c., *Half Portrait of Emperor Song Gaozong*, album, ink and color on silk, National Palace Museum.

Figure 4.26. Detail of “Receiving the Khitan Envoys” from *Four Events of the Jingde Era* 景德四圖, Anonymous, ca. 1049, handscroll, ink and color on silk, National Palace Museum, Taipei.

Figure 4.27. Detail of “Viewing Books at the Pavilion of Great Purity” from *Four Events of the Jingde Era*, National Palace Museum.

Figure 4.28. Attributed to Yi Chehyŏn 李齊賢 (1287-1367), *Crossing the River on Horseback* 騎馬渡江圖, ink and color on silk, handscroll (?) mounted on board, National Museum of Korea.

Figure 4.29. Detail of section eleven of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.


Figure 5.2. Anonymous, *A Qilin and Attendant*, with Shen Du’s 沈度 (1357–1434) inscribed eulogy and his preface dated 1414, hanging scroll, ink and colors on silk, National Palace Museum, Taipei.

Figure 5.3. The Optimus Wu Kuan, *Zhuangyuan tukao 《明狀元圖考》* (*Illustrated Study of Optimi*), published 1643, Harvard-Yenching Library.

Figure 5.4. Attributed to Li Song 李嵩 (fl. 1190—1230), *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses* 瑞應圖, 16th-17th c., handscroll, ink and color on silk, National Palace Museum.

Figure 5.5. Detail of section twelve of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, National Palace Museum.

Figure 5.6. Detail of section twelve of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, early 1170s, handscroll, ink, color, and gold on silk, Long Museum.

Figure 5.7. Detail of section twelve, *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, National Palace Museum.

Figure 5.8. Detail of section five, *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, National Palace Museum.
Figure 5.9. Detail of section nine, *Illustrations*, National Palace Museum.

Figure 5.10. Detail of section nine, *Illustrations*, Long Museum.

Figure 5.11. Detail of section nine, Anonymous, *Illustrations of Shaoxing Auspicious Omens*, handscroll, ink and color on silk, Tianjin Museum.

Figure 5.12. Detail of section nine, *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, National Palace Museum.

Figure 5.13. Detail of section nine, *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 5.14. Detail of section four, *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, National Palace Museum.

Figure 5.15. Detail of section four, *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 5.16. Attributed to Zhang Zeduan 張擇端 (1085—1145), *Qingming in Ease and Simplicity* 清明易簡圖, 16th-17th c., handscroll, ink and color on silk, National Palace Museum.

Figure 5.17. Qiu Ying 仇英 (ca. 1494–1552), *Spring Dawn in the Han Palace* 漢宮春曉, handscroll, ink and color on silk, National Palace Museum.

Figure 5.18. Colophon, *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, National Palace Museum.

Figure 5.19. Colophon, *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, National Palace Museum.

Figure 5.20. Detail of section four, *Illustrations of the Auspicious Responses during the Restoration* 中興禎應圖, reproduced from Xie Zhiliu, *Tang Wudai Song Yuan mingji* 《唐五代宋元明迹》 (Shanghai: Gudian wenxue chubanshe 1957), 66.

Figure 5.21. Detail of section six, *Illustrations*, reproduced from Xie Zhiliu, *Tang Wudai Song Yuan mingji*, 76.

Figure 5.22. Detail of section six, *Illustrations*, reproduced from Xie Zhiliu, *Tang Wudai Song Yuan mingji*, 65.

Figure 5.23. Detail of section five, *Illustrations*, reproduced from Julia Murray, “Ts'ao Hsün and Two Southern Sung History Scrolls,” 18.

Figure 5.24. Detail of section five, *Illustrations*, reproduced from Xie Zhiliu, *Tang Wudai Song Yuan mingji*, 68.

Figure 5.25. Detail of section five, *Illustrations*, reproduced from Xie Zhiliu, *Tang Wudai Song Yuan mingji*, 71.
Figure 5.26. *Illustrations of Shaoxing Auspicious Omens*, Tianjin Museum.

Figure 5.27. Encomium to section seven of *Illustrations*, Tianjin Museum.

Figure 5.28. Encomium to section seven, *Illustrations*, Long Museum.

Figure 5.29. Encomium to section nine of *Illustrations*, Tianjin Museum.

Figure 5.30. Encomium to section twelve of *Illustrations*, Tianjin Museum.

Figure 5.31. Detail of section seven, *Illustrations*, Tianjin Museum.

Figure 5.32. Detail of section seven, *Illustrations*, Long Museum.

Figure 5.33. Detail of section twelve, *Illustrations*, Tianjin Museum.

Figure 5.34. Detail of section twelve, *Illustrations*, Long Museum.

Figure 5.35. Detail of section seven, *Illustrations*, Tianjin Museum.

Figure 5.36. Detail of section seven, *Illustrations*, Tianjin Museum.

Figure 5.37. Detail of section seven, *Illustrations*, Long Museum.

Figure 5.38. Qiu Ying 仇英 (ca. 1494—1552), *Illustrations of Auspicious Omens*, handscroll, ink and color on silk, Palace Museum. Image from museum website.

Figure 5.39. Detail of section seven, Qiu Ying, *Illustrations*, Palace Museum.

Figure 5.40. Detail of section twelve, Qiu Ying, *Illustrations*, Palace Museum.

Figure 5.41. Section eleven, *Illustrations*, Long Museum.

Figure 5.42. Detail of section eleven, *Illustrations*, Long Museum.

Figure 5.43. Section eleven, Qiu Ying, *Illustrations*, Palace Museum.

Figure 5.44. Detail of section eleven, Qiu Ying, *Illustrations*, Palace Museum.

Figure 5.45. Detail of section twelve, Qiu Ying, *Illustrations*, Palace Museum.

Figure 5.46. Detail of section twelve, *Illustrations*, Long Museum.

Figure 5.47. Detail of section twelve, *Illustrations*, Tianjin Museum.
Figure 5.48. Detail of section twelve, Qiu Ying, *Illustrations*, Palace Museum.

Figure 5.49. Detail of section twelve, *Illustrations*, Long Museum.

Figure 5.50. Detail of section seven, *Illustrations*, Long Museum.

Figure 5.51. Detail of section seven, Qiu Ying, *Illustrations*, Palace Museum.

Figure 5.52. Anonymous, *Illustrations of Auspicious Omens* (catalogued as *Begging for Cleverness on Qixi* 七夕乞巧圖, 16th c. or later, handscroll, ink and color on silk, National Palace Museum.

Figure 5.53. Anonymous, *Illustrations of Auspicious Omens* (catalogued as *Pavilion with Figures*), 16th c. or later, handscroll, ink and color on silk, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Figure 5.54. A proposed history of *Illustrations*.


Figure 5.57. Detail of frontispiece, Qianlong Emperor, *Illustrations*, Long Museum.

Figure 5.58. Detail of frontispiece, Qianlong Emperor, *Illustrations*, Long Museum.

Figure 5.59. Detail of frontispiece, Qianlong Emperor, *Illustrations*, Long Museum.

Figure 5.60. Detail of frontispiece, Qianlong Emperor, *Illustrations*, Long Museum.

Figure 5.61. Detail of frontispiece, Qianlong Emperor, *Illustrations*, Long Museum.

Figure 6.1 (conclusion). Giuseppe Castiglione (1699-1766), *The Qianlong Emperor Attending Imperial Hunting Games*, 1755, hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, National Palace Museum. Image from museum website.

Figure 6.2. Detail of section ten, *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 6.3. Section ten, *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 6.4. Detail of *Stag Hunt* 獵鹿圖, attributed to Huang Zongdao 黃宗道 (active ca. 1120), handscroll, ink and color on paper, Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image from museum website.
Acknowledgments

I would like to begin by thanking Professor Robert E. Harrist, Jr., the supervisor of my graduate studies and a scholar, teacher, and writer whom I will always admire. His conviction in the power of looking at a work of art has swayed many students and convinced me to persist through the intellectual challenges of writing a dissertation. Professor Robert Hymes’ courses helped me build a foundation in middle period Chinese history, while Professors Dawn Delbanco, Matthew Mc Kelway, and Freda Murck have shaped my understanding of East Asian art and culture. Professors Jonathan Hay and Hsueh-man Shen at the Institute of Fine Arts also welcomed me into their courses, where my dissertation topic first germinated.

Research for the dissertation was conducted over several trips to China, Taiwan, and Europe over the course of three years, supported by the SYLFF Association, the American Oriental Society, the Mary Griggs Burke Center for Japanese art, C.V. Starr and GSAS Travel Fellowships from Columbia University, and the Weatherhead East Asia Institute. The support of the following and their willingness to share their perspectives on my project is deeply appreciated: Xie Xiaodong, Lou Pengzhu, Deng Xiaonan, Michael Cherney, Chiu Shih-hua, Chen Yunru, Fang Ling-kuang, and Ling Lizhong. Summer study trips to Dunhuang with the Dunhuang Woodenfish Foundation and Heidelberg University for the Getty Dissertation Workshop were instrumental in widening the scope of my understanding of East Asian art and scholarship. Conversations with Professors Lothar Ledderose, Sarah Fraser, Yukio Lippit, Shane McCausland, Craig Clunas, Lianming Wang, Cecie Riley, and Timon Screech helped my
dissertation take shape. I’m also grateful for meeting and learning from Gabrielle Niu, Chris Loo, Mai Yamaguchi, Ruying Gao, Katharina Rode, Monica Klasing Chen, Yang Chen, Lu Yun-chen, Shiori Hiraki, Wang Xiaoshi, and Yu Leqi.

In New York, I was fortunate to find intellectual stimulation and camaraderie in the communities at Columbia and the Institute of Fine Arts. I would like to thank Joyce Chun-yi Tsai, Xiaohan Du, Hwanhee Suh, Joe Scheier-Dolberg, Andrea Horisaki-Christens, Jeewon Kim, Valerie Zinner, Daniel Ralston, Mikael Muehlbauer, Karin Christiaens, Isabella Lores-Chavez, Sau-yi Fong, Chung Wei Yang, Ye Yuan, Zach Berge-Becker, Nataly Shahaf, Chuanxin Weng, Midori Oka, Nicole Meily, Elizabeth Lee, Hui Fang, Shujing Wang, Yeorae Yoon, Fan Zhang, Jiete Li, Shek-on John Yiu, and my editor Candice Kail. My last year of writing was supported by a dissertation completion fellowship from the Mellon Foundation/ACLS, which saw me through the project despite the disruptions of the pandemic.

A final thanks goes to my parents, Eric Dahl—my tireless reader, interlocuter, and companion over these many years—and Leo Alexander, our light.
To my parents
Introduction

Illustrations of Auspicious Responses

When Prince Kang 康王 (personal name Zhao Gou 趙構) took the throne in the fifth month of 1127 and became Emperor Gaozong 高宗 (r. 1127-1162), the first ruler of the Southern Song, his succession was linked to several unusual objects. Cao Xun 曹勳 (1098-1174), a member of the military bureaucracy and trusted servant of Gaozong’s father Emperor Huizong (r. 1101-1126), had escaped from his Jurchen captors and traveled to meet the court in Yingtian 應天 (present-day Shangqiu 商丘 in Henan Province). He smuggled south on his person a gold earring that belonged to Gaozong’s wife, the knowledge of two additional items Huizong had bestowed to the prince in secret, and a message from Huizong written on the collar of his inner garment. The eight-character note gives Huizong’s approval to the unforeseen succession plan and became known as the famous “collar edict.”¹ In the early 1170s after Gaozong’s reign had ended, Cao Xun memorialized his involvement in the transition with a lengthy, twelve-part painting known as Illustrations of Auspicious Responses 瑞應圖 (Fig. i).

Cao Xun (hao Songyin 松隱) was born in Yangdi 陽翟 in present-day Henan Province to a family serving the Song court as military officials. He received his jinshi degree in 1123,

¹ 可便即真,來救父母 (“You may at once assume the throne, then come and rescue your parents”). Cao Xun, Bei shou jianwen lu 北狩見聞錄 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2008), 6b. For the political significance of the edict and its transformation over the course of Gaozong’s reign, see Charles Hartman, “Cao Xun and the Legend of Emperor Taizu’s Oath,” in State Power in China, 900—1325, ed. Patricia Buckley Ebrey and Paul Jakov Smith (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2016), 62-98.
following in the footsteps of his father Cao Zu 曹組 (jinshi by decree 1121). Both men worked closely with Huizong, and the Cao family was likely related to the emperor through marriage as affinal kin. After being taken prisoner by the Jin army and escaping captivity in 1127, Cao Xun rejoined the Southern Song court and held official positions intermittently until his death in 1174. In his time away from office, as was common for men working in government, Cao Xun focused his energy on poetry and other writings. These works were gathered into the collection Songyin ji 《松隱集》 (Writings of the Pine Recluse), compiled posthumously by his son Cao Si 曹耜 (1137-1197).

Cao Xun’s text written on Illustrations is listed in Songyin ji as “Encomium and Preface to ‘Illustrations of Imperial Omens’” 《聖瑞圖贊并序》. The “Encomium and Preface” is dated to the end of Cao’s life between 1171 and 1174, which also provides the range of possible dates for the painting. The scroll opens with a preface, and a laudatory passage in prose and verse is written after each of the twelve segments of the painting, identifying the figures and explaining the weight of their actions. Although Illustrations was well documented from the Ming dynasty onwards and frequently reproduced, a version with all twelve segments only

---


4 Cao Xun (1098-1174), Songyin ji 松隱集 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1977), 29.1-11, hereafter SYJ.

5 Murray dates the text to this window based on taboo characters and titles used for Qinzong, Gaozong, and Gaozong’s mother Empress Wei or Xianren 顯仁 (1080-1159) in Julia K. Murray, “Ts’ao Hsün and Two Southern Sung History Scrolls,” Ars Orientalis 15 (1985): 3—4.
became publicly known in 2009 and now allows for close study. This relatively well-preserved handscroll, measuring almost fifty feet in length and now located at the Long Museum in Shanghai, forms the basis of this study.

The events depicted in Illustrations begin with Prince Kang’s birth in 1107 and end with a dream sequence which plays out against the backdrop of the Jin invasion in late 1126. The scenes follow the prince from birth through childhood into his experiences as a young man during the Jin-Song wars, but they are not arranged in strict chronological order. Sections 1 through 3 describe the prince’s birth and childhood, defined by the intervention of protective deities and early signs of physical strength and martial ability. The next passage of sections 4 thorough 6 depicts Prince Kang’s formative experiences in politics; as the ninth son of Huizong, he was never in serious contention for the throne before the war and was sent as a diplomat and royal hostage twice to the Jin. The second half of the handscroll takes place after the prince had accidentally traveled behind enemy lines and the Jin army had launched its final campaign against the Northern Song capital Kaifeng. Sections 7 and 8 show the efforts of two women: Consort Wei using a chess board to predict her son’s future while she remained in Jin captivity and an old woman who misdirects Jin troops in pursuit of the prince. They are followed by sections 9 and 10, two episodes in which the prince’s marksmanship presages his political and military successes. The scroll ends with section 11, showing a narrow escape across the Yellow

---

6 The scroll came to auction in 2009 at China Guardian Auctions in Beijing and now belongs to the collection of the Long Museum West Bund in Shanghai. Other notable but partial versions belong to the Tianjin Museum, the National Palace Museum, the Palace Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and several private collections. A twelve-scene handscroll is recorded in Xie Zhiliu, Tang Wudai Song Yuan mingji 唐五代宋元明迹 (Shanghai: Gudian wenxue chubanshe, 1957), 65-81. Only four sections are reproduced with black-and-white photographs, and the painting’s current whereabouts are unknown. None of the Long Museum, Tianjin Museum, and Xie Zhiliu versions have signatures or Song period seals.
River from the Jin army, and section 12, depicting the prince’s dream of his older brother Qinzong granting his own robe, denoting emperorship.

In the painting, Cao Xun uses a range of vocabulary to describe Heaven’s signs, including auspicious sign (rui 瑞), heavenly response (ying 應), tally or talisman (fu 符), prophecy (zhao 兆), and divination (bu 卜). Although some scenes may not intuitively seem like omens, Cao Xun is able to use their flexibility within the Song framework of predictive phenomena to craft an ambitious narrative. The scroll is at once a document of historical events, a reverie of lost northern territories, and an argument for the moral and cultural supremacy of the Song court. In other words, it maps the person of Zhao Gou onto the geography of Song lands and links the physicality of the painting surface with affective notions of identity and longing.

Methodology and Structure

In the next five chapters, I argue that Illustrations presents a vision of Song identity as ordered by culture, of the imperial house’s sole claim to such culture, and therefore its inseparability from the state. It does so despite the temptations of falling back on Han-nativist, ethnocentric rhetoric against a foreign and therefore “barbaric” invader, as happened in the later Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), which saw a proliferation of copies made of Illustrations and interest in its themes. The painting touches upon questions of nationhood, identity, and the roles that artmaking and culture at large play in the Chinese model of imperial legitimacy. Illustrations, narrative scrolls and paintings of omens during the twelfth century, and painted and sculpted portraits of the ruling Zhao house will be considered together as an eclectic, far-
reaching visuality of the Song imperial cult. The core research question of my dissertation is what role such a visual culture played in shaping Song identity in times of crisis and outside threat and in shaping the meanings of Chinese culturalism in a multi-state East Asia.8

Though Illustrations of Auspicious Responses survived in many copies and fragments, the circumstances surrounding its original creation are unknown from Song sources aside from Cao Xun’s biji. The identity of the painter is the subject of the second chapter, but the work was likely produced with the consent of Gaozong and with the resources available at court. Adding to the complexity of studying the painting is the absence of any records—aside from Cao Xun’s own words—of the work from before the mid-Ming dynasty (1368-1644).9 The first known mention of the painting under the title Illustrations of Auspicious Responses of the Shaoxing Period 紹興瑞應圖 is by the government official and calligrapher Wu Kuan 吳寬 (1435-1504). In a colophon written after seeing a twelve-scene version, Wu Kuan admits that although the painting is exquisite, he does not know who the artist may be.10 Our inquiry begins with writings by and perceptions of Cao Xun, who bridged the two halves of the Song dynasty, to understand

---


10 Wu Kuan, Paoweng jia cang ji 鞠翁家藏集, vol. 11 (Chanzhou: Wu Shi 吳奭, 1508), 55.98-99.
the function of a painting such as *Illustrations*. Cao Xun’s life and career will be used to map out the shifting political terrain of the early Southern Song and how his aims and *Illustrations* folded into the larger project of laying claim to the Northern Song’s cultural legitimacy.

The first part of the project traces the development of the *Illustrations* project over the course of five decades, from its conception during the immediate aftermath of 1127 to the completion of the handscroll in the 1170s. *Chapter One: The Twelve Omens* introduces the omens in the handscroll and situates its conception during the early Southern Song, a period of protracted military conflict and social instability. Visual analysis of the scenes is paired with a textual analysis of the encomiums and preface on the handscroll to frame foundational research questions such as authorship, original viewing contexts, and reception history discussed in subsequent chapters.

*Chapter Two: A Tale of Two Robes in Song Gaozong’s Succession* focuses on the military official Cao Xun, the author of the work’s text segments and director of the project. After the collapse of the Northern Song, Gaozong’s court spent more than a decade on the run and finally settled in Lin’an (modern Hangzhou) in 1138. A return to normalcy was marked by the resumption of court rituals and the reestablishment of the much-reduced imperial art collection. Cao Xun was a central figure in the effort to recover lost or looted works and to organize the collection according to Gaozong’s preferences. Using a rich collection of personal writings by Cao Xun and other Song and Yuan sources, I show that his handling of the imperial collection—criticized by later writers—was responding to the sensitive issue at the time of how to claim cultural hegemony and dynastic continuity while also distancing from the failures of Gaozong’s father. A previously untranslated memorial Cao Xun submitted to Gaozong in 1133 demonstrates that the project was conceived four decades earlier than previous scholarship
argued for, in a drastically different political climate. I contend that Cao Xun aimed to shift the focus of the list of omens from the Mandate of Heaven and its patrilineal method of transmission to the alternative Five Agents theory in light of the prince’s unusual route to succession.

Chapter Three: Omen Images and Interpretive Claims situates the work within the history of omen images, from the Han dynasty (202 BCE—220 CE) to the late Northern Song, other handscrolls often described as “history paintings” produced at Gaozong’s court, and Buddhist narrative paintings and storytelling structures. Multiple social groups, such as divinatory specialists, the imperial house, and educated scholars, all proclaimed to have an understanding of how omens relate to statecraft and political legitimacy. Cao Xun and the artist worked to combine multiple discursive traditions and iconographies of rulership into a single argument for legitimacy that fit the political contingencies of the restoration. The approach mirrors the nonsectarian, eclectic nature of Song official historiography11 but does so in an aesthetically innovative way.

The second half of this project traces a broader historical trajectory of how the scroll fits into the visuality of the imperial cult and how it has traveled through Ming and Qing Dynasty collections as a site of contestation for the Song’s legacy and more broadly, the identity of China. Illustrations operates on engaging with conventions of depicting members of the imperial family while also reinventing them, which I examine in Chapter Four: Authorship of Illustrations and the Song Royal Image. The chapter addresses the questions of who was involved in the creation of the painting and how Song and Yuan viewers may have interacted with it. Through the study of local temple history and detailed stylistic analysis, I suggest that Illustrations was possibly the

masterpiece of figure painter and religious specialist Su Hanchen 蘇漢臣 (active 1120s-1170s), and the evidence surrounding imperial portraiture points to Illustrations as a tightly controlled object of veneration. It was connected to large-scale, semipublic works at Lin’an temples such as murals and sculptures that commemorated the omens and the founding of the dynasty, but was likely used in the context of private devotion within the palace.

Chapter Five: Recovering the “Ancestors’ Old Things”: Ming Copies and Composites discusses the reception and transformation of Illustrations in the Ming and Qing dynasties when the handscroll left the imperial collection, was copied frequently, and transformed from a portrait-icon with restricted viewership to an art commodity. The painting became popular with the educated elites of the Jiangnan area in southern China, who by no coincidence were sympathetic to the local ties of the Southern Song. In the Qing, its reception changed again as several versions were brought into Qianlong’s imperial collection and the prince was condemned as a political and military failure. Illustrations became a screen onto which judgments about the past and desires of how it may have been different were projected because of its subject, but the scroll also proved irresistible to even the most politically intractable of collectors.

Illustrations of Auspicious Responses has been frequently characterized in two ways: as a product of its format as a narrative handscroll and as a piece of “propaganda” to convince the public of Gaozong’s rightful succession.12 Scholarship, especially the writing of Julia Murray,

has firmly established the production of other narrative handscrolls in the mid-twelfth century as seemingly designed to advance the political aims of the Song court.\footnote{13} Examples include paintings on classical themes (Mao shi scrolls from the Book of Poetry, Ladies’ Classic of Filial Piety) and the timely notion of homecoming (Eighteen Songs of a Nomad Flute: The Story of Lady Wenji, Duke Wen of Jin Recovering His State, Welcoming the Carriage). As attractive as the model of a centralized painting academy following a cohesive political agenda may be, in reality many of these works cannot be firmly dated to Gaozong’s reign\footnote{14} and the Southern Song academy was decentralized compared to Huizong’s institution.\footnote{15} The dating of and argumentation for legitimacy within Illustrations is well grounded by comparison. My research demonstrates that although being both a narrative and a work promoting the imperial cult contributes to the


understanding of the scroll, these characterizations are insufficient when considered in isolation from the wider social, intellectual, and artistic context of the early Southern Song. The most important factors that inform my study are the historiography of the Song imperial cult, how images of Song rulers were conceived of and viewed, and a millennium-long discourse of verifying and interpreting omens through pictures.

If there is no indigenous term for narrative painting within the discourse of traditional Chinese painting connoisseurship, perhaps it is for good reason. Artworks that are grouped together through “narrative” such as paintings on literary or poetic themes, Buddhist and Daoist hagiographies, and genre scenes sometimes have little in common aside from the use of figures to move a story forward. Although Illustrations uses narrative forms to their fullest extent, I argue that framing the scroll predominantly as a narrative work risks overemphasizing its formal elements and losing sight of its function. The central subject matter of the painting are the omens that the young prince encountered or experienced, and omen images are ultimately functional objects. They are used to record, verify, interpret, and perhaps enshrine the efficacy of the omen. In this way, they have more in common with artworks created in religious contexts or for ritual purposes, two ways of adding depth to our understanding of a scroll such as Illustrations.

Maggie Bickford’s research on the omen images produced at Huizong’s court has been especially instructive for my project, as has Patricia Ebrey’s work on viewing practices of

---


17 Their status as functional pictures may explain their exclusion from eleventh and twelfth painting catalogues.
images of the Song imperial cult. Illustrations also stands as an experiment of mapping imperial authority onto pictorial hagiographies derived from Buddhist artworks. Such hagiographies are also seen in Indian and Japanese art, and scholarship on this type of historico-religious painting has also informed my understanding of Song artistic practices.

For art historians, the methodological question of using the term “propaganda” depends on whether or not the term has a robust and historically accurate definition that may be useful when studying art made in the pre-modern period. The implication of “propaganda” is that when art is put to the service of politics, its aesthetic merit is reduced or even erased. Illustrations sits at the intersection of cultural production and politics, and how it is framed is crucial to understanding the implications for either area of study. Although the form of the message may vary, scholars agree that it should be able to reach a large audience and convince them of a view

---


that is not necessarily based in logic or fact.\textsuperscript{21} By both of these measures, propaganda is an imperfect and limiting framework to describe \textit{Illustrations of Auspicious Responses}. The first is an issue of viewship and audience. Most of the technologies described above for mass dissemination did not yet exist, and there is no evidence that \textit{Illustrations} was widely reproduced in woodblock print, the available method. As Chapter Two will discuss, because all likenesses of the Song royal family were restricted in terms of viewship, \textit{Illustrations} likely had an extremely limited audience. Some fundamental aspects of making and viewing art in the Song—especially figurative art in the context of the imperial cult or religious icons—are incompatible with the accessibility of propaganda.\textsuperscript{22} Secondly, the subject of omens and belief in a moral cosmology in the Song presents a mismatch with modern views of logic or reason. The gap in belief systems seems especially large when it comes to what qualifies as evidence of the legitimacy of a government. The present study will argue that \textit{Illustrations} operated within normal parameters of accepted beliefs in the intellectual and cultural environment of the Song and that aspects of Song visual culture stood both as successful works of art and nuanced political statements.


Chapter 1: The Twelve Omens

1.1 Cao Xun’s Life and Career

Cao Xun joined his father Cao Zu in Huizong’s service at court, working as an usher by 1125 at the Palace of Dragon Virtue 龍德宮, Huizong’s quarters after his abdication. After the Jin seizure of Bianjing, Cao Xun and the other hostages were taken north on 1127/3/29 when he was to perform the first of his two major acts of service for the Zhao family. The first involves the famous “collar edict;” Cao Xun successfully fled on 1127/5/18 and reached Gaozong’s court in Yingtian on 1127/7/28, delivering the edict along with messages and tokens from Gaozong’s mother Consort Wei and his wife. Cao’s second act of service was performed many years later when on a diplomatic mission to the Jin in 1141, he negotiated the release of Empress Wei and the return of Huizong’s remains.

After Cao Xun’s return to court in 1127, he suffered long periods without assignments and frequent opposition from other officials. Recent scholarship frames the hostility toward

---

23 The Cao family may have descended from Cao Bin 曹彬 (931-999), a founding general of the Song, through his granddaughter Empress Dowager Cao (1016-1079). After receiving the jinshi by decree in 1121, Cao Zu was stationed in the Hall of Profound Thought 睿思殿 as an Audience Attendant; those working in the hall produced ghostwriting in the emperor’s hand, engraved stones, created seals, and in Cao Zu’s case, wrote laudatory poetry in service of the monarchy. Tuo Tuo 脫脫 et al., ed., Song shi 宋史 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2007), 23.422, 379.11700, hereafter SS; Hartman, “Cao Xun and the Legend of Emperor Taizu’s Oath,” 65; Maggie Bickford, “Huizong’s Paintings: Art and the Art of Emperorship,” in Emperor Huizong and Late Northern Song China: The Politics of Culture and the Culture of Politics, ed. Patricia Buckley Ebrey and Maggie Bickford (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 503-11. For a detailed discussion of Cao Xun’s biography and career, see Liu Zhihua 刘志华, “Cao Xun shige yanjiu 曹勋诗歌研究” (M.A. thesis, Xiamen, China, Xiamen University, 2009).


25 Cao Xun was not given an official post after suggesting a naval rescue mission of the imperial captives when he reached Yingtian, and when mentioned as a candidate for Jiangxi Military Vice Director-in-chief in 1135/3, the Chief Councilor Zhao Ding 趙鼎 (1085-1147) rejected the idea on the basis that Cao Xun was unqualified. The diplomatic mission to the Jin in 1142 was followed by another long absence from
Cao Xun in the written record in two ways. One perspective argues that Cao was an ineffectual figure, unpopular among civil officials. Another, by contrast, considers Cao Xun on his own terms as a likely imperial affine with enviable access to the sovereign and a diverse social network. It is likely that the animus directed toward his creative endeavors is carried over from that against his person for having a backchannel to the inner palace that circumvents bureaucratic norms.

The relationships that Cao Xun carefully cultivated with Emperor Gaozong and in his later years, with Emperor Xiaozong, are central to the creation of Illustrations. The Southern Song historian Li Xinchuan 李心傳 (1166-1243) names him an imperial “favorite,” and late in life, Cao Xun attained the highest grade of military rank. In the preface to Cao Xun’s collected writings, Lou Yue 樓鑰 (1137-1213, jinshi 1163) describes him as frequently visiting the emperors, having “garnered the most favor and goodwill.” Lou Yue’s reference to the “two palaces” suggests that Cao Xun continued to visit Gaozong after he abdicated in 1162. Xiaozong and Cao Xun also had a close relationship: the emperor sent him a congratulatory note for his

1145 to 1155; after Qin Gui’s (1091-1155) death, Cao Xun traveled again to the Jin in 1159. Emperor Xiaozong (r. 1162-1189) wanted to appoint Cao Xun to the high rank of Military Affairs Commissioner 樞密使 in 1172; the Grand Councilor Yu Yunwen 虞允文 (1110-1174) countered by saying, “Cao Xun’s character is too vulgar, and he should not be appointed.” 功人品卑，凡不可用。SS 383.11798; Yaolu 87.1442-3.


29 Zeng Zaozhuang 曾棗莊 and Liu Lin 劉琳, eds., Quan Song wen 全宋文 (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2006), 264.5949.110, hereafter QSW.
birthday around the same time Yu Yunwen was contesting Cao’s appointment.\textsuperscript{30} The note was one of several gifts the two emperors bestowed on Cao Xun, including a copy of Gaozong’s “Treatise on Brush and Ink.”\textsuperscript{31} When Cao died in 1174, Gaozong took the unusual act of sending a personally written eulogy to Cao Xun’s family.\textsuperscript{32} What emerges from these correspondences are close, even affectionate relationships between ruler and subject, which would have provoked distrust among other political actors.

\textbf{1.2 Conflict and Uncertainty in the Early Southern Song}

The period of continued fighting from 1127 until the peace treaty of 1142 and the Southern Song’s political precarity sheds light on how \textit{Illustrations} compares with the broader cultural imperatives of the court. Gaozong’s accession in the fifth month of 1127 faced pressure from all sides. Soon after the court was dismantled and the royal family was taken north, other potential claimants to the throne emerged from within the Zhao clan.\textsuperscript{33} Although none of these

\begin{thebibliography}{99}

\bibitem{30} 《賜太尉昭信軍節度使提舉皇城司曹勛生日詔》, Zhou Bida 周必大 (1126—1204), \textit{Wenzhong ji} 文忠集 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1983), 110.27b—28a.

\bibitem{31} \textit{QSW} lists inscriptions written on six gifts from the emperors, including books and works of calligraphy. \textit{QSW} 191.4202.44—47.

\bibitem{32} \textit{QSW} 264.5949.110.

\bibitem{33} Huizong’s eighteenth son Zhao Zhen 趙榛 (d. 1140) and Song Taizu’s descendant Zhao Zisong 趙子崧 (Prince Qin 勤王, d. 1132) both gained some traction. While Zhao Zhen was soon recaptured by the Jin after his escape, Zhao Zisong reached Prince Kang after learning the latter had escaped the capital and was entrusted with the important task of preventing the Jin puppet emperor Zhang Bangchang 張邦昌 (1081-1127) from receiving any aid from his home base in Huainan 淮南. Zhao Zisong’s luck turned when he failed to defend against a rebel uprising in Zhenjiang, and someone overheard him repeating a longstanding saying that “the descendants of Taizu shall again possess the empire.” He was exiled to Nanxiong 南雄 (modern Guangdong) and died in 1132. Other examples include Zhao Shuxiang 趙叔向 (dates unknown) and Zhao Shujin 趙叔近 (d. 1128), who were both associated with parties considered to be rebels. \textit{SS} 246.8728-29; 247.8743-45; Patricia Buckley Ebrey, \textit{Emperor Huizong} (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2014), 486; John W. Chaffee, \textit{Branches of Heaven: A History of the Imperial Clan of Sung China} (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 1999), 127-39.

\end{thebibliography}
cases posed a significant threat to Gaozong’s status or claim, they nonetheless constituted a destabilizing factor for his government. By and large, the incipient Southern Song government struggled to reach a consensus on military strategy and how to respond to continued Jin aggression. From the beginning of Gaozong’s rule, he was reluctant to confront the Jin directly; he replaced his first chief councilor Li Gang 李綱 (1083-1140) within months when Li showed no sign of giving up on irredentist plans.34 Two years later in the third month of 1129, another dramatic episode unfolded: the court was at the time stationed in Yangzhou 楊州, and a branch of the Jin army advanced without warning and easily dismantled the Song defense. Several officials were killed by the angry crowds trying to flee and thousands died in the chaos or drowned, while Gaozong barely escaped across the Yangzi River.35 The court managed to regroup in Hangzhou but was much reduced in size and demoralized. Fearing the Jin troops and wanting to reach a peace deal, two aggrieved officers of the Imperial Guard named Miao Fu 苗傅 (d. 1129) and Liu Zhengyan 劉正彥 (d. 1129) led a mutiny that deposed Gaozong and installed his infant son as emperor. The men were subdued within a month and Gaozong’s rule was restored, but it seems that the violent episode—the dead including eunuchs who had served Gaozong closely—hardened his resolution to consolidate political and military control.36

At this time, the state of the military contributed to general lawlessness and large-scale defections within it presented an existential threat. Either forced by circumstance or seeking

---


opportunity, some military officers led their men to become bandits.\textsuperscript{37} The government in turn broke with Northern Song precedent and gave more latitude to generals in border regions. Gaozong was justified in worrying about his generals; they not only were potential challengers to the throne but also in a position to defect to the northern Da Qi 大齊 (1130-1137) puppet regime controlled by the Jin. The most consequential defection was likely that of Li Qiong 鄭瓊 (1104-1153), who left Jiankang 建康 (modern Nanjing 南京) with 40,000 men during a planned Song expedition north in the eighth month of 1137.\textsuperscript{38} In other words, it was far from clear which regime would dominate and successfully claim legitimacy for its government. The loss of Li Qiong was the decisive moment when Gaozong became unwilling to pursue the Jin north of the Yangzi River. He returned to Lin’an and started supporting a peace deal the next year and in 1146, Gaozong said that he was finally able to control his generals.\textsuperscript{39}

Over the course of the 1130s, the country’s war-torn status slowly stabilized, and Gaozong’s decisions set the course for the rest of his rule. First, the reign period was changed to Shaoxing 紹興 after the New Year of 1131, civil examinations were restored, and general pardons were extended to any rebels who had surrendered. Gaozong and the court returned to Lin’an in the first month of 1132, and it was officially designated the capital in 1138.\textsuperscript{40}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Banditry ran rampant in the Huainan region and south of the Yangzi River; this resulted in serious uprisings such as the one started in 1130 by Zhong Xiang 鍾相 (d. 1130) and finally defeated by Yue Fei 岳飛 (1103-1142) in 1135. Tao, “The Move South,” 662-66.
\item Yaolu 113.1826-27.
\item Yaolu 155.2515. See Tao, “The Move to the South and the Reign of Kao-Tsung (1127-1162),” 667-77. for an overview of the central government’s struggle for military control.
\item Gaozong insisted on the return of his parents to an 1134 envoy but was not willing to accept the Jin condition that the Yangzi River would delineate the boundary between the two states. Tao, “The Move to the South,” 675.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
turned his efforts to suing for peace over the protests of many officials: the two sides reached a peace deal in the tenth month of 1138, which failed in 1140, and another deal was negotiated in late 1141 and finalized in the fall of 1142. On Gaozong’s part, he accepted the investiture document that named the Song as a vassal state and his status as inferior to the Jin emperor’s. The imperial coffins of Huizong, Empress Zheng 鄭氏, and Gaozong’s first wife Empress Xing 邢氏, along with Gaozong’s mother Consort Wei, were soon returned to Lin’an in exchange.41

1.3 The Twelve Scenes

The first section of the handscroll opens onto a lush garden: bamboo, trees, and banana plants spread their foliage, their exuberant growth set in contrast with the neat lines of the buildings and bridges (Fig. 1.1).42 Lily pads and pink and white blossoms sway in the summer breeze beneath a latticework railing in the lower part of the painting. Several female attendants enter on a walkway to a palace building, bringing dishes and boxes, and leading a small boy by the hand. The child tugs on the sleeve of his caretaker, who turns to the building entrance, and another attendant points to the left with her fan. The theme unfolding is the vitality of summer, especially the hope and anticipation that new life brings.

Visible through an open window hung with rolled-up shades, a group of women is gathered around a red lacquer tub. It is June 12th, 1107, and Consort Wei 韋氏 (1080-1159)—later known as Empress Xianren—has just given birth to Zhao Gou, Emperor Huizong’s ninth son.43 As the text to the left of the scene explains, golden light fills the room when the prince is


42 See Appendix A for the text of the encomiums.

43 The consort received the title Empress Xianren 显仁 posthumously in 1159. When discussing the handscroll, Xianren will be used to stay consistent with Cao Xun’s text.
born. Outside the main room to the left, Emperor Huizong sits and waits in anticipation. Cao Xun writes,

When Empress Xianren was in the north [in Jin captivity], Huizong asked her whether Prince Kang was auspicious or unusual in any way. She answered, “At the time of His Highness’s birth, his mouth emitted a golden light, which shone forth brilliantly in the room. At the same time, the Four Sages followed behind him. It seems like the event cannot compare to [the birth of] other children, and one day, he is sure to assume the throne.” Your subject respectfully praises:

顯仁皇后在北時因
徽宗問康邸祥異奏曰
上初誕育口有金光燦然耀室中并四聖從行事似非他兒比異日必膺大位臣謹賛曰

The Four Sages do not appear in the painting, but a series of undulating lines can be seen emanating from the center of the room, where the tiny prince is wrapped in a bundle of red fabric. The radiating lines, drawn in gold paint, signal that the painting’s subject is out of the ordinary—the first of twelve auspicious omens featuring the young Prince Kang. The tropes of unusual colored lights appearing at birth and light emanating from a body can be found in biographies of Chinese emperors and in scriptural descriptions of the Buddha.44

It is summer again in section two, several years later, and the young prince is living with his mother (Fig. 1.2). The scene begins with the same bamboo garden in the upper register and a pond crowded with lily pads below. The first two figures the viewer sees are facing each other and encased in a bubble, which upon further unrolling, emerges from the sleeping Consort Wei. She is dreaming of a spirit king dressed like a military official, who chastises her for feeding the prince leftover food, an unintended result of the consort’s affection toward the boy and wanting

---

to share her meals. Two women chat at her bedside while seven more look out to the lily pond on the left. Consort Wei’s promises that she will only give her son food directly from the kitchens, as the text explains,

His Highness had not yet left [his mother’s] quarters. Xianren loved him tenderly, often giving him food that she was eating. One night, she dreamed of being denounced by a deity. Xianren said, “From now on, I will not feed him with leftover food.” The spirit admonished her to the utmost extent. Xianren woke up with a start and each day, told the servants urgently that whenever they offer His Highness’s food, it must be from the kitchens and they cannot do so with leftovers. Your subject respectfully praises:

Here, the artist uses the device of the dream bubble to create a synoptic scene in which the consort appears twice in the same frame: sleeping on a platform bed and greeting the deity in her dream. In the bubble, the consort is dressed in her formal court robes and headpiece. She raises her clasped hands in respect while the deity waves his right hand in a sign of disapproval. The same dream bubble is also used in the last section to reveal the prince’s dream of his brother Qinzong while he remains asleep. Synoptic compositions are common in East Asian art as a way to simultaneously depict a figure in situ and their internal state. A Northern Song illustration can be found in chapter seventeen of Li Gonglin’s *Classics of Filial Piety*, in which a minister is seated at home and thinking about how to advise his ruler (Fig. 1.3). A diagonal ribbon of clouds running from the lower left corner to the upper right separates the two scenes: one taking place in the real world and the other within the minister’s mind.\(^{45}\) Synoptic scenes depicting dream

sequences can also be found in the 14th c. Japanese narrative handscroll *Ishiyamadera engi* 石山寺縁起絵, in which pilgrims to the Ishiyamadera Temple experience a variety of miraculous dreams. Wu Hung argues that even non-figurative illustrations on physical objects such as screens can also act as projections of a character’s interiority.

The third section opens onto a courtyard that is lined at the top and bottom with neatly arranged rows of trees and male servants (Fig. 1.4). The four horses grazing in the shade and a large target stretched between two posts allude to the adolescent prince’s love for riding and archery. In a brawny show of strength, Prince Kang walks across the courtyard clutching two bulging sacks of rice. Of the sixteen attendants, most are watching the performance while cheering and clapping. The painting ends with a meticulously rendered building, likely the current residence of the prince after moving out of his mother’s quarters. Cao Xun writes,

> When His Highness moved out of [his mother’s] quarters, in his spare time outside of lectures and studying he personally enjoyed riding and archery. Taking up two sacks of rice, each filled with ten *dou* of rice, he lifted them with both arms and walked one hundred steps. Everyone was shocked and yielded to him, to the extent that enemy kingdoms learned of this and not one was not in awe and respectful.

Your subject respectfully praises:

> 上出閣講學餘暇喜親騎射及以二囊各貯斛米兩臂舉之行數百步人皆駭服以至敵國聞之莫不畏仰臣謹賛曰

The artist contrasts the decidedly masculine space of section 3 with the two prior scenes by choosing a symmetrical arrangement for the prince’s sixteen attendants and companions. The four horses tied to the trees in the background are also evenly spaced, enforcing the sense of

---


geometry in the composition. A more formal design is suitable for the prince’s debut in the scroll as a young adult, and the encomium references the Confucian ideal that a sagely ruler is able to subdue enemies without resorting to acts of violence.

Section four begins with a pair of imposing pine trees, whose branches are dense with needles and reach almost as high as the city gate (Fig. 1.5). The studded doors are open, and young Prince Kang, dressed in ochre, leads a procession that stretches far into the hills beyond the city. He is flanked by two advisors in bright red robes and a pair of military banners whose fluttering tails suggest a brisk march. The prince returns from his volunteer mission as a hostage to the Jin in the first month of 1126, during the first siege of the Northern Song capital. The text states how he advised appeasing the Jin with more reparations as the only option. After the meeting, the Jin prince decided that the charismatic Prince Kang should not be allowed to cross the Yellow River into Jin controlled territory in case he incites rebellion in its Chinese population. The Prince of Su, Huizong’s fifth son, took Prince Kang’s place as hostage. Children, vendors, and shopkeepers rush into the street to watch the procession, and a desk in a storefront sits empty with writing supplies hastily left out. In this version of events, the text explains,

It was the beginning of the Jingkang [Period]. The Jin people rebelled; the defenses along the Yellow River fell, and they arrived directly at the capital city. The imperial court had no plan of action. His Highness said desolately, “Only by increasing reparations can we make peace.” Emperor Qinzong thereupon sent him [to negotiate] and entreated Zhang Bangchang (1081-1127) to assist him in meeting the second prince. The second prince said to his companions, “The vitality and appearance of the prince is extraordinary. I’m afraid of him crossing the river and being embraced and protected by the Song people, and even worse, he’ll easily command them.” The Prince of Su indeed went in place of him. Your subject respectfully praises:

靖康初金人犯順大河失守直抵京城廟堂無策
上慨然謂獨有增幣講好 欽宗乃遣  上求成張邦昌副之見二太子二太子謂
其徒曰
The artist chose to depict a moment not described in the text, when Prince Kang returns to the Kaifeng. The townspeople who line the streets are peering at and discussing the prince’s arrival as stand-ins for both the Jin and the people of North China.

The hubbub of the last scene continues into section five (Fig. 1.6). On the street, common folks are in turn gesticulating, carrying goods by a shoulder pole, and peddling hand puppets. A royal retinue enters and is led by two officials dressed in red followed by a man carrying a canopy. Behind them, a man wearing a brown top seems to be pleading on his knees with another holding a staff. On the other side of the gate within an enclosed courtyard, servants are carrying boxes, a folding chair, and readying the prince’s horse. The Jin army’s arrival marked the beginning of the Jingkang Incident, and Prince Kang’s brothers were avoiding orders to act as emissaries to the Jin camp. After learning this from his mother, the young prince volunteered for the mission.

Following a long stretch of members of the retinue preparing to leave and other quotidian details, the prince appears, flanked by four tall and brightly dressed spirit kings (Fig. 1.7). Their green and pink clothing, adorned with flying streamers, stand in contrast with the subdued attire of the prince and his servants. The halberds and swords of the spirits, set side by side with the men’s household items, denote their extraordinary power and status. Yet no one seems to see them, except a young girl named Zhao’er 招儿 who points with an outstretched hand and describes their appearance. Empress Xianren stands with a group of women, including Prince Kang’s future empress Yijie 懿節, and promises to devote herself to the spirit kings so that they will protect her son. Cao Xun states,
Empress Xianren once declared that at the start of the Jingkang [Incident], the princes of the blood who were chosen to be dispatched as emissaries to the Jin perhaps had not yet accepted their orders. His Highness, deeply stirred, requested to go. Qinzong was very pleased. On the day of departure, Xianren and Yijie accompanied [Gaozong] to the audience hall, where a girl servant named Zhao’er pointed and said, “There are four very large men who are either holding lance and halberd or wielding bow and sword, following the prince’s horse.” The crowd did not see them. Xianren said, “If I devote myself to the Four Sages seriously, surely [Prince Kang will] receive their protection and blessing.” Your subject respectfully praises:

顯仁皇后嘗宣諭曰靖康初遣親王使金所擇或未受命
上慨然請行 欽宗甚悅啟行日 显仁 禹節送至廳事小女奴招兒指曰有四人甚長大或執槍戟或持弓劔從王馬後衆不見也
顯仁曰吾事四聖甚謹必獲保祐臣謹賛曰

Prince Kang’s volunteer mission is framed by Consort Wei’s perspective in the text, while the painting incorporates many figures who are not involved with the sighting. The artist’s choice in doing so heightens the contrast between the mundanity of the everyday and the miraculous appearance of the deities.

The prince and his entourage are traveling north in section six when they reach Cizhou 磁州 in present-day Hebei Province (Fig. 1.8-1.9). His bannermen and attendants gather at the entrance to a temple, which is partially obscured by a rocky hill and pine trees. Gaozong is paying a visit because a crowd of commoners had implored him to do so the day before. Once at Cui Temple, dedicated to the local deity Lord Cui 崔府君, an old man dressed in a dark headcloth warns Gaozong not to let his deputy Wang Yun 王雲 (d. 1126) convince him to go north. At the gate, tension sits in the air as the figures peer to the left and one man prepares to run up the stairs with sleeves rolled up. In the next courtyard, the viewer encounters the most violent scene in the scroll: a mob of eight commoners and more ready to join are attacking Wang Yun. Wang looks hapless as he is pushed and pulled by the men, who are so incensed by the old
man’s words that they beat him to death. Three gentlemen stand on a nearby bridge, pointing to and discussing the commotion. When Gaozong learns of the murder, he orders the guilty to be arrested and refuses to ride a red sedan—the symbolic seat of Lord Cui—that some servants are carrying. According to the text,

His Highness departed as emissary to the state of Jin and Wang Yun acted as his deputy. He arrived in Cizhou, when suddenly the residents of the prefecture numbering in the tens of thousands requested in unison for him to visit Cui Temple. His Highness went to the temple the next day at sunrise and while ascending from the eastern corridor, he saw in the courtyard an old man wearing a blue-black headcloth. This man said in an exceptionally stern voice, “Wang Yun cannot solicit Your Highness to go north.”

At that moment, Wang Yun was behind the emperor, and a crowd of people grabbed him and threw him down. Soon after, he was killed by the commoners. His Highness ordered, “Arrest those who killed Wang Yun.” [The people thought] this to be an exalted manifestation. [They urged] to not send the bailiff’s horse [and instead] the small red-lacquered sedan was prepared for His Highness to ride. He said, “I and the others all see, how dare I ride [on Lord Cui’s ceremonial sedan?] On this day, if the common folk had not killed Wang Yun, he would have pressed me to go north!”

Your subject respectfully praises:

The intervention of Lord Cui proved to be important in the young prince’s journey, since the deity was widely worshipped in North China. The narrative complexity of this scene and its political implications are fully discussed in Chapter Three. Despite its moral ambiguity, Wang Yun’s death stands as the pivotal moment when Prince Kang gains a measure of control over his fate.
In the first two months of 1127, Bianjing fell to the Jin army and the emperors Huizong and Qinzong and their families were taken prisoner. Section seven shows Consort Wei as a hostage, confined by a tall bamboo fence but otherwise in comfortable surroundings and attended to by her ladies (Fig. 1.10). Prince Kang was away from the capital at the time, having accidentally crossed behind Jin lines on his mission, and rumors that he is leading an army north had spread to the Jin camp. In the face of uncertainty, Consort Wei decides to use the chessboard in front of her to gather clues about her son’s future: she writes his title on a piece and wraps them in a yellow gauze cloth. She then lights incense and prays that if the prince’s chess piece lands in the Ninth Palace, he will succeed to the throne. To the surprise of the women standing behind her, this is exactly what happens when the consort casts the pieces. The strict sense of symmetry in the architecture and the trees and the juxtaposition of Consort Wei and a group of women recalls section two, which also features the prince’s mother. The text explains,

In the bingwu year of the Jingkang period, the capital was destroyed. The Jin captured both emperors [Huizong and Qinzong] and all of their families and were camped in the southern suburbs. The Jin [commanders] said to the guards, “His Highness is leading his troops north of the river, morning and night. He’ll arrive soon.” This led the guards to be fooled by these words and reassured the two emperors. Xianren once wrapped [a set of] chess pieces in yellow gauze and wrote Prince Kang’s name on one of them. She rose in the early morning, burned some incense, and prayed, “If in casting the pieces onto the board, only Prince Kang’s piece enters the Ninth Palace, then surely he will assume the throne.” She threw down the pieces and indeed as she prayed, none of the other pieces landed [in the Ninth Palace.] Everyone congratulated her and immediately reported this to the emperor. Huizong was both delighted and surprised by this. Your subject respectfully praises:


49 Gaozong’s new government used the number nine to convey a symbolic tie to the past, since there were nine previous emperors in the Song and Prince Kang was the ninth son of Huizong. Jing-shen Tao, “The Move to the South and the Reign of Kao-Tsung (1127–1162),” in The Cambridge History of China, ed. Paul Jakov Smith and Denis Twitchett, vol. 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 648.
Consort Wei’s fourth and final appearance in the scroll proved to be an especially popular scene in later Ming reproductions. Like in section one, Huizong’s presence is deemphasized; he is missing in the painting while the prince’s mother assumes full agency in predicting her son’s future.

After Wang Yun was attacked and killed by the mob, the prince decided to stay in Cizhou instead of continuing on his mission. Section eight opens with a dialogue between an old woman and two riders on horseback (Fig. 1.11). The men are scouts for the Jin army, as their leopard skin quivers indicate, and they demand to know whether or not the emperor is still in Cizhou. The viewer’s sense of curiosity and dread deepens as the troops come into full view: the calvary and their horses are fully armored, and a long line of banners snakes through the hills to the horizon. The woman, though physically frail and leaning on her staff, is not shaken by the sight of the Jin army. According to the text,

The people of Cizhou believed Wang Yun wished to intimidate His Highness into traveling north. The commonfolk thus killed Wang Yun in [Cui] Temple. His Highness was still staying in Cizhou when the enemy rode in a large gathering to the east of the prefecture. They asked an old woman on the side of the road, “Is His Highness in Cizhou or not?” The woman deceptively answered, “The day before yesterday, His Highness already passed east of the mountain.” The enemy exclaimed in surprise that it was too late to give chase and just after retreated and gave up. Your subject respectfully praises:

The Jin troops are carrying banners stitched together with red, black, white, gray-green, and yellow fabrics and other than the two scouts, are dressed in heavy laminar armor. The artist of
the closely related scroll *Eighteen Songs of a Nomad Flute* uses the same palette for the flags carried by the Xiongnu (Fig. 1.12). Their horses have their forelocks tied campaign-style and are also clad in armor. The tension of confronting the advancing army is palpable, and the viewer is left in wonder of the lone old woman who dared to misdirect its scouts.

After two scenes in which other characters are contemplating or pursuing the missing Prince Kang, section nine rejoins his journey (Fig. 1.13). It is spring again in the second month of 1127, and the beautiful, lingering landscape contains a body of water and gently sloping hills in the distance. An elaborately sculpted and painted tower comes into view, topped with a pavilion named Terrace of Flying Immortals 飛仙臺. Hardly visible are three slim arrows, one lodged in the center of each character. The prince is staying at the government offices in Yunzhou 鄆州 (present-day Shandong Province), and privately hoping to test his fate, has just shot the arrows at the pavilion’s placket. They have landed on their mark straight on, and the men standing behind him are pointing at and discussing what happened. Through the open doors of the reception hall in the background, a large screen painted with a winter scene and water birds is visible. Cao Xun writes,

> His Highness was passing through Yunzhou and his residence was in the government offices. In the garden, there was a pavilion that was called “Terrace of Flying Immortals.” His Highness had the secret intention to use this to foretell his fate. The arrows struck the three words on the placard consecutively. Without slanting or leaning, the arrows were all centered on the words. His Highness was pleased. Your subject respectfully praises:

![Image of Terrace of Flying Immortals](image)

The colors, symbolizing the five cardinal directions, are being used to denote otherness rather than a specific ethnic group. Robert A. Rorex and Wen Fong, *Eighteen Songs of A Nomad Flute: The Story of Lady Wen-Chi; A Fourteenth-Century Handscroll in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1974), n.p. [Scene 2].
The loosely symmetrical placement of the prince’s retinue in this scene recalls the archery contest from the *Four Events of the Jingde Era* scroll in the Palace Museum, albeit with fewer figures. Ten men are arranged on two sides of and behind the prince while looking on in slight disbelief that the arrows have found their mark.

In another display of marksmanship, the tenth section begins with a target: a white rabbit has just been struck by an arrow mid-leap (Fig. 1.14). Prince Kang fired the shot, and more than twenty members of his retinue follow behind, surprised and impressed by the feat. The albino coloring of the rabbit, in addition to being unusual, is also tied to the color of metal, or *jin*. As a stand-in for the Jin army, the white rabbit and its play on words represents one of the more straightforward omens in the scroll. The line of men and horses trail back to the city walls of Cizhou, where they are most currently stationed. The significance of the white rabbit is explained in the text:

> His Highness was stationed in Cizhou. In the early morning, he woke up and left for the suburbs, and the cavalry followed behind. In front of the horses, suddenly a white rabbit jumped up. His Highness bent his bow and with one shot struck it. Of the officers and soldiers, no one was not astonished or impressed. It is so that the strangeness of the rabbit’s color and the attainment of one’s fate are two events that both agree on the emperor as auspicious. Your subject respectfully praises:

Unlike the last scene, the shooting of the white rabbit takes its visual cues from depictions of Khitan hunters, such as *Stag Hunt* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The artist deftly suggests that Prince Kang can operate within both the Han Chinese and nomadic spheres by juxtaposing the two hunting scenes.

Like the attack on Wang Yun in section six, section eleven presents another moment of intense drama (Fig. 1.15). It is mid-winter in the last month of 1126, and Gaozong and his troops
are crossing the Yellow River at Ligu Ford 李固渡 on the way back from Cizhou. The prince had ordered all the men and horses to cross before he does, except the rearguard. The riverbank is rocky and bare, dotted with trees whose nude branches seem braced against the cold. Two horses making their way across the ice lower their heads in concentration and tentatively feel out the next step with outstretched legs. On the opposite bank, one Gao Gonghai 高公海 (dates unknown) had disregarded the order and ridden behind Gaozong. Just as the prince reaches the shore, he hears a large crack and the ice splits open, swallowing Gao Gonghai’s horse. Only its head is visible above the surface as it struggles, and the rider, having barely escaped and still clutching the horse’s bridle, looks on in shock. Only a few of the other men have registered what happened and turn to look at the commotion. The text explains,

When His Highness was returning from Cizhou in the north, it was in the depth of winter and bitterly cold. He was crossing the Yellow River at Ligu Ford. His Highness commanded his retinue and horses to cross first, with only the rearguard to follow him. Only Gao Gonghai rode behind him, and His Highness had just reached the shore when the ice cracked and split with a loud sound. He turned around to see that Gao Gonghai’s horse was already trapped in the ice and Gao escaped holding only the horse’s bridle. Your subject respectfully praises:

A light snow falls through the seemingly congealed air, an unusual display of precipitation in Song painting. Showing an exact moment as indicated by the snow is important to the composition of the scene, which contains a temporal loop. The painter chose to represent the beginning of the river crossing in the first part of the painting on the right and the last members of the procession on the other bank. Following the straightforward narratives of the archery scenes, section eleven shows the artist’s mastery of the storytelling potential of the handscroll format.
The twelfth and final section takes place in the early morning at a military camp in the eleventh month of 1126 (Fig. 1.16). Men are stretching and emerging from their tents, which are encircled by colorful banners large and small. Several miniature figures appear to be floating between two groves of leafy trees, but no one else at the camp takes notice. As the scene continues, it becomes clear that the figures are contained in a dream bubble emerging from the head of the sleeping prince. Prince Kang has accepted his appointment as Grand Field Marshal 大元帥 of a division of the Song army at the request of his brother Qinzong, and in this dream he encounters the current emperor Qinzo 大宗 in the palace. The older brother takes off his red tunic and tries to hand it to the prince. As this exchange symbolizes the passing of the throne, Gaozong backs away in reluctance and wakes with a start. His tent is decorated with a brightly patterned rug and surrounded by armored guards and banners and drums used in battle. Cao Xun writes,

When His Highness accepted the orders to become Grand Field Marshal, he was ready to organize the troops and select generals in response to the call for help from the capital. He suddenly dreamed that Emperor Qinzong, as if everything were normal, was in the palace. [Qinzong] removed his robe, giving his tunic to His Highness. His Highness was fearful and startled, and at the moment when he was making an excuse and backing away, he woke up. Your subject respectfully praises:

The dream bubble reappears and plays a central role in conveying the most important message of the scroll: a direct and uncontested transmission of imperial authority from Qinzong to Prince Kang. The illustration within the bubble probes the relationship between differing levels of reality, namely the picture surface, the world created within the painting, and the internal experience of the prince’s dream. The artist connects the realities with a miniature version of a potted tree with an erect trunk and dense foliage that mirrors the larger ones growing outside dream bubble (Fig. 1.17). In making the trees identical, the artist suggests the permeability of the
membrane between the prince’s dream and the waking world, and the realness of what is taking place in the dream. It is then not such a leap of faith for the viewer to be immersed in the painting and to grasp the immediacy of the omens.

1.4 Qianlong’s Foreword and Questions Raised

In the fall of 1785, the Qianlong Emperor inscribed a foreword of more than three hundred characters (Fig. 1.18) for the Illustrations scroll then in the Qing palace collection. Occupied by the questions of authorship, reception history, and the work’s underlying tension between aesthetic and political aims, he writes:

Xiao Zhao once created *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*;  
Cao Xun composed the encomiums, exaggerating the auspicious signs and tokens of sovereignty.  
Prince Xiao was fond of prophecy and in the end restored the Han,  
The Son of Yue bore his humiliation and despite all, ended the State of Wu.  
Though the two men lost the northern realm in different ways—  
[Qiao Gaozong] spent his entire life enjoying the pleasures of West Lake.  
The red and green pigments unroll to show a portrayal of the events of those years,  
Taken either as an honor or a disgrace!

In this scroll, Cao Xun compiled the tales of Song Emperor Gaozong’s auspicious signs and responses, numbering twelve sections, each connected with an encomium for which Xiao Zhao made illustrations. According to *Songshi*, “Cao Xun was from Yangdi. During the Jingkang period, he was appointed as an Audience Attendant at the Longde Palace [on quasi-regular appointment.] He accompanied Huizong to banishment north and was commanded [by Him] to bring the royal garment to Prince Kang. Xun fled from Yanshan and returned. In the first year of the Jianyan period, he reached the southern capital, where he presented the royal garment. His subsequent official positions included Military Commissioner of Qianzhou and Defender-in-Chief, promoted to the Capital Security Office, often serving in addition as an

---

51 Han Emperor Guangwu 光武 (r. 25-57 CE).

52 King Goujian 勾踐 (r. 496-465 BCE) of the Yue Kingdom 越國 in the Warring States period, who was captured and forced to serve King Fuchai 夫差 of Wu 吳 for three years. After being released, he eventually defeated Fuchai in battle and effectively destroyed the state of Wu.

53 I.e. painting.
emissary to the Jin state.”\(^{54}\) Also, according to *Huashi huiyao*, \(^{55}\) “Xiao Zhao comes from Houze [in the Hedong circuit] and was proficient in painting. During the Jingkang period, he followed Li Tang in the passage south. Li Tang taught him everything he could, and during the Shaoxing period, Xiao Zhao was admitted to the painting academy. In his paintings, the mountains, waterways, people, and things appear vigorous and unadorned, and so on.” Song Gaozong was immersed in [the pleasures] of West Lake, content in ruling only part of the country after the southern crossing; he was unable to recover the Central Plains to wipe away a sovereign’s humiliation. Gaozong neither measures up to Guangwu’s restoration of the Han Dynasty nor to King Goujian’s enduring his humiliation and annexation of Wu. Rather, his subjects narrated in detail auspicious signs and responses, overstating them when composing this painting. This reality is insufficient to be considered honorable and is only something that adds to [his] disgrace.

Like those of viewers before and after himself, Qianlong’s comments belie a friction between admiring the painting and rejecting its argumentation. Approximating a social history of the painting, the first half of the text uses restoration politics to explain the significance of *Illustrations* rather than its aesthetic value. Qianlong begins with a poem of fifty-six characters expressing his ambivalence toward the scroll and then explains the poem’s meaning in prose. Cao Xun and Xiao Zhao are both treated as makers of this collaborative work, and standard

---

\(^{54}\) The passage is essentially a condensed version of Cao Xun’s biography from the *Song shi*, edited for brevity and clarity but its phrases quoted directly. *Song shi* 宋史, edited by Tuo Tuo 脫脫 (1313–1355) et al., Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1977, 379.11700-01.

\(^{55}\) Written in 1631 by Zhu Mouyin 朱謀堮, descendant of Zhu Yuanzhang.
biographies with places of origin and official titles are provided to frame its historical context. The real subjects of scrutiny, however, are Gaozong’s claim to legitimacy and the place of the Southern Song in dynastic history.

Qianlong layered his arguments to put to rest any notion of genuine belief in the omens. He describes the project as an exaggeration of historical events and a graceless attempt on Cao Xun’s part to inflate Gaozong’s legacy. Qianlong’s attitude was, of course, shaped by his identity as a Manchu, who, like the earlier Qing rulers, saw himself as a descendant of the Jurchens and an inheritor of the Jin legacy. Qianlong’s third great-grandfather Nurhaci (r. 1616-1626) named his coalition of Jurchen tribes the Later Jin 後金國 (1616-1636) before the reign name was changed to the Great Qing in 1636. Whether the Jin or the Song were the rightful inheritors of the political and cultural legacy of the Middle Kingdom was a crucial question for the Manchus and posed an unresolved dilemma for Qianlong. From a politico-ethnic standpoint, the Qing styled themselves after the Jin, but they wholeheartedly adopted southern literati culture that flourished under the Southern Song as writers and artists flocked to the capital at Lin’an (Hangzhou). Since the Jin seized only half the Song territories, many Chinese cultural figures fled to the south instead of living under alien rule. The number of extant sources from the Song also far outnumber those from the Jin, providing little evidence for writers such as Qianlong himself who would have been inclined to praise the achievements of Jin culture.

---

56 In addition to painters such as Li Tang, Xiao Zhao, and Su Hanchen, other examples include Li Qingzhao 李清照 (1084-c. 1150), poet and collector who escaped from her home in Zhangqiu 章邱 (modern Shandong Province) during the Jin invasion. She left with a prized collection of books and ancient bronzes, first to Jiankang and then to Lin’an.

57 For a discussion of the opportunities and limitations of Jurchen cultural studies, see Hoyt Cleveland Tillman and Stephen H. West, eds., *China under Jurchen Rule: Essays on Chin Intellectual and Cultural History*, SUNY Series in Chinese Philosophy and Culture (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995). In terms of painting, more examples of Jin murals in temples and tombs survive than do portable formats on paper and silk, creating an asymmetry in the material record when compared to the larger body
Although Qianlong does not say so explicitly, it is from this conflicted position that he levels his criticisms at Gaozong and Cao Xun. He uses terms such as 侮辱 (humiliation, dishonor) and 耻辱 (disgrace) to cast Gaozong as a pleasure-seeker who abdicated responsibility when he decided to settle in Lin’an instead of campaigning to retake the north. Cao Xun is described as a sycophant who overstates and exaggerates 詐 (xu); 耻 (chi) the favor that his sovereign received from Heaven. And yet, by comparing Gaozong with others leading a dynastic restoration—Han Emperor Guangwu and King Goujian—the text places him into a lineage of legitimate rulers. Using the same criterion of controlling the whole of former Song territories, the Jin were also unsuccessful and could not be said to be the undisputed dynastic house through which a single lineage of legitimacy had passed. Gaozong may have been an imperfect monarch, but Qianlong’s passage implicitly validates the period’s history as told from the Southern Song perspective. Qianlong’s poem and exegesis end with a sense of distaste for putting art—the red and green pigments of painting—in the service of advancing an overtly political aim.

Following his political and ideological musing on dynastic history, Qianlong finally turns to a study of the scroll itself:

In particular, [the scroll’s] draftsmanship and ink-energy are thick and heavy. His figures, things, mountains, and waterways are each in turn finely wrought and subtle, decidedly similar to Li Xigu. Afterward, Dong Qichang added a colophon, stating that this scroll by Xiao Zhao is “exquisite in craftsmanship and exceptionally alluring…[It is] wholly modeled upon Gaozong’s copying of [Yu] Yongxing. It deserves to be praised as two kinds of unsurpassed artistry.” Take special note that this scroll, as recorded in Notes on Books and Paintings in the Yan Collection, probably once


belonged to the Yan Song family collection. The so-called Xiang collection picture by Xiao Zhao in Zhang Chou’s Painting and Calligraphy Boat in the Qing River with six segments is therefore another version. Also, according to a colophon in Wu Kuan’s Personal Collection, the stated Song painting Illustrations of Auspicious Responses has in total twelve segments, each with an encomium but does not mention Xiao Zhao. Sun Mingqi, who on the contrary says that Cao Xun completed the encomiums and Li Song, the painting, was presumably referring to this scroll. In sum, because it lacks Xiao Zhao’s signature and seals, [prior viewers] ended up using groundless [assumptions] as factual evidence. Yet, because Song and Yuan epigraphs and colophons have been trimmed away when remounted by people of mediocre skill, I ought to take what Xiangguang [Dong Qichang] wrote as correct. On the occasion of writing a preface for this scroll and authenticating it, written with the imperial brush on the eighth lunar month of 1785.

The passage shifts abruptly from censure to admiration once the subject changes to the rendering of the scroll and its place in painting history. In Qianlong’s assessment, the work strikes a balance between substance and intricacy (hongzhong 厚重; jingmiao 精妙) and inherits Li Tang’s style and technique. He quotes verbatim Dong Qichang’s shining praise of both the painting and calligraphy, which displays Gaozong’s study and incorporation of Yu Shinan’s 虞世南 (558–638) style. By linking the scroll to a master of the Southern Song and an early Tang calligrapher, Qianlong places the painting among contemporaneous artistic developments as well as ancient ones. Qianlong relied on a team of scholars serving at the Imperial Study to research and identify calligraphy, although according to Shen Chu 沈初 (1729-1799), memorials

59 Otherwise known as Qianshan tang shuhua ji 《钤山堂书画记》by Wen Jia, Wen Zhengming’s second son. The book is a collection of notes and commentary of Yan Song’s 頭嵩 (1480-1567) collection after his fall from grace.
containing changes to attribution should remain anonymous. The team working for him likely compiled the research and allowed Qianlong to construct a stylistic pedigree spanning a millennium to give *Illustrations* an identity separate from its apparently problematic subject matter. In other words, Qianlong tries to decouple its historical value as a key work about imperial politics from its aesthetic value, determined by its draftsmanship and record of viewership, grappling with a set of contradictions as all viewers of the scroll have had to do.

---

60 Nicole T. C. Chiang, *Emperor Qianlong’s Hidden Treasures: Reconsidering the Collection of the Qing Imperial Household*, (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2019), 59-60.
Chapter 2: A Tale of Two Robes in Gaozong’s Succession

2.1 Prince Kang’s Dream

In the last scene of Illustrations of Auspicious Responses, the young Prince Kang is asleep in a military encampment. The flaps of his tent are propped open, and he is seen dozing on a vividly patterned cream and vermilion rug, while the men in the camp slowly stir and wake (Fig. 2.1-2.3). The other figures do not seem to take notice of an unusual scene halfway through the composition: a dream bubble trickles out of the prince’s head and opens to show an exchange between Qinzong and Prince Kang within a grove of trees (Fig. 2.4). In this version of the story, Huizong’s robe that Cao Xun smuggled back has vanished from view. The garment and its message were replaced by a dream sequence in which the unfortunate Emperor Qinzong (r. 1126-1127) is seen handing his robe to his reluctant younger brother. How did the vestment of one emperor take the place of another’s, and why did Cao Xun remove himself as a crucial link in the transmission of the imperial legitimacy?

To those with knowledge of Huizong’s message, the scene appears uncannily familiar: an inner garment—not more conventional objects such as seals or tallies—acting as the symbol of imperial investiture and a transition of power. The economy and directness of the original message are put aside in favor of more exultant language. Moreover, Huizong’s orders as embodied in his garment and his handwriting have been replaced with an event that is impossible to either prove or disprove. The decision to leave out the well-known edict and its physical evidence in favor of the metaphysical world of dreams and omens may seem inscrutable to modern viewers. Yet, the logic of Cao Xun’s maneuvers starts to come into focus when looking at the Jingkang period events that inspired the painting and his own role in shaping how they were remembered.
2.2 Rebuilding the Song Imperial Collection

Before Cao Xun’s involvement with Illustrations, he played a role in rebuilding the imperial art collection after its dispersal in 1127. After a decade of evading Jin forces, Gaozong chose Lin’an (modern Hangzhou) in 1138 as the temporary capital and started building palace and administrative offices. The city was small and provincial compared to Bianjing, and it was not until 1133 that covered alleyways were put up at the prefectural offices so employees did not have to trek through the mud on rainy days. The makeshift capital eventually turned into a permanent one; state functions such as civil service exams and official sacrifices were reinstated, and the art collection was rebuilt. An important source documenting the reconstitution of the collection is the Song text “Record of Scrolls in Gaozong’s Collection” 思陵書畫記, which Zhou Mi 周密 (1232-1298) reproduced in his early Yuan (1279-1368) Qidong yeyu 齊東野語 compilation. According to Zhou Mi’s preface to the “Record,” Gaozong worked tirelessly to solicit donations and purchase artworks so that by the end of his reign in 1162, he had no fewer works than his father had amassed. Zhou Mi also comments on the role of Cao Xun and others in managing the collection:

How regrettable! Everyone carrying out appraisals, such as Cao Xun, Song Kuang, Long Dayuan, Zhang Jian, Zheng Zao, Ping Xie, Liu Yan, Huang Mian, Wei Maoshi, and Ren Yuanbei, was low in character and their ability to discern [good from bad] was painfully lacking. In general, the items that their predecessors had evaluated and written inscriptions for were without


63 Siling 思陵 is short for Yongsiling 永思陵, the name of Gaozong’s tomb, which is sometimes used instead of his temple name.
exception taken apart and [the writing] removed. The result is that today in the imperial collection, most items do not have inscriptions or labels, so that their history and how they circulated, after years of conducting textual research, cannot ever be recovered. This is a great pity and that’s all there is to it.

惜乎鉴定諸人，如曹勛、宋貺、龍大淵、張儉、鄭藻、平協、劉炎、黃冕、魏茂實、任原輩，人品不高，目力苦短。凡經前輩品題者，盡皆拆去，故今御府所藏，多無題識，其源委、授受、歲月、改訂，邈不可求，為可恨耳。64

Zhou Mi’s main concerns are the provenance and circulation of the artworks. As a text-based connoisseur, he bemoans the lack of inscriptions (ti 题) and labels (shi 識), since scrolls missing their supporting documentation are nearly impossible to authenticate and match with written records. Zhou Mi blames a long list of people, starting with Cao Xun, for removing identifying information. In an echo of Yu Yunwen’s objection a century earlier, he attributes the deletions to Cao’s inferior character and taste.

In order to understand Zhou Mi’s comments, the main text of the “Record” needs to be examined. Below is a description of the work Cao Xun and the others carried out to rebuild the collection:

All acquired model calligraphy and ink remains must be brought down and given to the Secretariat. First, Zhao Shiyuan must judge and verify their authenticity, and classify them according to their quality. After they are presented to the Emperor, Zhuang Zonggu is to then sort them out, and they are turned over to Cao Xun, et al. to be judged and verified again. When this examination has been completed, the scrolls are mounted. All acquired famous paintings must first be brought down and given to Wei Maoshi to be judged and authenticated. They are numbered with the characters of the Qianziwen, and their seal impressions are judged and authenticated. After they are presented to the Emperor, they are brought down and given to Zhuang Zonggu to be sorted by hand and remounted.

64 Zhou Mi 周密 (1232-1308), Qidong yeyu 齊東野語 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 6.93, hereafter QDYY. Translation is mine; van Gulik translates the entire text in Robert Hans van Gulik, Chinese Pictorial Art as Viewed by the Connoisseur, Serie Orientale Roma (Rome: Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1958), 205-12.
This passage clarifies Zhou Mi’s comments in several ways. The processing of the works in the collection was methodical and headed by Gaozong himself. From the order of inspection, Zhao Shiyuan was likely the foremost expert on calligraphy and Wei Maoshi the top expert on painting. The emperor acted as the final authority on painting before the scrolls were remounted, but interestingly, authenticating calligraphy required further study by a group headed by Cao Xun. The collective effort can be explained two ways: the administration may have given more importance to calligraphy than painting, and works of calligraphy could be considered intrinsically harder to authenticate.

Zhou Mi takes his list of names in the preface from this section, but details such as what the group evaluated were omitted. One of the most discerning experts of his own time, Zhou Mi notes elsewhere that on a visit to the reduced imperial holdings in 1299, of the more than 160 scrolls he viewed, fewer than ten were of superb quality. This suggests that in the aftermath of war, despite their best efforts, the imperial offices may have admitted a number of inferior or even fake works. In the preface to the “Record,” Zhou Mi pins his dissatisfaction with the state of the collection on Cao Xun and the calligraphy group, even though they were not painting experts nor did they seem to make purchases for the collection. He is reluctant to lay blame on

65 *QDYY* 6.100.

Gaozong for the collection’s weak areas, praising him specifically for having a “wonderful understanding of bafa 八法 (i.e. calligraphy).”

Zhou Mi adapted the first section of the preface from Zheng Xingyi’s 鄭興裔 (1126-1199) colophon on a letter from Gaozong. The emperor had written the shouzha or personal letter in 1158 to Zheng’s adoptive father Zheng Zao 鄭藻 (mid-12th c.). Zheng Zao was the nephew of Huizong’s Empress Zheng (r. 1110-1126) and his inclusion in the list likely led Zhou Mi to this source. Zheng Xingyi’s colophon describes how his father accompanied a Long Jiuchen 龍舊臣, possibly another name for Long Dayuan, on imperial orders to enter the inner offices. The two worked together to evaluate, authenticate, label, and write inscriptions for artworks. Gaozong wrote the letter to thank the elder Zheng for his services rendered to the imperial collection, and Zheng Xingyi was evidently proud of his father’s role and had the letter mounted for safekeeping. Gaozong remained active in cultural pursuits until his death in 1187, and the colophon was written not long after in 1196. In this source, Zhou Mi found a close to contemporary account of the emperor’s dedication to the arts and how he acquired works for his collection.

67 QDYY 6.93.


69 Person ID 0015346 in the China Biographical Database Project (CBDB) at https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/cbdb/home.

70 八載。翰墨如新，敬命工裝飾，寶藏於家以垂來茲。慶元丙辰，十一月己夘識。Zheng Xingyi 鄭興裔 (1126-199), Zheng Zhongsu zouyi yiji, 2.119.
2.3 Purchasing from Public Markets

Artworks entered the Southern Song palace in a rather piecemeal way. Aside from soliciting donations, Gaozong also order works to be purchased from the public markets called *quechang* 榷場 on the border between Jin and Song territory along the Huai River. Although these markets existed in the Northern Song on the border with Liao, the buying and selling of artworks was sporadic. Gaozong reestablished the markets in 1142 after the Treaty of Shaoxing with the Jin, and the art and antiques trade increased greatly in the Southern Song.\(^{71}\)

After the initial outflow of works during the Jingkang Incident, there was much demand in south China for cultural products, and the markets were the only way for objects to move south across the border. From 1145-1147, the repurchasing of paintings and works of calligraphy reached its peak and continued even after Gaozong’s abdication.\(^{72}\) The term *soufang dao* 搜訪到 or “acquired” likely refers to these scrolls, some of which were taken from the former Bianjing palace before ending up in the markets.\(^{73}\) Works for sale on the open market varied in quality, and even those from the old imperial collection may have suffered during transit and the changing of hands. Combing through the acquisitions was therefore crucial, as was having a process to standardize their mounting, labeling, and organization. The preface to “Record of Scrolls in Gaozong’s Collection,” however, does not address why the experts would take the

---


\(^{72}\) A connoisseur named Bi Liangshi 畢良史 (d. 1150), active in Kaifeng collectors’ circles, was tasked by Gaozong to purchase items on behalf of the court during these years. He received a respectable salary of 50 strings of cash per month for his work. Xu Mengxin 徐夢莘 (1126-1207), *Sancho beimeng huibian 三朝北盟會編* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1987), 208.1502, hereafter *SCBMHB*.

\(^{73}\) van Gulik, *Chinese Pictorial Art as Viewed by the Connoisseur*, 205.
drastic step of removing all identifying information. It is likely that Zhou Mi drew his conclusions from the following section on remounting:

All excellent works of model calligraphy and famous paintings of the Six Kingdoms, Sui, and Tang periods, models [of writing or painting] copied by the imperial brush, and models by famous statesmen of the present dynasty, must have title slips written by the Emperor. Those of middling and lower quality must be brought down and given to the Secretariat, to be inscribed by Pei Xi…. All antique paintings, if they have Xuanhe period inscriptions or title slips by Emperor Huizong, will be taken apart and the [writing] removed and not used. In addition, Cao Xun et al. must judge and verify their authenticity and will also compose titles, create a painting catalogue, and present this to the Emperor to obtain a rescript [i.e., for edits].

應六朝、隋、唐、出等法書名畫，幷御臨名帖、本朝名臣帖，並御書面僉。內中下品，並降付書房，令裴禧書。
應古畫，如有宣和御書題名，並行拆下不用。別令曹勛等定騐、別行譔名、作畫目，進呈取旨。74

The most prized items in the archives—taking both age and quality into account—were honored with title slips handwritten by emperors. The problem with Huizong’s “slender gold” calligraphy was that it is unmistakable and quite unlike other styles of writing. Aside from his reputation as a renowned painter and calligrapher, Huizong was seen as a failed ruler during whose reign the Northern Song came to an ignoble end.75 Gaozong thus aimed to distance himself from this painful recent history by writing in a calligraphic style markedly different from that of his father.76 To doubly emphasize this point, the text within Illustrations is written in a style consistent with Gaozong’s small regular script practice (Fig. 2.5).

74. QDYY 6.100.
76. Wen Fong, Beyond Representation: Chinese Painting and Calligraphy, 8th-14th Century (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 224-42.
By ordering the team of connoisseurs to remove Huizong’s inscriptions, Gaozong replaced his father as the voice of imperial aesthetic authority. The relabeling of the scrolls was driven not mainly by taste but by a specific political need to erase the imprint Huizong had left on the collection. The “Record” takes care to say that the writings were “removed and not to be used,” which implies they were placed in storage instead of being discarded. It also does not mention the removal of texts by other predecessors predating Huizong. In any case many inscriptions were lost by Zhou Mi’s time, and to one living long after the political exigencies of the early Southern Song, this act seemed needlessly destructive.

Zhou Mi found a convenient scapegoat in Cao Xun and the others for shortcomings in the Southern Song collection. Like Yu Yunwen, who blocked Cao Xun's appointment to office under Xiaozong, Zhou denigrates Cao Xun’s character. This type of censure is useful because it is impossible to disprove; it is not an attack on a specific act but an underlying quality of a person that affects everything they touch. Cao Xun may have suffered this criticism because of his overly deferential and inappropriately personal relationship—from the perspective of Yu Yunwen and others—with the royal family, first in suggesting the rescue mission for Huizong and second in following Gaozong’s orders to remove his father’s calligraphy. Zhou Mi was a Song loyalist who left his official career to protest Yuan rule, and in his critique avoids addressing societal factors such as the initial instability of Gaozong’s rule. His own great-grandfather Zhou Mi 周秘 (dates unknown) was an advisor to Prince Kang before he assumed the throne and was awarded the position of Vice Censor-in-Chief after the move south. Instead of analyzing Gaozong’s motives, Zhou Mi shifts the focus to the men’s “character,” perhaps

---

made easier by their social identities as distinct from civil officials: the eight others included two imperial affines and at least two eunuchs.\textsuperscript{78}

In Zhou Mi’s bluntly worded critique, there is no mention of the bestowal of the letter to Zheng Zao or of Gaozong’s satisfaction with the work carried out. By refusing to acknowledge his source or Gaozong’s involvement, he turns away from the emperor’s political agenda of distancing himself from the Xuanhe period in reorganizing the imperial art collection. Zhou Mi’s preface is reproduced in a number of Ming and Qing texts and played a role in reshaping later understandings of the Southern Song collection and the roles played by the various officials and connoisseurs.\textsuperscript{79}

\textbf{2.4 Circulating Omens and Legitimation Debates}

It is against this backdrop of reconstructing the Song court’s claim to cultural hegemony that the conception of \textit{Illustrations} should be placed. The earliest source related to the painting I have located is a memorial Cao Xun submitted to the court in 1133, titled “Memorial to the Emperor on Fourteen Matters”《上皇帝書十四事》.\textsuperscript{80} Based on the format and language of Cao Xun’s memorial, it was written in response to the original list that Geng Nanzhong and others created at the time of Gaozong’s accession in 1127, although the omens have almost all been changed. The events in the original 1127 document are as follows:

\textsuperscript{78} Hartman, “Cao Xun and the Legend of Emperor Taizu’s Oath,” 67.

\textsuperscript{79} A few examples: Tian Rucheng 田汝成 (1503—1557), \textit{Xihu youlan zhi} 西湖遊覽志 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1980), 2.40—41., Li E 劉鶚 (1692—1752), \textit{Song shi jishi} 宋詩紀事 (Taipei: Taiwan zhonghua shu ju, 1971), 57.4125—26., Pan Yongyin 潘永因 (17th c.), \textit{Song bai leichao} 宋稗類鈔 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1983), 32.1849—50.

\textsuperscript{80} Datable to 1133 or 1134 since Cao Xun states his age as 36 at the beginning of the text. \textit{SYJ}, 23.1a.
1. The day that Prince Kang took leave of the capital on a diplomatic mission to Wolibu’s camp outside Kaifeng, Emperor Qinzong gave him a jade belt ornament usually worn only by emperors [1126/11/3].

2. Upon notification of his appointment as grand field marshal, Prince Kang dreamed that Qinzong removed his yellow robe and gave it to him [1126/i11/18; Part 12 of Illustrations].

3. A popular interpretation of the two graphs in the Jingkang reign period—to mean “establish him in the twelfth month”—foretells Prince Kang’s appointment as field marshal.

4. The prince’s three arrows strike the Flying Immortal Pavilion [1127/2; Part 9].

5. A sign (order) from Huizong authorizes the prince to assume command as emperor (jizhen 即真).

6. The Yellow River suddenly freezes and permits Prince Kang to cross [1126/12/15; Part 11].

7. At Jizhou, red auras appear in the sky, an omen of the Song dynasty’s “fire virtue” [sometime after arrival at Jizhou on 1127/2/23].

Gaozong’s supporters intentionally uncouple the imperial garment, its message, and the messenger. Cao Xun is not mentioned explicitly and did not receive a post at court, probably because of his suggestion of the naval rescue mission and close association with Huizong. The omens proceed roughly chronologically and take place in the several months leading up to the Jin invasion. The list is also skillfully put together, combining signs of support from Gaozong’s two predecessors, the people, and Heaven. According to this reading, all the players listed—including Prince Kang and even the common citizen—have some say about the course of succession. The inclusiveness of actors on the list can be understood as an argument about capturing the Mandate of Heaven (tianming 天命) and its relation to the dynasty’s “Fire Virtue” (huode 火德).

The expression Mandate of Heaven is often used in writings on legitimation in the imperial period. It was conceived in the Western Zhou, in order to explain the conquest of the

---

81 SCBMHB 90.5a-b; QSW 122:2636.202; translation adapted from Hartman, “Cao Xun and the Legend of Emperor Taizu’s Oath,” 77.
much larger Shang polity and to solidify the Zhou’s control over it.\textsuperscript{82} The underlying argument is that Heaven grants its support to a leader based on his virtue and ability, therefore allowing for a transition of power when the ruler fails. \textit{Tianming} has since evolved to become a central political theory used to justify all dynastic transitions and was especially pertinent to the establishment of the Northern Song. Emperor Taizu’s \textsuperscript{太祖} (r. 960-976) consolidation of power followed the turbulent Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period, named respectively for the small states that quickly succeeded one another in northern and southern China. None had full control over previous Tang territories, and at the same time all were competing to lay claim to Heaven’s support. The intensity of this period of war was problematic for the early Song because of two reasons: the Mandate of Heaven should run continuously from one ruler to the next, and only one sovereign can claim it at a time. Moreover, the ruthlessness of the contenders hardly matched the moral virtue ideally embodied by the recipient of the Mandate. Eventually, the court decided to trace its mandate through the northern Five Dynasties since they held various degrees of control over the Central Plain.\textsuperscript{83}

A key aspect of the Mandate of Heaven theory is that support can be withdrawn if the ruler fails to govern well. Some scholars have described the conditional nature of the Mandate as “performance legitimacy” or “sovereign accountability.”\textsuperscript{84} Unlike under the European


\textsuperscript{83} Mote, \textit{Imperial China, 900-1800}, 8-10.

conception of the divine right of kings, birthright does not grant unconditional rule; anyone in theory could lay claim to emperorship, which is reflected in the many peasant rebellions punctuating Chinese history. Since rulers are measured on performance, it is necessary for Heaven to have a means to communicate with them and their subjects. It does so by sending either auspicious signs when the ruler is deserving or calamities like natural disasters when he is failing. As evidenced by the active debates at court over omens since the beginning of the imperial period, how Heaven’s signs were reported and interpreted was fairly open-ended. As a result, omens carve out a dialectical space to evaluate and critique the worth of a ruler, giving nuance to the idea of monarchical rule. The emperor was compelled to take public sentiment into account, especially in the early years of Gaozong’s reign before he was able to consolidate military and administrative power.

In the 1127 record, Geng Nanzhong and his colleagues repeatedly invoke the concept of tianming in order to frame the stakes of the succession and argue for Prince Kang’s rightful claim with the list of omens as evidence. The most important link they draw is the one between Heaven’s mandate and the wishes and sentiments of the people. The record introduces its argument by stating, “The Mandate of Heaven has already been prophesied, and the will of the

85 For the decades long dispute over which of the Five Elements the Western Han court should be aligned with, with a sighting of a yellow dragon playing a key role, see Hok-lam Chan, *Legitimation in Imperial China: Discussions under the Jurchen-Chin Dynasty (1115-1234)* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), 28-30.

86 One channel for rulers to admit wrongdoing and solicit feedback is the Edict of Self-blame or zuijizhao 罪己詔. Seven emperors in the Song issued such edicts, in which they are expected to take personal responsibility for failures of policy, natural disasters, and plagues. In light of Gaozong’s forced abdication during the Miao-Liu rebellion in 1129 and the many who died, he issued a publicly circulated Edict of Self-blame to acknowledge his mistakes: for lacking a specific plan and vision for the future of the state, and also for lacking the personal virtue to restrain others. The document implies that unless Gaozong acts immediately on the threats facing the dynasty, there is a real possibility of his loss of the Mandate of Heaven. Zhao, “The Mandate of Heaven and Performance Legitimation in Historical and Contemporary China,” 421; Mote, *Imperial China, 900-1800*, 297.
people has therefore found refuge. Responding to Heaven and accommodating the people is well suited for this opportune moment." If Prince Kang agrees to take the throne, then he is helping to achieve the congruent aims of Heaven and manmade society. In other words, the advisers are using *tianming* and its associations of cosmic ordering to naturalize a manifestly unnatural line of succession. The officials also urge the prince that the Mandate of Heaven should not be long obstructed, then return to the concept again in the last section when they cite the omens. The document ends with several impassioned pleas, declaring that *tianming* is evident and warning Prince Kang that to violate Heaven’s wishes and to ignore public sentiment would not be wise.

Its rhetoric relies on parallelisms and acts directionally, looking above to protect Heaven’s intention and below to fulfill the realm’s hopes, using the prince to neatly bind them together.

A phrase commonly used in conjunction with Mandate of Heaven, “legitimate transmission” or *zhengtong* 正統, is conspicuously missing from the 1127 and 1133 documents. *Zhengtong* was popularized during the Han restoration and denoted more narrowly “correct filiation” or “proper bloodline.” Emperor Guangwu 光武 (r. 25-57 CE) used it to emphasize his descent from the Han founder Gaozu 高祖 (r. 202-195 BCE) and that of the Liu clan from the legendary Emperor Yao 堯 (ca. 2356-2255 BCE). The omens section refers to Emperor Guangwu twice, along with King Wu of Zhou 周武王 (r. ca. 1046-43 BCE), as models of exemplary rulers for whose accessions heavenly signs played a major role. At this time Gaozong

---

87 天命已兆，人心實歸，應天順人宜適機會。*SCBMHB* 90.3a.

88 天命彰彰著聞，周之武王、漢之光武，何以過此大王，其可久稽天命乎！其可弗順人情乎！古人有言曰：違天不祥，願大王亟即帝位，上留天心，下塞人望。*SCBMHB* 90.5b.

89 Chan, *Legitimation in Imperial China*, 32.
admired Han Guangwu’s character, and Guangwu’s work in restoring the Han was invoked regularly, such as in Gaozong’s succession proclamation. Following the Han, from the Jin 晉 (266-420) to the Tang periods, zhengtong expanded to mean “legitimate succession” as part of a continuous line and incorporated moral and cultural components. As discussed above, Northern Song historians were actively engaged with how to organize the uninterrupted transmission of legitimacy through the Five Dynasties. Geng Nanzhong’s omission of the term zhengtong and its implied unbroken lineage is telling: lateral succession from brother to brother is not as neat in the Chinese scheme and needs to be treated delicately. The passage thus makes ample mention of rescuing the two captured emperors as Gaozong’s motivation to take command. In order to sidestep the issue of linear transmission of power, the advisers do not use their rhetorical force to argue that the situation fits into the traditional mold of zhengtong. Their solution is to instead strongly imply a linkage between the administrations and of assent by Huizong and Qinzong through the exchange of precious objects.

The combination of events on the 1127 list can be read as a list of supporters of the accession, but it also emphasizes how this support is conveyed. As mentioned above, the document integrates endorsements from Heaven, the people, and the two emperors, along with a

---


91 Chan, Legitimation in Imperial China, 35-36.

92 When Ouyang Xiu 歐陽脩 (1007-1072) wrote on the Five Dynasties, he redefined legitimacy as not being contingent on an unbroken line of succession in part because he wanted to exclude the Later Liang 後梁 (907-923) and depravities of its founder Zhu Wen 朱溫 (852-912). This represents a significant shift from the Five Agents theory by classifying some rulers and periods as legitimate and other periods as having no legitimate rulers. The Five Agents theory continued to be popular, but Ouyang Xiu’s writing laid the foundation for a moral-ethical dimension of the debate and for Zhu Xi’s (1130-1200) arguments in the same vein. The Neo-Confucian habit of contrasting legitimate rulers with usurpers and excluding the latter from legitimacy narratives would slowly gain traction in the later Southern Song. Chan, 38-42.
demonstration of Gaozong’s personal merit by shooting the placard. In other words, some of the events are understood as acts of God, while others are the direct result of human action. It is tempting to read the indirect influence of Heaven in every instance; the two captured emperors can be seen as acting on behalf of Heaven when they give Gaozong their tokens of approval. The contrast drawn between tianming and the people’s sentiment, however, indicates that Heaven’s machinations and human agency can be complementary. Geng Nanzhong and the others warn the prince that to hesitate and go against Heaven’s wishes is unwise, but still frame the decision as his to make.93 The call and response nature of Heaven’s relationship with a ruler is reflected in the use of “reply” or “response” (ying 应). Likewise, the painting’s later title Ruiying tu 瑞應圖 underscores Prince Kang’s initiative and ability rather than as passive recipient of Heaven’s mandate.

A second way of analyzing the omens is based on how they are communicated, either as an exchange of physical tokens of authority or a widely observed event. Omens three, four, six, and seven take place in either public or semi-public forums and have a large number of witnesses. Their settings and accessibility are important to demonstrate that the omens are verifiable and have widespread support. The first, second, and fifth signs center on an exchange of items that takes place either privately or within a restricted setting, which needs further explanation.

The document uses four terms to describe Heaven’s communications: omen (yao 兆), tally or talisman (fu 符), and auspicious sign (xiang 祥 and rui 瑞). The range of language points to an ontological flexibility, from a tangible object like a tally, to observable natural phenomena,

93 天命已兆，人心實歸，應天順人宜適機會。天命不可以久濤，人心不可以強違，萬機不可以暫曠，願大王即皇帝位以定天下。SCBMHB 90.3a-b. 

52
to less measurable but still important passions or sentiments. The centrality of *fu* is seen in the introduction of the passage, where the advisers argue that since antiquity, emperors and rulers must receive tallies as proof of acquiring the Mandate. Historical precedents include the appearance of white fish in support of King Wu of Zhou and the book on omens that named Emperor Guangwu as the one destined to restore the Han.\(^{94}\) The Song examples—Qinzong’s jade belt, his yellow robe, and Huizong’s written message—differ from their precedents in that they were not believed to have appeared spontaneously. Instead, the act of the emperors gifting personal items is central to connecting Gaozong to his father and brother and establishing him in a continuous line of transmission. The importance of material culture in transferring legitimacy is reflected in Cao Xun’s accounts of his escape from the Jin and delivering the “collar edict)” to verify the message, Huizong told Cao Xun that he once gave Prince Kang a kingfisher-colored pearl and a box made from rhinoceros hide.\(^{95}\) The preciousness of the objects and the extreme rarity of their materials allows them to substitute for more conventional symbols of authority such as jade tallies or the imperial seal. Examining how the omens operate is not meant to replace but to add to the first view of it as an index of supporters, demonstrating the robustness of the list that Geng Nanzhong put together. Moreover, it highlights the primacy of material culture in legitimacy campaigns, which thus far has mostly been addressed within the context of intellectual or institutional history.

The last sign of the appearance of red auras at Jizhou also stresses continuity with the Song imperial cult by referencing the Five Agents theory of dynastic change. The theory was

---

\(^{94}\) 蒲聞自古帝王之興，必有受命之符。故白魚潛躍武王作周，赤伏顯符光武興漢。*SCBMHB* 90.5a.

\(^{95}\) 會有龍德宮密賜馬價珠、犀合子、等物。*SCBMHB* 98.7a.
invented by Zou Yan (ca. 305-240 BCE), who assigned one of the five agents to rulers and used their cyclical relationships to explain the rise and fall of dynasties. Each agent is affiliated with a color and bears on aspects of the dynasty’s visual and symbolic program such as imperial robes, regalia, and the sacrificial calendar (Fig. 2.6). Until the end of the Han, it also affected more practical tools of governance such as choosing the first month of the calendar and units of weights and measures. Zou Yan addressed the Yellow Emperor through the Zhou dynasty and overlaid his scheme on the older ideas of the Mandate of Heaven and the Confucian ideal of a virtuous, benevolent ruler. The Five Agents theory was one of many ways to legitimize rule, depending on the circumstances and political context, and worked in tandem with other notions of legitimacy.

Starting from the Qin, dynasties in their early years began to claim support by one of the agents and documenting omens in the corresponding color. The Qin emperor was the first to adopt a cosmic power to legitimize his rule. He chose Water and its affiliated color black because it overpowered the Fire Agent of the Zhou, and the appearance of a black dragon in the early years of the dynasty confirmed the choice. A Han work attributed to Dong Zhongshu (179-104 BCE) suggests that Han should claim succession to the Zhou and not the Qin, opening the door for later thinkers to apply their own criteria to create legitimate lines of succession. The debate in the Northern Song over how to position itself in relation to the Five Dynasties also encompassed the Five Agents; there was some disagreement over whether or not

---

96 Chan, Legitimation in Imperial China, 24-27.

to continue with Taizu’s choice of Fire, but in the end, it was not changed. The importance of color for visualizing the imperial cult is apparent in the full-length portraits of most of the Song emperors, in which their voluminous robes are depicted in an assertive and unvarying wash of red (Fig. 2.7). The same dispute over whether to choose a new element surfaced again in the early Southern Song. Geng Nanzhong argues here for continuity with the sighting of the red auras, and upon his succession on 1127/5/1, Gaozong changed the reign period to Jianyan 建炎 or “Establishing Fire.”

Laying claim to the Fire Virtue for the Southern Song had further reaching implications than justifying Gaozong’s succession. The conditions of the Mandate of Heaven are that it should run continuously through a line of rulers, and only one sovereign can claim it at a time. The bestowal of precious items and secret messages from father to son and brother to brother proves continuity. As for the second condition, asserting the Southern Song’s link to the Fire Agent argues that it is the only valid government. In other words, to publish this list publicly is to make a point against Jin legitimacy and to cast the invasion of northern China as a historical aberration instead of a legal and recognized government. Geng Nanzhong’s audience was not limited to those who may question Gaozong’s succession but also included the population of northern China and powerful southerners who may defect. The Five Agents theory was a native Chinese framework of proving legitimacy, and in fact the Jin did not make a counterclaim. It was not until the late twelfth century that Jin Emperor Zhangzong 章宗 (r. 1189-1208) systematically adopted the theory in his own legitimation efforts, under military pressure from Mongol neighbors and after decades of assimilation efforts. Geng Nanzhong’s stance should be seen as

---


99 Chan, 73-97.
part of a larger discourse over how much to distance the Southern Song court from the policies and legacy of the Northern Song, which continued for the rest of Gaozong’s reign and is reflected in many ways by *Illustrations*.

### 2.5 Cao Xun & the Five Agents Theory

Cao Xun’s 1133 “Memorial to the Emperor on Fourteen Matters” lays the foundation for the painting by describing seven signs he argues as currently relevant:

1. Prince Kang pays diplomatic visits to the Jin camp and the enemy is intimidated by his deportment and imposing presence [1126/1; Part 4 in *Illustrations*].
2. Empress Xuanhe [contemporaneous title for Xianren] relays the story of how on the day that Prince Kang left for a mission to the north, a servant girl named Zhao’er saw four spirit kings standing guard [Part 5].
3. The prince’s three arrows strike the Flying Immortal Pavilion [1127/2; Part 9], combined with the Yellow River suddenly freezing and permitting Prince Kang and the Song troops to cross [1126/12/15; Part 11].
4. At the end of the Jingkang period, the prince leaves for his second mission to the Jin and avoids capture when the capital falls.
5. The Jin army surprises the Southern Song court in Yangzhou. Caught in the chaos, Gaozong narrowly escapes across the Yangzi on horseback [1129/2/3].
6. Author draws a parallel to the founding of the Western Zhou with an excerpt from the *Shijing* and applauds Song ministers as united in the face of difficulty.
7. When pressed by Jin troops in Zhejiang, Gaozong and the court escaped by boarding a fleet of ships and sailing into the sea for several months [1129/12/15].

Six years after the succession, Cao Xun pivots away entirely from written or physical traces of Qinzong’s or Huizong’s authority or consent. His new version incorporates recent events and turns moments of terrible miscalculation, such as the escape from Yangzhou, into divine protection. The focus of the list is on Gaozong’s natural leadership abilities and successful confrontations with the enemy, and Empress Xianren is incorporated for the first time as a key

---

100 *SYJ* 23.1-8.
actor. Cao Xun has found a way to forefront his involvement without either of the former emperors: by emphasizing Gaozong’s mother’s role, he begins the process of shifting the transmission of legitimacy through her person and which becomes more pronounced decades later in the painting.

Cao Xun’s memorial includes a few of Geng Nanzhong’s omens—those in item three—and fills out the details of events during the Jingkang Period. It incorporates two current events since the succession and focuses on interpersonal interactions and encounters with the Jin, rather than direct or indirect signs from Heaven. Cao Xun is less concerned with proving transmission of the Mandate of Heaven and only uses the term tianming once in the text. Based on the many confrontations with the Jin he describes, he sees them as a more tangible threat than any misgivings about Gaozong’s succession. Six years after the Jingkang Incident, the Southern Song was more established and Gaozong had survived the Miao-Liu mutiny that resulted from the invasion at Yangzhou. The list therefore does not revolve around physical talismans that prove Gaozong’s legitimacy but instead focuses on his luck and personal merit as a leader. Read together with the suggested reforms on taxation and policy that follow, the omens can also be understood as a cautionary reminder of the recent past and the pitfalls of not bringing groups on the margin such as bandits and refugees into the fold of the empire. In short, the memorial suggests a path forward to consolidating power after Geng Nanzhong’s efforts helped Gaozong acquire the throne.

The concluding section of the memorial shows that Cao Xun also viewed the debate over the Five Agents as essential to the administration. In a departure from Geng Nanzhong and Northern Song precedent, he advocates for replacing Fire with Earth Virtue (tude 土德). He first
describes omens from the early Northern Song that manifested in the color yellow, which corresponds with the Earth Agent:

I recently heard about auspicious talismans and humbly submit these coarse words: “Emperor Taizu was born wrapped in yellow and subsequently received the Mandate [of Heaven]. The Five Planets [Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn] gathered in the “Strider” constellation [part of Andromeda and Pisces], yet Saturn was in the principal position. When Emperor Zhenzong offered a sacrifice to Heaven on Mount Tai, clutching a yellow sword-guard, the Hanyu Star [an auspicious star] was visible. Their colors were all yellow, which is the talisman of Earth virtue. The country would benefit from Earth virtue ruling over the world, in following the footsteps of the Sacred Ancestor, like how the Han Dynasty used Fire Virtue to succeed Emperor Yao and those that came after him.”

The passage uses yellow imagery to weave together individuals in the Zhao family into a coherent lineage. Cao Xun quotes these omens from another source in a concerted effort to connect Gaozong’s legitimacy with rulers who established the Northern Song rather than Huizong or Qinzong. The dynasty founder Emperor Taizu’s being born wrapped in yellow may have planted the idea for Prince Kang’s birth scene in the painting, in which the room is filled with a radiant golden light. In addition, the sacrifices on Mount Tai made by Emperor Zhenzong (r. 997-1022), third ruler of the Northern Song, are also related to the imperial cult. They were carried out in 1108 after the so-called Heavenly Text (tianshu 天書) appeared on

---

101 SYJ 23.8b.

102 The excerpt on Taizu’s birth is also found in the 13th c. Hanyuan xinshu 翰苑新書 "New book of the literati garden,” 後集上 juan 1, but it is unclear what earlier source both are using.
a roof tile at a gateway to the imperial palace. This silk scroll—also yellow—extolled the ruling Zhao family as follows: “The Zhao have received the Mandate and brought glory to the Song. It has been handed down to Zhenzong and dwells within his capabilities. If one abides by orthodoxy, then the dynasty will certainly last for seven hundred years (帛上有文曰「趙受命，興於宋，付於昚，居其器，守於正，世七百，九九定」).” Although the formality of the language and its lofty claims do their best to glorify dynastic beginnings, the reality was that the Song was already struggling against Khitan military incursions. Conflict with the Liao in 1004 ended with the political and financial concessions Song made in the Chanyuan Treaty 澶淵之盟 of 1005. Cao Xun is likely including Zhenzong’s sacrifices as an example of historical precedent in dealing with non-Han peoples by using Chinese legitimation theory to demonstrate cultural superiority.

The text’s allusion to the Sacred Ancestor (shengzu 聖祖) is tied to both the imperial cult and to Zhenzong’s dedication to Daoism. In 1012, Zhenzong claimed the Sacred Ancestor as progenitor of the Zhao clan and elevated him in the pantheon of Daoist figures above Laozi, who the Li royal family of the Tang had coopted in a similar manner. Given the primacy Cao Xun places on the Zhao line, its origins, and its continuity, the omission of Huizong and Qinzong becomes more glaring. In effect, he is suggesting a distancing of Gaozong’s rule from his father

---

103 For a discussion of the politics and historiography of this event, see Suzanne E. Cahill, “Taoism at the Sung Court: The Heavenly Text Affair of 1008,” Bulletin of Sung and Yuan Studies, no. 16 (1980): 23-44.

104 Chen Bangzhan 陳邦瞻 (d. 1623), Song shi jishi benmo 宋史紀事本末 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1977), 22.3a-b.

and the recent past; he looks to dynastic origins and further still to the Han dynasty to construct his narrative. Six years after the accession and Geng Nanzhong’s promise that rescuing the two emperors was Prince Kang’s main motivation, Cao Xun would rather avoid reminding the court of their continued captivity. For a brief time after the accession in 1127, the hawkish and capable Li Gang headed Gaozong’s makeshift court. It was he who decided on the strategy to distance the new emperor from the failures of the Northern Song, and whose imprint can be felt in Cao Xun’s argument several years later.106 Although Cao Xun professes that he has no expertise in astronomical phenomena, the arrangements of constellations and stars in the memorial are more specific than the “red auras” in the older list. This document is in general more technical and argued with references to the Classics, which is warranted given that its intended audience is more specific than what Geng Nanzhong had in mind.

The conclusion of the memorial makes a final case for Earth Virtue by returning again to recent events. Cao Xun lists several instances when the Fire Virtue has apparently expired:

Not to mention, [when] the year before last the imperial carriage stopped over at Kuaiji and last year in Lin’an, not even a few days had passed and three times [you] encountered destruction by fire. Is it not the case that Fire has lost its nature, if it has come to this? Currently in this time of turmoil, if [Your Majesty] abide by the intention of Heaven and follow the course of the Earth Virtue, it would not only replace the old and enact the new but also follow the strategy of yielding and in performing the seasonal rituals bring about auspiciousness. [Your Majesty] would also not lose the sequence of the Five Agents transmitting their virtue.

況前歲法駕駐會稽，去歲臨安，不旬日間，三經回祿，豈火失其性，而至於是？倘以兹多故，稽和天意，以順土德，不惟除舊官新，為禦却之術，而迎氣致祥，亦不失五行傳德之序。107

106 On Li Gang’s brief but important tenure as Junior Grand Councilor of the Department of State Affairs and concurrently Vice Director of the Central Secretariat, see Mote, *Imperial China, 900-1800*, 292-93.

107 *SYJ* 23.8b.
Cao Xun argues that the disasters at Kuaiji and Lin’an as evidence that the Fire Agent has abandoned the Song and is now acting harmfully. Couched within the discursive turns about conducting the correct rituals and seeking the appropriate Agent is the crux of the document: out with the old and in with the new. Replacing the Fire Virtue with Earth is a thread within the larger discussion of how to relate to the Northern Song, in terms of policy but also in terms of symbolic and cultural projections of the court.

Cao Xun’s putting forth of these specific omens should be understood together with his reorganization of the imperial collection and relabeling its items. Through devaluing Huizong’s aesthetic hierarchy and demoting his calligraphy, the court is dictating the terms by which it engages with the recent past and removing Huizong from the lineage of cultural legitimacy. By the time Zhou Mi is researching the Southern Song collection, he is far removed from the court’s calculations of how to manage the painful memories of the Jingkang period. In other words, he is approaching the collection from an academic perspective of knowledge preservation while its creation, form, and perpetuation cannot be divorced from its political aims. Zhou Mi’s critiques can be seen as a parallel to the historiography of the Heavenly Text affair: heavily colored by later historians who are more concerned with assessment by their own criteria than weighing the political complexities of the time. For our purposes, the 1133 memorial not only strives to provide a solution to such pressing concerns but also lays the foundation for the fully developed hagiography of the painting.

Compared to the 1127 and 1133 documents, the group of omens included in Illustrations is much more expansive in its scope and the number of years depicted. Geng Nanzhong’s submission focuses on the immediate events of the Jin invasion, contained within a three-to-four-month period. Cao Xun lengthens the period under discussion to several years after the capture
of the capital. The painting, created in the early 1170s, is in turn a biographical record that begins at Prince Kang’s birth and continues until Empress Wei’s captivity in the chess scene, although it is not arranged in chronological order. Four decades later, the painting contains a faint residue of Cao Xun’s previous argument about the Earth Virtue: the prince is born with a golden light filling the room in Scene One, and the wrapper of the cloth that Empress Wei uses to cast her chess pieces in Scene Seven is also yellow. There is, however, no explicit mention of yellow’s association with the Earth Virtue, and the phrase does not appear in any of the writings on the scroll. It seems that as the state and its relationship with the Jin stabilized, Cao Xun left behind the idea of adopting a new agent to signal an epochal shift. His position at court became more and more secure by the end of his career, and his focus changed to elevating Gaozong and his legacy to that of dynastic restorer.

When selecting omens about Prince Kang to depict in the handscroll, Cao Xun took a further step in reshaping the source and transferal of his power. Several models have been proposed for how to interpret and understand the sequence of the paintings, from their relationship with textual evidence to chronology and theme.\textsuperscript{108} Not surprisingly, Cao Xun forefronts his role as intermediary between members of the royal family and also as their confidant. The path that he charts has to do with the central role that Empress Wei took on in the later years of Gaozong’s rule. Her return to the Song-controlled south as part of the peace

\textsuperscript{108} Li Tianming suggested that the group should be divided into five categories according to textual sources, ranging from stories that correspond with “reality” to “myths without factual evidence,” categories which reflect the concerns of modern researchers. Charles Hartman offers another way to sort the list, combining chronology and theme: omens that appear in the historical record before Gaozong’s accession, ones that relate to Consort Wei, and ones having to do with the cult of Lord Cui at Cizhou. Li Tianming 李天鳴, “Ruiying tu de gushi 瑞應圖的故事,” in \textit{Dynastic Renaissance: Art and Culture of the Southern Song, Rare Books} (Taipei: Guoli gugong bowuyuan, 2010), 18-29; Hartman, “Cao Xun and the Legend of Emperor Taizu’s Oath,” 75.
negotiations in 1142 was framed as a major diplomatic victory and an act of filial piety on Gaozong’s part.

Taken together with the earlier explications of omens—Geng Nanzhong’s insistence on links with Huizong and Qinzong and Cao Xun’s avoidance of them—Cao Xun’s rhetorical strategy crystallizes. He redirects the lineage of proper transmission through the unlikely figure of Empress Wei in a departure from the patrilineal notions of bloodline woven into zhengtong. Huizong’s writings on works of art in his collection and his robe—both by extension symbols of his authority—no longer fit. Although Huizong briefly appears in the opening scene and Qinzong’s avatar is seen in the last one, Consort Wei is depicted as Prince Kang’s guide and instrumental to his development. Huizong is literally placed at the margins of the prince’s birth—in a small room adjacent to where the infant is being bathed—and is one of the last figures to be seen. Empress Wei is the person to set the story into motion, who works to nurture and protect the prince by abiding by the Spirit Kings’ commands, and who actively seeks an answer to what his destiny may be. Cao Xun’s turn away from legitimation discourse as contained within familiar frameworks such as zhengtong and the Five Agents means seeking symbols of authority elsewhere, to be explored in future studies on Illustrations.

The current chapter has focused mainly on the discursive level at which Illustrations operates. But as an artwork whose form guides how viewers engage with it, the scroll has its own objectives. The shared weakness of text-based approaches lies in their treatment of the painting as an index of data points that can be rearranged or lifted from their frame as is convenient for the viewer. Instead of separating and regrouping the scenes according to their relationship with texts, an object-based approach would prioritize the order of images as they sit in the painting.
Unlike formats such as album leaves or illustrated books, a handscroll demands that the viewer encounter scenes in the order that the artist intended.

The scroll extends for 48 feet and presents an interpretive opportunity unique to long narrative handscrolls: each segment stands on its own as a composition, but it also relates to the ones that come before and after in a narrative and visual sense. Akin to watching a film or listening to a piece of music, viewing a handscroll engages the temporal element of memory. It also allows for the buildup of narrative tension and resolution that longer forms of storytelling encourage. Cao Xun and the artist clearly agreed that narrative flow trumps strict chronology; the scenes follow the prince from birth to accession but are not in chronological order (the Yellow River crossing and several others took place after the dream). Instead, the artist is more concerned with building tension and making a subtle argument for causation: every time Empress Wei dreams of a deity or consults one, the following scene shows how the prince benefited from divine protection. Her dream of nourishing the prince as child (section 2) leads to his remarkable strength (section 3), the manifestation of the Spirit Kings (section 5) is followed by Lord Cui’s protection (section 6), and the prediction on the chess board (section 7) leads to a narrow escape from the Jin army (section 8). Of course, Prince Kang has to eventually prove his mettle apart from his mother, which shapes the trajectory of the last four scenes. The final section’s elevation of Prince Kang to Grand Field Marshal, the supernatural frame of the dream, and the emotional appeal of Qinzong’s gesture draws together many of the threads explored in the painting.

The prince’s dream of Qinzong is moved to last place after being listed second in the original 1127 document and excluded from the 1133 memorial. In the painting, it acts as the final climax of the story and emphasizes the importance of Heaven’s intervention in an otherwise
impossible meeting between the brothers. Qinzong had been dead since 1161 and presented fewer complications than when he had been alive. Moreover, there was apparently still no appetite for reminding viewers of Huizong’s role in the transition nor of his legacy. Compared to the more matter-of-fact tone and policy suggestions of the memorial, the painting turns fully to how the prince received the Mandate of Heaven through signs and omens in the metaphysical realm.

The painting leaves behind talismans—central to Geng Nanzhong’s assertion of legitimate rule—and replaces them with stories centered around human actors. Gone are the references to Qinzong’s jade belt, Huizong’s collar edict, the rhinoceros hide box, and the gold earring. The single exception is the robe that Qinzong passes to his brother, but since it is framed within a dream, it functions more on a symbolic than a material level. The creators—Cao Xun and the artist—must have realized that the painting did not need to depict the exchange of items, because its ability to persuade the viewer of the truth lies on the picture surface. The rare materials that gave the tokens their power have been transposed to the surface of the silk as gold paint, and the pictorial frame is freed to focus on the human interactions in each scene. In other words, the craft and beauty inherent to the handscroll is argument enough for the importance of cultural knowledge in asserting political legitimacy. Along with the rebuilding of the imperial collection, the painting and how it was made stands for another aspect of legitimization apart from the politico-historical arguments: a claim to cultural inheritance and related ideas of moral justice. Solidifying this claim for the Southern Song, along with securing his role as the essential narrator of its origin story, were Cao Xun’s ultimate goals.
Chapter 3: Omen Images since the Han and Interpretive Claims

In section four of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, on the eve of the rupture between the Song and the Jin in 1126, Prince Kang rides through the gates of the capital city Kaifeng (Fig. 3.1). The nineteen-year-old prince has just returned from a round of negotiations at the enemy camp outside the city. He leads a long procession seen through the open gate, punctuated by a line of black banners winding briskly through the low-lying hills. Amid a crowd of men dressed in gray-green, the prince wears an ochre-shaded ensemble while his two closest advisors frame him in bright cinnabar red. A crowd has gathered in the city streets: seventeen adults and a child stand in front of a store, hastily abandoned by its owner, to watch the commotion of the prince’s entrance (Fig. 3.2). One gentleman carrying a staff shields his eyes from the sun in order to get a better look, and a few turn their heads to their companions to discuss the scene.

What unfolds before the viewer is a process of looking, observing, and bearing public witness to the qualities, both physical and moral, of the prince. The public nature of the display and the common people as its witness act together to authenticate the omen, in this case the charisma of the young prince. Although *Illustrations* uses elements of the moral cosmology developed by Han dynasty (202 BCE-9CE; 25-220CE) writers, it deviates from the types of omen images produced prior to the Song by embracing narrative forms. Scholarly attention has not been evenly divided: the Han through Six Dynasties are well studied, as are the many pictures produced at Song Huizong’s court.109 Omen images, however, were continuously made

from the early to mid-imperial periods, seen in the popularity of illustrated catalogues and due in part to reports of omens to court being verified through pictures. Though omen images are far from uniform or historically static, this chapter will for the first time treat them from the Han to the Song as a tradition that shares in representative norms, function, and interpretive practices. Studying them as a cohesive group also draws out what Illustrations inherited from earlier omen images, what it cast away, and what other languages of authority it borrowed in order to construct an argument for the overarching and eclectic authority of Song rulership.

3.1 Han through Six Dynasties Omen Images

Omen images are one of the oldest forms of painted and carved pictures in China. The theory behind a moral cosmology of omens was developed in the Han dynasty, although scholars continue to debate its place in early Chinese intellectual history and its bearing on contemporary politics. According to a text traditionally attributed to the Eastern Han historian Ban Gu 班固 (32–92 CE), the logic behind auspicious omens goes something like this:

The reason that signs and auspices appear when general peace prevails in all under Heaven is because the King is assisting heaven in the regulation [of things] and the harmonization of yin and yang. When yin and yang are in harmony, the ten thousand things will be in hierarchic order and the [blissful] ethers will permeate [everything]. Therefore, when signs and auspices appear one after another, [it is a sign that] they have come in response to the ruler’s virtue.”

---


天下太平，符瑞所以来至者，以為王者承天統理，調和陰陽。陰陽和，萬物序休，氣充塞。故符瑞臻皆應德。111

The text then provides examples of such auspicious omens, such as vermilion herbs, the *qilin* and various albino animals, luminous clouds, the divine tripod, the yellow dragon, and many others. Essentially, a moral cosmology means that Heaven acts as a moral agent, engaging in a display of signs to encourage a sovereign’s righteous behavior or warn against negligence or misconduct.112 According to Martin Powers, Ban Gu’s argument is used specifically to advance the idea that the emperor should place the right kinds of advisors—those with a moral voice—in official positions so that the country can be governed properly.113 Correlative thought that linked observable natural phenomena and events with social or political implications was well developed by the early imperial period. The metaphysical construction of Heaven’s intentions as both knowable and communicated to the human realm by omens, and the idea of officials possessing the authority to interpret omens, were inherited by Cao Xun and asserted in *Illustrations*. The paintings, however, share almost nothing in common with omen images from the early imperial period. Understanding how the representation of omens changed over time can shed light on how *Illustrations* operates within omen discourse and the place of omen imagery in Song painting history.


112 The realities of implementing these lofty ideas were beset by factional fighting and violence. Cai, “The Hermeneutics of Omens,” 439-59.

113 Powers discusses the social status of the “retired worthy” in the Eastern Han and points out that such rhetoric seems to be written on behalf of unemployed scholars. Powers, 7-12.
Illustrations of omens began to appear in the Han. A silk manuscript from Tomb 3 at Mawangdui 馬王堆 (burial dated 168 BCE) may contain the earliest extant examples of such images, though it has not been included in studies of the better-known stone carvings at the Wu Liang shrine. The manuscript titled *Divination by Astrological and Meteoromantic Phenomena* 《天文氣象雜占》 depicts around three hundred divination passages, most of them accompanied by drawings of clouds, solar and lunar halos, comets, and eclipses (Fig. 3.4). The pictures are each accompanied by a caption written in clerical script explaining the phenomenon and its implications. A final section of prognostications at the end of the manuscript is not illustrated. 

The reconstructed piece of silk measures around 150 centimeters wide and forty-eight centimeters tall and is divided into six registers. The topmost register begins on the right with fourteen clouds whose animal, vegetal, and other geometric configurations each were associated with a kingdom during the Warring States period (c. 475-221 BCE). For instance, the captions beneath each drawing explain that the clouds of Chu 楚 appear as white as the sun (楚云如日而白) or that cattle-shaped clouds are found in Zhao 趙. The prognostications begin in earnest with the next series of clouds, which are shaped like oblong diamonds or ovals; the texts explain that “A sagely prince appears [who will become] an overlord” (聖王出, 霸) or “A serious flood; a state will perish” (大水, 亡一邦) (Fig. 3.5). Astrological events are thus tied to the realm of men, but the relationship is causative in a straightforward manner rather than Heaven acting in guidance or in dialogue.

---

114 For color photographs of the manuscript and a full transcription and annotation of its contents, see Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭, ed., *Changsha Mawangdui Han mu jianbo jicheng* 長沙馬王堆漢墓簡帛集成, vol. 1 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2014), 203-9; Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭, ed., *Changsha Mawangdui Han mu jianbo jicheng* 長沙馬王堆漢墓簡帛集成, vol. 4 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2014), 245-90.
The majority of the manuscript’s predictions comment on military successes or failures: “In no more than five days, there will be a significant battle and the host will win” (不出五日，大戰，主人勝), “The state in which this appears has troops” (出所之邦有兵), “The battle will be won” (戰勝), and so forth (Fig. 3.6). Some omens are phrased in neutral terms and simply state the outcome (“In no more than five days, copious rain” 不出五日，大雨), but most are inauspicious. In other words, the omens and interpretations recorded on the Mawangdui manuscript have little to do with the moral cosmology binding rulers and Heaven’s intentions that came to be codified during the Han. There are no promises that placing the right type of person in the right job will bring peace and harmony to “all under Heaven.” The signs are instead concerned with the minutiae of military tactics and with the deaths of leaders such as feudal kings (邦王) or generals (大將軍). Given the lack of taboo implemented for the bang 邦 character for the dynasty founder Liu Bang’s 劉邦 (r. 202-195 BCE) personal name and the incorporation of Chu regional seal script style into the writing, the manuscript was likely created in the very early Han as a composite of older sources.\textsuperscript{115} Given the primacy of the Chu cloud—white as the sun—at the beginning of the work and the location of the Mawangdui burials in former Chu territory, one can make a more specific claim: the manuscript represents an investigation into omens on behalf of Chu elites. The cumulative affect of hundreds of predictions is grim: the signs that appear in the celestial realm are mostly harbingers of death, suffering, and destruction. Such a set of omens reflects the social concerns and internecine fighting of the pre-Qin period, not the frictions within a complex bureaucracy that had developed in the Han. The evidence from this manuscript suggests that the study of omens experienced a

\textsuperscript{115} Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭, *Changsha Mawangdui Han mu jianbo jicheng* 長沙馬王堆漢墓簡帛集成, 2014, 4:245.
change in form and usage with the consolidation of the Han state from a subject with practical implications to a more discursive function in legitimation politics.

One section of the Chu manuscript depicts twenty-nine comets (huixing 彗星) observed over the course of three preceding centuries (Fig. 3.7). In the bottom register, the author places the comets in a row: the heads are represented by one or sometimes two concentric circles and the tails face upward, described by flicks of flame emanating from a series of one to four curved lines. The depictions are schematic and clearly the work of an amateur hand, unlike the neat columns of the calligraphy beneath each comet. The captions describe various evil portents: “This is a bamboo comet; a ruler of men will die” (是竹彗，人主有死者), and “Cattail comet; plague in all the land” (蒲彗，天下疾). Again, the predictions have to do with the mobilization of troops, political unrest, disease, and in one particularly dire case, the deaths of up to one million people (百萬死下). Given the gravity of the prognostications, the diagrams seem inadequate. The uneven application of ink, the wavering lines, and the asymmetry seen in the tails of some comets might shake the viewer’s confidence in the reliability of the phenomena and how they are interpreted.

In studies of omen hermeneutics or the interpretation of omens, three social groups receive the most attention: technical specialists such as diviners, the elites or ruler whose fortunes omens might predict, and educated gentlemen (ru 儒) who produced the written interpretations of omens. The Mawangdui manuscript requires the knowledge of a technical expert in order to make sense of its representations. These experts included necromancers,
diviners, astrologers, and others with expert knowledge. They were referred to by the term *fangshi* 方士 or “methods master,” which also included architects and artisans.¹¹⁶

When looking at the Mawangdui manuscript as a whole, the need for a technical specialist qualified to interpret it becomes clear. Many of the illustrations differ only slightly, but their accompanying prognostications can vary wildly; illustration, text, and the specialist’s training together are needed for interpretation. Donald Harper points out that the manuscript presents the knowledge of specialists—several are named—while also appealing to an elite readership. It does so by making a claim to empirical observation, but also using the abstracted cord-hook (*shenggou* 繩鉤) or so-called TLV pattern found on other elite artworks such as bronze mirrors.¹¹⁷ The quality of the drawings, however, detracts from Harper’s argument that they shaped the elite viewer’s perception of nature; they are too sketchy and diagrammatic to function without specialized knowledge. Moreover, a number of predictions refer to specialists themselves, such as “A battle; the methods practitioner [diviner] prevails” (戰，方者勝). The question of whether or not the specialist himself could be the person who deploys troops deserves further study. For now, I offer a simpler explanation: it was important both practically and for the purposes of demonstrating belonging to an elite social stratus for the tomb occupant to have a library with texts about omens. Simply having access to such a text could demonstrate membership in the ruling class, while the text’s knowledge could provide a material advantage in military decision-making.


In addition to divinatory specialists and the elites who employed them, educated gentlemen or ruin emerged as an increasingly important and vocal group in omen interpretation, not owing to their technical expertise but to the moral authority they claimed. The dichotomy of specialist-scholar, however, ignores other groups who were invested in the power conferred by omens. Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (ca. 195-105 BCE) is frequently credited with codifying the notion that auspicious omens such as yellow dragons, sweet dew, or auspicious grains indicate the coming of a beneficent ruler, while signs such as fires, floods, or comets are warnings for a failing state. Dong Zhongshu and other Han thinkers, however, possessed a greater diversity of opinion on the subject of omens than can be described by a simplistic causative model. For one, the Chunqiu fanlu 春秋繁露 (Luxuriant Dew of the Spring and Autumn Annals) is thought to be a composite work by multiple authors. In the Han shu 漢書 chapter on the Five Agents theory, more reliably by Dong Zhongshu, he is concerned with ill omens more so than auspicious ones; he writes about ill omens as warnings from Heaven but does not attribute Heaven’s intention to auspicious ones. Perhaps it was Dong Zhongshu’s disinterest in auspicious omens as a political tool that led Wang Chong 王充 (27-c. 97 CE), a well-noted voice of skepticism regarding omens, to omit him as someone who subscribes unthinkingly to a moral cosmology. Moreover, aside from using inauspicious omens to explain the 135 BCE fires at the shrine of Han Gaozu in

---

118 Cai writes that by Sima Qian’s time, himself appointed as grand astrologer (taishi 太史), “official astrologers and diviners still performed mechanical tasks such as compiling calendars, tracing the movement of the constellations, providing advice regarding sacrifices, and performing divinations before military actions, they had lost the reputation of being knowledgeable persons who understood the Way of Heaven (tiandao 天道).” Cai, “The Hermeneutics of Omens,” 451.


120 Loewe, Dong Zhongshu, A “Confucian” Heritage and the Chunqiu Fanlu, 191-224.
Liaodong 遼東 and near his tomb at Changling 長陵, the rest of the seventy-four omens discussed were not contemporary but occurred in the Chunqiu period. Dong Zhongshu’s boldness in suggesting that the emperor’s relatives, consort’s relatives, and prominent officials be put to death after the fires may have been what led to his nearly being executed. Rather than intellectualizing on theories of auspicious omens to curry favor with his emperor, Dong Zhongshu was apparently willing to put his life on the line over his beliefs in ill omens.

Regardless of the diversity of opinion within the official class, the notion that omens were a response to the performance of a ruler created an opening for them to be exploited in debates over legitimacy. Ideas such as the one described by Ban Gu above show that auspicious omens gained in importance compared to inauspicious ones by the Eastern Han. The accounts of auspicious omens proliferated as every claimant to the throne realized their usefulness as a political tool; reports reached a fever pitch under the Xin dynasty founder Wang Mang 王莽 (r. 9-23 CE) in an effort to legitimize his rule. Wang Mang’s use of auspicious omens did not seem to be the exception but rather the rule. Auspicious omens had been recorded since the beginning of the Han, and their proliferation in the second half of the first century CE led to the debates within Ban Gu’s Discourses. It was also in the Han that the recording, reporting, and publicizing of omens became institutionalized. When an unusual event was observed, provincial officials submitted a report and sometimes a picture to the court, where these were recorded and compiled into the dynastic histories. The Han system of reporting survived into the Northern

121 Loewe, 125-27.


Song, when Huizong’s court saw an active solicitation of omen reports from local officials. The omens were documented and images of them put on display in the forms such as banners carried in processions in the capital. Han historians still gave most of their attention to interpreting ill omens, as seen in the *Treatise on the Heavens* (*Tianwen zhi 天文志*) and the *Treatise on the Five Phases* (*Wuxing zhi 五行志*) in the *Han shu*, but for rulers, auspicious omens became a way to demonstrate their legitimacy and assert the effectiveness of their policies.

The first instance of an illustrated catalogue of auspicious omens dates to Emperor Wu’s 漢武帝 (r. 141-87 BCE) time and was referred to as a *ruitu 瑞圖*. A poem by the emperor describes the sighting of a *zhi 芝* plant in the Ganquan Palace 甘泉宮 in 109 BCE:

A plant has appeared in Qi Hall;
It has nine stems and joining leaves.
The palace grooms reported the marvel,
And [I] opened and read the *tu* and identified [the omen].

From this short poem, we gain a sense of several shifts in the perception omens. First of all, a system was in place to document sightings of auspicious omens, as the palace grooms knew to look for unusual flora and to report the sighting. Secondly, the emperor himself became the arbiter of the interpretation of omens made known to him in an illustrated catalogue. No specialists were consulted for their technical knowledge of the unusual plant, nor were officials asked to weigh in on its meaning. From the perspective of the ruler, once the link between auspicious omens and dynastic legitimacy became established, it was to their benefit that anyone

---


with a keen eye could spot an auspicious omen. Ideally the organs of the state, or in this case specifically the emperor, would decide which omens were legitimate and would be incorporated into the official histories.

No instances of *ruitu* catalogues survive from the Han, but dozens of carvings of omens on the Wu Liang shrine ceiling slabs are related to such books. The three slabs are severely damaged, and twenty-four carvings—perhaps less than half—survive. Each omen is rendered in a schematic manner with an identifying cartouche, and the animals and human figures are seen in profile views. The carvings include both auspicious signs, likely based on now-lost *ruitu*, and inauspicious signs taken from the *Guideways through Mountains and Seas* (*Shan hai jing* 《山海經》). For example, an image of two trees whose upper branches merge together is labeled “The Intertwining Trees: Intertwining branches grow when a ruler’s virtue is pure and harmonious, and when the eight directions are unified into a single family” (Fig. 3.8). The inauspicious signs are found on Omen Slab 3, which is in poor condition and whose carvings and cartouches are incomplete. One of the cartouches states that when a certain beast appears holding a long tail in its mouth, then “the people will face a disaster,” which roughly corresponds to a passage in the *Guideways*.127

Art historians have proposed that the shrine’s auspicious omens were used ironically as a form of political protest in the deteriorating social and political conditions of Wu Liang’s time. Wu Liang’s views seemed to align with those of the New Script School, whose members, as part of the self-identifying group of “retired worthies,” eschewed high office and instead used omens

---


127 For a full list and related passages in the *SHJ* and the Ruiying tu, see Wu Hung, *The Wu Liang Shrine*, 235-44.
to express disapproval of contemporary politics. Put another way, the omens were an entreaty to the court to place those of high moral character in high office, because only by doing so would the course of the Han be corrected and Heaven be appeased. Although the importance of the symbolism of the omens to Wu Liang is beyond doubt, details of audience and viewship remain unanswered. The design of the shrine is to some extent public facing, but a large distance separated an ancestral shrine in Jiaxiang County in modern day Shandong Province from the capital in Luoyang. The combination of auspicious and inauspicious omens, which until the Eastern Han occupied mostly separate contexts, stakes a comprehensive claim to cosmological insight. The carvings aimed to devise or synthesize a system that incorporates both omen traditions in order to demonstrate mastery over the diversity of material that makes up omen discourse. Their audience was much more likely to be other “retired worthies” and local community members rather than residents of the faraway capital. The carvings may have been more effective at demonstrating Wu Liang’s membership in a social and political group than at criticizing those outside it.

Illustrated catalogues of omens continued to be made after the Han. The cache of archaeological finds at the Mogao Caves in Dunhuang contains over three hundred items related to divination, including examples of omen catalogues. Among the better studied omen texts is a Dunhuang star atlas in the British Library (Or.8210/S.3326) that includes a section describing clouds of different shapes, and a text in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (P.2683) interpreting


the appearance of turtles, dragons, phoenixes, and miraculous scrolls (Fig. 3.9-3.10). Both manuscripts follow the format of an illustration in the top register paired with an explanatory cartouche in the bottom register. The British Library manuscript likely dates from the early Tang and its prognostications echo those of the Mawangdui text concerning the raising of troops and other social ills.\(^{130}\)

By contrast, the manuscript in Paris, which likely dates from the Six Dynasties, describes auspicious omens.\(^{131}\) It has been trimmed on both ends: the truncated upper half of a turtle is visible at the beginning, and the last illustration of a phoenix is also cut off and lacks an accompanying text. The scroll is a working draft rather than a finished product, as some of the cartouches are missing their illustrations, and some of the drawings are annotated with the character *chong* 重 (duplicate) (Fig. 3.11).\(^{132}\) The manuscript itself is composite in nature and cites a range of texts, including Sun Rouzhi’s 孫柔之 (6th c.) *Ruiying tu* 瑞應圖 (*Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*), Shen Yue’s 沈約 (441-512) *Furui zhi* 符瑞志 (*Treatise on Auspicious Omens as Tokens*), and many other sources.\(^{133}\) What is clear is that by the sixth century, divinatory texts and illustrated omens catalogues had proliferated to the extent that they were being freely reproduced and recombined by the Dunhuang copyist.

---


\(^{131}\) Lippiello, *Auspicious Omens and Miracles in Ancient China*, 84-85.

\(^{132}\) The Library Cave contents include many items which are drafts, incomplete, or simply doodles and sketches.

3.2 Song Omen Images

The Song dynasty inherited and developed further a millennium-long tradition of illustrated catalogues of omens. One of the earliest, *Guideways through Mountains and Seas* was likely illustrated for the first time in the Jin 晉 dynasty (265-316 CE), and another set was created in the Song by Shu Ya 舒雅 (dates unknown) in 999. The earliest surviving edition of the illustrated *Guideways* is from 1597, in which block printed illustrations group several omens together into a single page (Fig. 3.12), and may resemble the Song version in some sense. The *Guideways* encompassed a much wider range of uses for its omens, combining sightings of omens that predicted political outcomes with talismans to cure physical or mental afflictions. There are Human-Fish 人魚 which can be eaten to cure delusions, the Feiyi 肥遺 bird which can cure contagious disease when eaten, along with fruits of the Conglong 葱聾 tree which can cure deafness when ingested. Literally ingesting or otherwise incorporating strange animals or flora into one’s accessories, such as worn on one’s belt, activates them as talismans. What is most salient for our study is that many of the omens pertain to personal concerns such physical illnesses or mental afflictions, not social ones, and some of the entries are not accompanied by omens at all. *Guideways* could be said to cater to the non-specialist reader who has a curiosity about the anomalous, and is not necessarily interested in its broader social implications. It was nevertheless a repeatedly illustrated text that speaks to the dimension of popular belief in omens.

---

134 Wu Hung, *The Wu Liang Shrine*, 80-84.

The Song government continued the practice of embedding the reporting and verification of auspicious omens into bureaucratic processes. Wang Yinglin 王應麟 (1223-1296) dedicates six juan (195-200) in his encyclopedia Yuhai 玉海 (Sea of Jades) to xiangrui 祥瑞 or auspicious omens. The chapters give an accounting of omens that had appeared repeatedly since the rule of the Yellow Emperor, such as five-colored clouds that appeared in 1162 around the time of Xiaozong’s accession. The Yuhai chapters cover tianrui 天瑞 (astral signs, 195), dirui 地瑞 (earthly signs), zhiwu 植物 (plants, 197), dongwu 動物 (animals, 198-99), and zongrui 總瑞 (collected omens, 200). Wang’s text also includes numerous accounts of local officials submitting pictures of omens (祥瑞圖) as proof of their sightings. Other sources confirm that paintings of auspicious signs were memorialized to the throne and were subjected to a routine authentication process that involved sending envoys to the location of the sighting and drawing pictures of omens if the item in question was not movable, such as intertwining trees. When officials were invited into the palace stores in 1043 to view auspicious objects, they first had to pay their respects to the portraits of Taizu and Taizong—a practice that reflects a concrete link between the veneration of the imperial cult and the collection, viewing, and documentation of auspicious omens. Perhaps Illustrations was presented under similar circumstances when officials were invited to viewings, as a gesture to Gaozong’s status as a quasi-founder.

---


137 Lippiello, Auspicious Omens and Miracles in Ancient China, 126.

138 This chapter does not provide information beyond the eleventh century. Yuhai, 200.32.

139 My thanks to Robert Hymes, who made this intriguing suggestion.
It is in the context of the institutionalization of omen reporting and the continuity of the imperial cult in which the auspicious omens paintings of Song Huizong’s period can be situated. The documentation of omens at Huizong’s court has been well studied, due to their relative abundance and their documentation in superb paintings. Under Huizong, documenting omens and making pictures of them was a major enterprise, which subsequently became the target of later historians who sought to blame Huizong’s aesthetic preoccupations for the collapse of the Northern Song.140 Recent studies have argued that Huizong was not unreasonably obsessed with auspicious portents but cannily used the documentation, replication, and dissemination of omens as a tool of statecraft, not a diversion from it.141 Omens paintings and other works such as banners were designed to reach a variety of audiences: some were gifted to officials, some were shown in processions, and still others seemed to be kept within the palace for the sake of documentation and preservation. In other words, treating Huizong in the context of Song beliefs and artistic practices allows us to disentangle his legacy from distortions of traditional historiography and understand the functions of a diverse set of images.

Such a shift is a step away from relying on the individual temperament of a ruler or artist toward the institutions, bureaucratic processes, and larger cultural forces that make up art production in the Song. For instance, Maggie Bickford has questioned the idea of individual


artistic agency by describing the system of ghost painters and quality control that yielded a vast number of works in Huizong’s distinctive painting and calligraphy styles. The images of auspicious omens were designed to be part of a unified visual program that advanced Huizong’s claims of authority and legitimacy.\(^{142}\) Consider, for example, *Five-colored Parakeet on a Blossoming Apricot Tree* 五色鸚鵡圖 in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (Fig. 3.13). According to Huizong’s inscription, the brilliantly colored bird was a heavenly dispatched tribute from Southern China, endowed with the gift of speech. Alighting on an apricot tree in bloom, the bird inspired the painting.

The visual connection to older catalogues of omens is clear: the parakeet is drawn in isolation, in profile view, and is paired with a text that explains its significance. The painting techniques that evoke the brilliant feathers and scaly beak of the bird are an innovation in the twelfth century, but the format is an archaizing one (Fig. 3.14-3.15). The theme of an auspicious tribute bird also has historical significance in both the early Song and the Tang. Emperor Taizu had received a golden *yingwu* in 961 from Longzhou 隴州 (modern Gansu Province), which in 968 made its way onto his Kaibo period (968-976) insignia. Moreover, a popular story in Song times speaks of a five-colored parakeet that was presented at the court of emperor Xuanzong (r. 712-756) as tribute from the south and also knew how to talk. Zhang Yue 張説 (667-731) used the *Nanhai yiwu zhi* 《海南異物志》 (*Register of Marvelous Creatures of the Southern Seas*) to identify the bird as a *shile niao* 時樂鳥, harbinger of peace.\(^{143}\) The logic behind the omen is straightforward: when a sagely emperor rules, the “barbarians” on the borders make peace, and


tribute gifts were the evidence for their submission. The five-colored parakeet ties together the visual paradigms of omen catalogues and historical allusions to the early Song and the Tang.

Another painting from Huizong’s court, the Ruihe tu 瑞鶴圖 (Auspicious Cranes), can also be understood in the context of refashioning Tang auspicious omens. The large handscroll depicts the arrival of twenty white cranes above the main gate of the palace in the year 1112 (Fig. 3.16). Huizong describes their graceful movements above the “owl-tail” ornaments of the gates in prose and in verse, but the link to dynastic legitimacy is only implied. The painting ostensibly documents a specific auspicious event, but it is also linked to Huizong’s desire to recover the correct pitches of ritual music before they supposedly became corrupted in the Five Dynasties.144 A parallel document of an appearance of birds is found in Tang Xuanzong’s 玄宗 (r. 685-762) Ode on Pied Wagtails 鵲鴒頌 in the National Palace Museum (Fig. 3.17). More than three hundred characters written in a large semi-cursive script describe a flock of pied wagtails that landed at Linde Hall 麟德 in the Tang palace. The birds numbered in the thousands and recalled for the emperor their association with fraternal love and harmony. He describes having five brothers, likening their relationship to the birds’ charming movements and character, and ends by saying that seeing them has made his heart happy.

Although the alighting of the wagtails is framed by a personal response, the subject of fraternal love was of utmost political significance. Succession in the early Tang was marred by violence: Emperor Taizong had killed his two brothers at the Xuanwu Gate coup, and Xuanzong’s own succession pitted him against a number of family members.145 In the context of

144 Sturman, “Cranes above Kaifeng,” 38-41.

the many coups leading to Xuanzong’s reign, familial harmony was understood to assure political stability. The handscroll has multiple seals from Huizong’s court, including the Xuanhe seal and the double dragon seal.\(^{146}\) Five-colored Parakeet and Auspicious Cranes, two of the best-known auspicious omen paintings from Huizong’s time, seem to have been consciously modeled on Tang Xuanzong’s precedent. Beyond a general interest in claiming the Tang’s cultural or political legacy, it was a natural fit for Huizong to evoke a Tang ruler known for his love of and support for the arts.

On one hand, the paintings produced at Huizong’s court and Xuanzong’s \textit{Ode on Pied Wagtails} are a continuation of the institutionalized reporting and documentation of auspicious omens at court, in which individual emperors displayed varied degrees of interest.\(^{147}\) On the other hand, in these works the artist-emperor assumes a more important role. In the Song period, technical specialists were of no importance and scholars consulting texts and catalogues played only minor roles.\(^{148}\) The person who had the ultimate say was the ruler, originally the target of critique of inauspicious omens and now authority in auspicious omens. Han Wudi turned to


\footnotesize{\hspace{1em} \(^{146}\) For a full list of colophons and seals, see the National Palace Museum database entry: https://painting.npm.gov.tw/Painting_Page.aspx?dep=P&PaintingId=14715.}

\footnotesize{\hspace{1em} \(^{147}\) Xuanzong’s indomitable grandfather Tang Taizong was derisive of the system of reporting omens and believed the dynasty’s success depended on the actions of man. As discussed in Ch. 3, Song Gaozong was also less interested in omens than his father was. Wechsler, “T’ai-Tsung (Reign 626-49) the Consolidator,” 189.}

\footnotesize{\hspace{1em} \(^{148}\) Huizong employed a number of Daoist \textit{fangshi} at his court, but they did not seem to participate in production of paintings. Levine, “The Reigns of Hui-Tsung (1100-1126) and Ch’in-Tsung (1126-1127) and the Fall of the Northern Sung,” 606-14.}
By Huizong’s time, the Song imperial house had refined the aestheticization of omen images so as to turn them into a useful currency in political discourse. Huizong’s claim to authority was similar to that of Han Wudi, except that rather than turning to a text authored by another, Huizong relied on the convincingly accurate images made by artists at his court to verify that omens confirming the success of his reign were real. Moreover, the emperor himself was at least notionally the creator of the images and the author of the accompanying texts explaining their significance. *Illustrations* is in some ways a continuation of the Huizong court’s practice, especially when taken together with the funding of the two temples in Lin’an that promoted the restoration omens. Its design of a picture combined with a prose description and poem eulogizing the omen reflects the same design of *Five-colored Parakeet* and *Auspicious Cranes*. Still, Gaozong’s court faced the familiar problem of staking a claim to power using the same tools as its failed predecessor. The creators of *Illustrations* therefore had to invent novel ways of representing its subject while remaining true to the conservative enterprise of imperial legitimacy.

### 3.3 Pictorial Hagiographies & Narrative Immersion

In *Illustrations*, the transformation of omen images is taken one step further: while his father merely documented them, the prince becomes the character in a narrative about his own life marked by the recurring appearance of omens. Although *Illustrations* deploys the logic of omens and legitimation, the scroll looks almost nothing like catalogues of omens that were made...
prior to the Song. The handscroll uses the form of a pictorial hagiography to develop a complex narrative that absorbs elements of Han moral cosmology, precocious childhoods, and Buddhist and Daoist miracles. Such a turn, however, was built upon the aestheticization of omen images in the twelfth century and widely-held beliefs about the significance of such images.

Two of the omens in the scroll are directly related to the restoration of the Han dynasty by Emperor Guangwu. The first sign manifested at Guangwu’s birth, during which a red light in the middle of the room radiated throughout the space. Prince Kang’s room is likewise filled with a golden light, which, as discussed in Chapter Two, was adjusted to fit Cao Xun’s argument of the Earth Virtue becoming predominant with the rise of the prince. In stories of early childhoods of historical figures, the appearance of bright lights, along with sweet dews, dragons, mists and vapors, and other unusual signs were common.\footnote{Kenneth J. DeWoskin, “Famous Chinese Childhoods,” in \textit{Chinese Views of Childhood}, ed. Anne Behnke Kinney (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1995), 66.} A second and more telling omen, prefiguring the career of Prince Kang, marked Guangwu’s crossing of the Yellow River:

Having Wang Lang 王郎 [d. 24 CE] on his heels, he was about to cross the Hutuo River to the south, but the guide returned and said: “The waters of the river drained away, it is impossible to cross it by boat.” Everyone was terrified. The emperor then sent Wang Ba to inspect the place. He went there and saw that it was indeed as the official had reported. Knowing that the truth would frighten them, Wang Ba was reluctant to report the actual situation on his return, therefore he lied: “The water of the river froze, therefore the surface is hard. But it can be crossed.” The emperor hurried to proceed. When they arrived at the river, the water had frozen indeed and was hard enough to be crossed on horseback. But when Guangwu had passed, the ice subsided before many carriages had completed the crossing. Only Guangwu proceeded and reached the west of Xiaobo Prefecture.\footnote{Shen Yue, \textit{Song shu 宋書} (Ctext digital ed. of Qianlong wuying dian 清乾隆武英殿 ed.), 27.13, translated in Lippiello, \textit{Auspicious Omens and Miracles in Ancient China}, 292.}

Parallels with section eleven in \textit{Illustrations} include the location, the river’s sudden freezing, and the hero’s luck in crossing at exactly the right moment. In Cao Xun’s retelling, Prince Kang
surpasses his predecessor in grace and character by insisting that everyone else cross before he
does. The river crossing was included on the 1127 list of omens and in Cao Xun’s memorial
because of its easily understood appeal: the freezing of the river could be interpreted as an act of
Heaven, it was witnessed by many, and it brings to mind a model of dynastic restoration to
which Gaozong’s administration surely aspired. In these two sections, the handscroll evokes the
associations the viewer may have had with the Han dynasty and its moral cosmology without
using aesthetic forms of that period.

The painting’s handling of Gaozong’s childhood and adolescence, as well as its
engagement with Buddhist and Daoist miracles, is conveyed by borrowings from Buddhist
hagiographies. Cao Xun was well connected with Buddhist clergymen and artists of his time and
would have been familiar with the conventions and techniques of Buddhist art. For instance, he
wrote an epitaph for the high-ranking eunuch Dong Zhongyong 董仲永 (1104-1165), who had
escaped Kaifeng during the Jingkang Incident and subsequently joined Gaozong’s court. Dong
Zhongyong’s eldest daughter was married to the famous artist Zhao Boju 趙伯駒 (d. after 1162),
himself a clansman of the Zhao house and direct descendant of Taizu.151 Zhao Boju and his
father-in-law had a close relationship that sometimes involved collaboration: together they
painted a one-hundred scroll set of the Five Hundred Arhats for Chan master Dahui Zonggao’s
大慧宗杲 (1089-1163) temple.152

151 Cao Xun (1098-1174), Songyin ji 松隠集 (Taibei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1977), 36.7.
152 Dahui Zonggao was the leader of the Linji school 臨濟宗 in the mid-twelfth century. He was accused
of plotting with Zhang Jiucheng 張九成 (1092-1159), a high official and political opponent of Qin Gui
and was defrocked and exiled to the south as punishment. After Qin Gui’s death, Dahui Zonggao was
allowed back to the capital area and given the abbacy at Mount Ashoka, an important Chan site. Both
Dong Zhongyong and Cao Xun seemed to be followers of the master and perhaps sympathetic to his
irredentist views. Cao Xun (1098-1174), 30.9-14; Yang Huei-Nan 楊惠南, “The Interaction Between
Kan-Hua Ch’an and the Hawks of the Southern Sung 看話禪和南宋主戰派之間的交涉,” Chung-Hwa
Moreover, Cao Si when compiling *Songyin ji* decided that the text for *Illustrations* should be placed in *juan* 29 followed by other Buddhists texts describing the arhat paintings, a dedication to a temple, and so forth. The text of *Welcoming the Carriage*, the other handscroll associated with Cao Xun and the restoration often studied together with *Illustrations*, is placed at the very beginning of *Songyin ji*. *Welcoming the Carriage* depicts the 1142 return of Empress Xianren to the Song, along with the coffins of Emperor Huizong and Gaozong’s first Empress Xing 邢氏 (1106—1139). Julia Murray has pointed out that *Welcoming the Carriage* was painted at the time of the event in 1142 and bestowed by Gaozong in honor of Cao Xun’s diplomatic feat. Cao Xun writes in the preface that the scroll is a treasured possession meant to be kept within the Cao family.\(^\text{153}\) The ordering of the *Songyin ji* confirms that Cao Xun’s descendants also saw his negotiation for the return of Empress Xianren as his greatest achievement, while *Illustrations* was better contextualized with other religious projects.

Miraculous conceptions, births, and childhoods described in Chinese texts predate the introduction of Buddhism, but it seems that illustrated hagiographies developed only after its arrival.\(^\text{154}\) Prior to the Ming, the evidence for such depictions is more fragmentary. Two ninth century Buddhist banners from the Library Cave at Dunhuang provide a comparison for the first two scenes of *Illustrations*: the prince’s arrival and his mother’s dream of the Four Sages (Fig. 3.18, 3.20). The first banner depicts the first bath of the newborn Siddhartha in the Lumbini Garden three quarters down the length of the painting. He stands in a golden tub and is

---


surrounded by female attendants, while nine dragons gather in a dark cloud above and bathe him with fragrant water. *Illustrations* likewise does not depict the prince at the moment of birth but in his first bath, encircled by female servants and the room filled with a radiant golden light (Fig. 3.19).

In the second banner, Queen Maya sleeps on a platform bed with one arm tucked under head while a dream bubble carrying the white elephant portending the birth of the Buddha hovers above her head. Consort Wei in section two sleeps in the same pose—facing right instead of left—and is also visited by a deity in her dream, visualized above her sleeping figure (Fig. 3.21).

The differences in content and intended audiences are vast, but the layout and logic of the compositions are the same. The theme of skill in archery, recurring in sections three, nine, and ten, is also depicted in *Life of the Buddha* series. In the 1167 Jin period Yanshan si 岩山寺 mural painting in its Mañjuśrī Hall, young Siddhartha is shown completing a Parthian shot over his shoulder through seven drums (Fig. 3.22). The emphasis on martial ability, however, is less a reference to the prince’s skills demonstrated in this episode than an indication of its significance at Xiaozong’s court.\(^{155}\) The disjointed organization of the first four sections depicting the prince’s birth to his first public act as a political figure reflects a similar tendency in biographical writing on childhood. Historians are generally less interested in drawing a trajectory from childhood to adulthood or tracing character development than in what Dewoskin describes as a

---

\(^{155}\) Xiaozong was interested in martial training, horsemanship, and archery and participated in five major military maneuvers. He injured an eye while practicing archery in 1169, which apparently did not dampen his enthusiasm for war games. Archery contests were also held at court together with palace feasts, and Imperial University students and *jinshi* candidates were required to participate. Gong Ai, “The Reign of Hsiao-Tsung (1162-1189),” in *The Cambridge History of China: Volume 5: The Sung Dynasty and Its Precursors*, 907–1279, ed. Denis Twitchett and Paul Jakov Smith, vol. 5, The Cambridge History of China (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 734, 740.
“frame-by-frame illumination of the many facets of individual character and the many aspects of fate.”

When Prince Kang rides through the gates of Kaifeng in section four, the narrative becomes too complex to be conveyed in vignettes of a hagiography, though there were precedents for certain scenes in illustrating of the life of the Buddha. In the scene of a royal procession departing from a city gate in another banner painting from the Library Cave, Siddhartha is accompanied by three attendants and encounters the suffering caused by old age and disease for the first time (Fig. 3.23). In both the banner and Illustrations, the prince rides a white horse through a brick gate topped with a red watchtower and crenellated city walls (Fig. 3.1). While the banner focuses on Siddhartha’s internal reaction to what he sees, the scene in Illustrations is more complex. The scene suggests the prince’s state of mind moves forward and depicts responses and opinions expressed by the crowd. The artist could have chosen to depict Prince Kang’s confrontation with Aguda, but instead places him in front of the audience that ultimately matters: the people of Kaifeng. In other words, it was important that the people directly witness the bearing and the charisma of the prince.

A similar procession can be found in the second section of the Eighteen Songs of a Nomad Flute 胡笳十八拍圖 handscroll. As seen in the colophons on the Boston album leaves, which date to the Song and on which the Metropolitan Museum handscroll is based, a number of Ming and Qing viewers mistook Lady Wenji’s story for Illustrations. The two stories were popular and shared in their engagements with the frontier and non-Han peoples, though Eighteen

---

156 DeWoskin, “Famous Chinese Childhoods,” 76.

*Songs* is based on the figure of Cai Yan 蔡琰 (ca. 178-?) who was abducted by nomad mercenaries in the late Eastern Han. Despite using source material from a millennium prior, the Boston painting tells the story in Song style: its depictions of urban crowds and architecture, nomadic encampments, and processions on horseback are similar to scenes in *Illustrations*. Moreover, the two paintings share a format: a sequential composition that depicts episodes from a longer narrative, separated by texts that further explain the scene.\(^{158}\) In *Eighteen Songs* the figures are larger and more fully developed, exhibiting a sociological diversity in age, dress, and vocation that is present only in a cursory manner in *Illustrations*. The importance placed on the figures in *Eighteen Songs* indicates to me that though the paintings have much in common, they are done by different hands.

The departure scene from the Met handscrolls shows Lady Wenji leaving her home in a procession that looks almost identical to Prince Kang’s entrance into Kaifeng (Fig. 3.24). Two men at the head of the group look backwards at Lady Wenji, who is positioned between her new husband and another rider, while five standard bearers lead the rest. In each the main character occupies the same position near the head of a procession, yet they are surrounded by a moving mass of figures and horses, emphasizing how they are swept along by larger social and historical forces. The arrangement looks especially dynamic when compared to the diagrammatic and rather stiff groupings in the Northern Song scroll *Illustration of the Imperial Guard of Honor* 大

---

\(^{158}\) Scholars disagree on whether the Boston painting was created before the conquest of 1127 or afterwards. Robert Rorex argues in his dissertation that *Eighteen Songs* should be taken in tandem with *Illustrations* as products of Gaozong’s court as arguments for the peace deal of 1142; the return of Empress Xianren was framed as an act of filial piety on Gaozong’s part and mirrors the return of Lady Wenji to the Han. Irene Leung, in contrast, argues that *Eighteen Songs* was created before 1125 and reflects the Northern Song’s relations with the Liao court, not the Jin. Either interpretation assumes the artist uses an old literary theme to comment on current politics, which affords the artist more flexibility in terms of how to present the Xiongnu and the emotional complexities of Lady Wenji’s experience. Rorex, “Eighteen Songs of a Nomad Flute”; Irene S. Leung, “The Frontier Imaginary in the Song Dynasty (960-1279): Revisiting Cai Yan’s ‘Barbarian Captivity’ and Return” (Ph.D., University of Michigan, 2001).
A direct and affective intimacy is established with the viewer in a way that is missing in the more formal imperial procession.

The twelfth century *Qingming shanghe tu* 清明上河圖 by Zhang Zeduan 張擇端 (1085-1145) is the best known depiction of Song urban spaces, and its innovations are seen in the way *Illustrations* uses panoramic views and the vitality of crowds as part of its narrative. The scroll contains many scenes in which a crowd of people are looking and making sense of various phenomena: they stand on Rainbow Bridge to peer at the wayward boat below, lean on the railings of another footbridge while chatting, and listen attentively to a storyteller (Fig. 3.26-3.28). The river connects the many groupings of people and provides the momentum to carry the viewer forward. By contrast, *Illustrations* relies on shorter vignettes in an episodic arrangement, but it also uses clusters of figures to direct the viewer’s attention to its varied incidents. Moreover, the sheer number of people depicted—some actively involved, some otherwise engaged—create the effect that *Illustrations* captures the totality of human experience in the world it describes.

Prince Kang’s visit to the temple of Lord Cui in section six presents the most intricate narrative in the scroll and poses a series of questions about the royal house’s relationship with organized religion, sacred spaces, and icons. In a work that engages with the supernatural—both individual deities and the more generalized will of Heaven—section six is the only one to take place in the physical space of a temple. It is also the only scene to depict an explicit act of violence in the murder of Wang Yun, one of the Song administration’s own members. The presence of Lord Cui is figured in two places: at the entrance to the temple, where two guardian

---

statues can be glimpsed behind their barricades, and a sliver of the main idol seen at the very end of the scene (Fig. 3.29-3.30). What is visible of the guardian figures indicates they are dressed in flowing robes and rendered in the same vivid palette of red and light green as the Four Sages in section five (Fig. 3.31). The artist thus points to the interchangeability of a deity and its representation in order to convey its presence within the temple. Lord Cui’s intention on this day to prevent Prince Kang from meeting with the Jin is especially important to visualize, in order to justify the otherwise gruesome murder of Wang Yun.

The last portion of the temple scene brings to the fore the tension between the prince’s authority and the status of the temple’s deity, and by extension, the portions of North China where worship of Lord Cui was popular that had already fallen under Jin control. Just past a footbridge where three men are seen pointing to the mob, the prince is flanked by his retinue and looks down at an ornately worked lacquer sedan chair draped with an embroidered silk tapestry (Fig. 3.32). Read one way, the prince’s refusal to sit in the sedan can be seen as an act of propriety. The sedan chair brings to mind the same type of lacquer chairs and silk tapestries seen in official portraits of Song emperors (Fig. 3.33). Not only does Prince Kang not want to supersede Lord Cui, he does not want to give the appearance of having aspirations to the throne. The act of refusal is made more magnanimous by the fact that he has the popular support of the northern people. Read another way, this scene depicts an encounter between imperial authority and obeisance paid to organized religions and their icons. The prince and the statue of Lord Cui are both seen on raised platforms with neither given clear place of primacy. The sedan is situated between the two, and the prince’s body is turned away in a sign of reluctance. His refusal to take the sedan can also be seen as avoiding the appearance that he and Lord Cui are equals, or worse, that he would appear to be subservient. In the early Northern Song, emperors hesitated to pay
homage to the image of the Buddha because of the unclear relationship between their own status and that of the deity. Taizong in particular tried to monopolize the translation and printing of Buddhist texts, melding imperial authority in politics and Buddhism in an effort to be recognized as universal king. A similar dynamic can be seen in Illustrations, in which the assistance of the Four Sages and Lord Cui, as well as implicit comparisons to the historical Buddha, are ultimately put in the service of imperial authority.

The fact that many different types of omen images existed for different viewers meant that belief was pervasive, and that belief is what state-sanctioned omens tried to use to their own advantage. In order to do so, the royal house turned to the preeminent cultural forms of their day and to aesthetic suasion. Specialist knowledge in omens was replaced by connoisseurship in art and painting history, necessary to fully grasp the argument for legitimation in Illustrations. Bickford writes of the five-colored parakeet, “The bird must stand outside and independent of human agency: it is the self-existing figure—xiang—of auspicious affirmation.” By contrast, Illustrations takes efficacious images, as in the form of icons, and embeds them in the larger world of the painting. It confronts directly the question of human agency and the complexity of the relationships between the throne, officials who espouse a moral cosmology, and religious voices of authority, but also between reality and representation. Despite being created just a few decades after Huizong’s parakeet alighted in the emperor’s private garden, Illustrations presents a different strategy for depicting the auspicious omens that supported dynastic legitimacy. Indications of Prince Kang’s heavenly ordained destiny take place in


crowded urban spaces, on the streets of the capital, and at a popular temple in disputed territory.

Signs of the ascendancy of the future Gaozong and public support for his rise could be doubted by no one looking at Illustrations. At the same time, however, the scroll’s sophisticated questioning of the relationships between icon and person, and art and reality, all but ensures that the scroll was designed for select groups of viewers close to the abdicated emperor or his heir, not a public viewership in need of persuasion.
Chapter 4: Authorship of Illustrations and the Song Royal Image

4.1 Song Sources and the Xiao Zhao Attribution

Like many surviving Song paintings, Illustrations of Auspicious Responses does not bear an artist’s signature or seal. The only contemporary record of such a painting is found in Cao Xun’s own writings. His preface and scene descriptions amount to over a thousand characters, but he makes no mention of the painter’s identity. Of the names of artists linked to Illustrations by later collectors and critics, that of Xiao Zhao 蕭照 (fl. 1130-1162?) appears most frequently. Why did viewers from the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) onward decide Xiao Zhao was the artist of the scroll? An assessment of this attribution is crucial for understanding why Illustrations was made, the conditions of its making, and its early history.

Xiao Zhao’s biography can first be found in Yuan dynasty (1279-1368) sources written a century after his time. Accounts of the artist’s life are set against the background of the social and economic upheaval of the Jingkang period (1126-1127), but sources provide few details.

---

162 The preface written at the beginning of the scroll and the transmitted version in Songyin ji《松隱集》 (Collections of the Pine Recluse) differ slightly; the language on the painting is more formal and precise, while the print version takes a measure of poetic license. For instance, the latter generalizes several place names to suit the rhythm of the prose. The lack of identification of the artist is made more noticeable by the emphasis placed on the formal titles of Emperor Gaozong 高宗 (r. 1127-1162) and Cao Xun: the passage begins with a dedication to Emperor Gaozong (“Your Majesty, the Retired Emperor of Brilliance, Loftiness, Longevity, and Sagacity, Bringer of Justice, and Follower of the Righteous Path,” 光堯壽聖憲天體道太上皇帝陛下) and ends with Cao Xun (“Defender-in-Chief, Military Commissioner of Qianzhou and the Capital Security Office,” 太尉昭信軍節度使皇城司). See Appendix A for full texts. Cao Xun (1098-1174), Songyin ji《松隱集》 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1977), 29.1-11.

163 Wu Kuan 吳寬 (1435-1504), the earliest Ming commentator, refrained from making an attribution. Sun Feng 孫鳳 (b. 1466?)—an expert in mounting scrolls—is the only person to suggest another court painter, Li Song 李嵩 (fl. 1190-1230), as the artist. Sun Feng recorded a version of Illustrations with eleven of the twelve sections, but the order of the sections is scrambled and a number of minor changes were made to the text of the encomiums. Mid-to-late Ming connoisseurs and art historians such as Wen Jia 文嘉 (1501-1583), Dong Qichang 董其昌 (1555-1636), and Zhang Chou 張丑 (1577-1643) also name Xiao Zhao as the artist.
Xiao Zhao’s birthplace is uncertain: the early Yuan collector Zhuang Su 莊肅 (fl. 13th c.) suggests that he may have been from Jianye 建業 (modern Nanjing). The late Yuan critic Xia Wenyan 夏文彥 (fl. 1365), citing Zhuang Su as a source, concludes that the artist was a man of Northern China, specifically Huoze 濱澤 (modern Yangcheng 陽城). Huoze belonged to the Hedong circuit and abuts the Taihang Mountains 太行山, where a propitious encounter set Xiao Zhao on a path southward. The two writers agree that Xiao Zhao had fled into the mountains during the Jingkang years to escape the chaos of war and had joined a group of bandits. One day, the gang seized a victim who carried only pigments and brushes in his traveling bag. When questioned, the man identified himself as none other than the master Li Tang 李唐 (ca. 1070s-1150s). Xiao Zhao convinced Li Tang to take him as a student, and the two traveled south together to the new capital.164

In Lin’an, Xiao Zhao became Li Tang’s best-known follower, painted for the court, and won the admiration of Gaozong. During the Shaoxing period, Xiao Zhao was appointed painter “in attendance” for the so-called but loosely organized Southern Song academy. He also won the prestige title of digong lang 迪功郎 (Gentleman for Meritorious Service) and was awarded the Golden Belt, a marker of distinction, for his work.165 Zhuang Su records a fan formerly in his collection that was painted on the obverse (shantou 扇頭) by Xiao and to which Gaozong had added a poem, presumably on the reverse. The fourteen-character couplet describes white clouds

---


165 Rank 9b for civil officials. Charles O. Hucker, A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2008), 492.
breaking over a jade-green mountain range. Whether or not the fan survives is unknown, but Zhuang Su’s phrasing suggests the painting was completed first and the poem was written in response. A painted fan is an intimate format: the viewer holds a fan by a handle which extends into and forms the spine of a round, oval, or kidney shaped composition. At close distance, the viewer can admire the work’s finely wrought facture and consider how each side relates to the imagery of the other. Perhaps the composition of Zhuang Su’s fan and its mood were similar to the fog-laden cliffs in the album leaf Travelers in a Mountain Pass or Autumn River in Twilight, which carries a single seven-character inscription by Gaozong (Fig. 4.1-4.2). Zhuang Su would have manipulated the fan by turning the handle one way to view the painting, another to read the poem, all the while aware of the high esteem in which Xiao Zhao was held by Gaozong. The artist’s dramatic, romanticized biography—so closely entwined with events of the Jingkang period and Gaozong’s own youth—may have added to the importance accorded Xiao’s work.

Frequently repeated descriptions of Xiao Zhao’s style also are first seen in Yuan sources. Zhuang Su describes Xiao Zhao’s brushwork as more unaffected, natural, and unconventionally graceful than that of Li Tang. In other words, something of the artist’s history as an outlaw and his unconventional behavior were reflected in the way he painted. Around seventy years later after Zhuang Su wrote, Xia Wenyan takes a slightly more negative tone: although he finds the landscapes, figures, rare pines, and strange rocks to be verdant and evocative of antiquity, he laments that Xiao Zhao uses too much ink. Together, these two critics provide a glimpse of

---


167 Ibid.

168 紹興中，補迪功郎畫院侍詔，賜金帶。其畫山水、人物、異松、怪石滄浪古野，惜用墨太多，書名於樹石間。Xia Wenyan, *Tuhui baojian* 圖繪寶鑑 (preface 1365) (Airusheng Zhongguo jiben gujiku), 4.12.
Xiao Zhao’s style and professional successes, but we have to turn to surviving works and Song writings to understand his artistic practice and reception more fully.

Writing in 1980 before the discovery of the Shanghai handscroll, James Cahill catalogues fifteen known paintings attributed to Xiao Zhao. Three of the fifteen are copies of Illustrations, namely those in the Tianjin Museum, Metropolitan Museum, and the one reproduced in Xie Zhiliu’s Tang Wu Dài Song Yuan ming ji catalogue. The Shanghai version was not yet known to the public at the time of publication in 1980. Cahill considers the Tianjin and Xie Zhiliu works to be important, along with an attributed fan painting of Red Trees in Autumn Mountains in the Liaoning Museum and Temple on the Mountainside 山腰樓觀 in the National Palace Museum. The others depict mountains, waterfalls, and scenic sights such as the Red Cliff and Suzhou’s Tiger Hill; Cahill catalogues most as later works with Yuan to Ming origins. This corpus encompasses a fair number of works, but with its wide range of dates and quality does not provide much guidance for the styles or modes in which Xiao Zhao preferred to work.

The one work widely agreed today to be a solid attribution, Temple on the Mountainside in Taipei, is a large vertical format landscape mounted as a hanging scroll (Fig. 4.3). It does not have much in common with Illustrations. The composition is dominated by an imposing cliff on the left, crisscrossed by a waterfall that cascades into a pool in the bottom left corner. Groups of trees are crowned with foliage and hang tenaciously on to the rock face. Evidence of human activity is plentiful: a boater ties his vessel to a stake, two well-to-do men survey the river from an outcropping, and far up the mountain two figures climb a steep path leading to a temple complex. The vertiginous cliffside and its hard edges are rendered with dark outlines and bold Li

---

Tang-inflected axe-cut strokes. Xiao Zhao’s application of ink is indeed heavy, as seen in sections where ink is used both to modulate the effect of light and to give a base color to the rocks (Fig. 4.4-4.5). In *Illustrations*, the topography consists of gently sloping hills and mounds instead of craggy, faceted cliffs. The hills and their grass-covered tops are rendered in more dilute, parallel strokes in light ink wash that follow the changes in elevation (Fig. 4.6). In other words, the brushstrokes are mainly used to describe the shapes of the inclines rather than to imply them through the interplay of light and shadow. The landscapes in *Illustrations* are, on the whole, more integrated into each composition as settings for the various scenes in the narrative.

*Temple on the Mountainside* is signed with the artist’s full name in small regular script calligraphy, under a crown of leaves hanging over a cliff halfway down the composition (Fig. 4.4). The name is cleverly camouflaged: it is written in the same tone of ink as the leaves and outlines of rocks between which it is nestled. Yet once the signature is seen, its placement in the center of the composition holds the viewer’s attention and demands acknowledgement of the expansive vista as the artist’s creation. Perhaps Xia Wenyan was referring to *Temple on the Mountainside* when he noted that Xiao Zhao wrote his signature in the spaces between trees and rocks.170

It is not clear if Xiao Zhao maintained a consistent method of signing his works. Zhao Xihu 趙希鶚 (1170-1242), a Song imperial clansman and connoisseur, wrote *Pure Records of the Cave Heaven* 《洞天清錄》, a text on collecting antiques and art objects such as musical instruments, inkstones, and rubbings. In a section on signature practices of Song artists, he writes

---

170 紹興中，補迪功郎畫院待詔，賜金帶。其畫山水、人物、異松、怪石滄浪古野。惜用墨太多，書名於樹石間。Xia Wenyan, *Tuhui baojian* 圖繪寶鑒 (preface 1365) (Airusheng Zhongguo jiben gujiku), 4.12.
that Xiao Zhao liked to sign his name in the archaizing *shigu wen* 石鼓文 or stone drum script. Other familiar names such as Guo Xi 郭熙 (1020-1090), Zhao Danian 赵大年 (fl. ca. 1070-1100), Cui Shun 崔順 (Cui Bo 崔白) (fl. ca. 1050-1080), and Yi Yuanji 易元吉 (ca. 1000-1064) each had their preferences: Guo Xi wrote the character Xi in the corner of his compositions, while Zhao Danian included the year and the term *biji* 筆記 or “brush notes.” Cui Bo liked to sign his full name beneath the leaves in his paintings, and Yi Yuanji wrote his name in the spaces between rocks.171 Xiao Zhao’s name written in regular script on *Temple on the Mountainside* and Zhao Xihu’s account of his preference for stone drum script are at odds, but may simply be the result of Xiao Zhao’s changing methods over a career of several decades.

Artists’ use of signatures to lay claim to their works and connoisseurs’ expertise in evaluating them were established practices well before Xiao Zhao’s time.172 And yet, many Song paintings do not bear signatures, seals, or other inscriptions by the artist, whether owing to the artists’ choice or to loss due to trimming and remounting of the paintings over the years. A signature may yet to be discovered in a version of *Illustrations*, but the question remains as to whether the viewer should expect to find one given the painting’s subject matter. Imperial portraits of all periods were not usually signed, and in the Song, they were produced by artists within the palace. Their availability for viewing and use were tightly controlled, and generally portraits were treated as having a kind of direct, iconic relationship with the person they

---

171 郭熙畫於角有小熙字印。趙大年永年，則有大年某年筆記，永年某年筆記。蕭照以姓名作石鼓文書。崔順之書姓名於葉下。易元吉書於石間。Zhao Xihu, *Dongtian qinglü* 洞天清錄 (Airusheng Zhongguo jiben gujiku 中國基本古籍庫 digital ed. of Qing Haixian shan guan congshu 海山仙館叢書 ed.), 39.

represent. Given the conventions of depicting royal subjects, artists were likely prohibited from asserting ownership over their works, so the search for a signature on *Illustrations*, with its recurring images of Gaozong, may be in vain. *Temple on the Mountainside* differs from *Illustrations* significantly in terms of theme, style, and signatory practice, so we must turn elsewhere to explain how Xiao Zhao became linked with the scenes of omens.

In the fourteenth year of the Shaoxing period (1144), the Four Sages Temple of Perpetual Auspiciousness 四聖延祥觀 was built on Mount Gu perched above West Lake. Mount Gu is located not far from the palace and was known as an idyllic getaway for imperial outings (Fig. 4.7). A number of Southern Song sources describe the site’s relationship to Gaozong and the Zhao clan. The earliest record is by Li You 李攸 (fl. 1111-1134?), who explains that the temple was built in memory of the omen of Zhao’er and the Four Sages:

Temple of Perpetual Auspiciousness: Built in the fourteenth year of the Shaoxing period [1144] to honor the Four Sages. Previously, at the end of the Jingkang period, His Majesty departed from the Kang residence for a diplomatic mission to the north. As he was about to mount his horse, a small servant girl named Zhao’er saw four people dressed in armor and helmets, clutching bows and swords in order to safeguard him. She pointed at them, but no one in the crowd could see. Empress Xianren heard and said, “Since I’m devoted to the Four Sages and burn incense and candles with utmost respect, I’m sure to receive their covert aid. Though I’m trapped in Beiting [north of the Great Wall], every night when the night is deep, I bow forty times.” After Cao Xun travelled south and returned, he submitted a memorial urging His Majesty to honor [the deities] properly in order to repay Heaven’s favor. The Daoist temple sits today on West Lake and is exceptionally magnificent. Its sculptures are carved from agarwood. Repairs and renovation costs are fully paid for by Cining Palace, and officials do not get involved.

---


174 Gu here refers to the humble first pronoun used by rulers: “I, the solitary one.”
The entry paraphrases Cao Xun’s memorial from 1133, removing some of the color and narrative detail from the story and relaying it in a straightforward manner. Based on the phrase reminding Gaozong to honor the deities and repay their favor, Li You was referring not to the original memorial but to Cao Xun’s summary of it in his Record of Experiences in Northern Captivity.176 It appears that Cao’s memoir was being treated as a historical source by the 1140s, if not earlier.

Several details stand out, the first of which is timing: the temple was built only two years after Empress Wei’s return from captivity under the Jin and the negotiated peace of 1142. The planning of the temple must have started soon after she settled into Cining Palace, her new residence. Funding this public project to promote her connection with the Four Sages and her devotion to them must have been a priority for both herself and Gaozong. The painting Gaozong gifted to Cao Xun, Welcoming the Carriage, should be understood as part of a group of commissions designed to publicize the empress dowager’s return, along with the Temple of Perpetual Auspiciousness. Li You describes the architecture of the completed temple as magnificent and its icons as being made from agarwood (chenxiang 沈香).

Agarwood—a hardwood introduced from India along with Buddhism—was prized for its aromatic qualities and was traded as a luxury good along with items like precious stones, metals,

175 Li You, Song chao shishi 宋朝事實 (Airusheng Zhongguo jiben gujiku 中國基本古籍庫 digital ed. of Qing Wuyingdian 武英殿 Juzhenban congshu 聚珍版叢書 ed.), 7.22-23.

176 Cao Xun (1098-1174), Bei shou jianwen lu 北狩見聞錄 (Airusheng Zhongguo jiben gujiku 中國基本古籍庫 digital ed. of Xue jin taoyuan 學津討原 ed.), 7-8.
and spices. Those who could afford to used it in fragmented or powdered form as a personal fragrance on the body and clothing and to perfume rooms. It was employed also in a variety of religious and medical contexts, such as the making of incense, healing, and expelling evil spirits.\(^\text{177}\) Sometimes consecratory material in a statue’s cavity included small pieces of agarwood.\(^\text{178}\) The name “sinking fragrance” refers to the category of scented Aquaralia wood species and also to its highest grade, which does not float due to high resin content.\(^\text{179}\) Given his account of the temple’s splendor and its funding, Li You may be specifying that the sculptures were carved from the most expensive wood of this type. The main icons likely would have been of considerable size as to match the temple’s architectural proportions, and having them made of agarwood was a significant financial commitment on the part of Empress Wei.

Southern Song historians who record the omen of Zhao’er and the Four Sages include Wang Mingqing 王明清 (1127-ca. 1214) in his Waving the Duster and Li Xinchuan (1166-1243), who cites both Li You and Wang Mingqing.\(^\text{180}\) The temple was in an enviable location in the capital, and its origin story was continuously publicized by scholars for the remainder of the


\(^{179}\) Zhao Rukuo 趙汝適 (1170-1231), another member of the royal clan, was an official posted to Quanzhou 泉州 (modern Fujian Province). His experience supervising maritime trade informed his Zhufan zhi 《諸蕃志》. On types of agarwood, sourcing from Southeast Asia, and various factors in judging its quality, see juan xia 下. López-Sampson and Page, “History of Use and Trade of Agarwood,” 119-20.

\(^{180}\) Wang Mingqing, Huichen hou lu 挥塵後錄 (Ctext digital ed. of Qinding Siku Quanshu 欽定四庫全書 ed.) 2.1-2; Li Xinchuan, Jiwen zhengwu 《舊聞證誤》 (Airusheng Zhongguo jiben gujiku 中國基本古籍庫 digital ed. of Wenyuange Siku Quanshu 文淵閣四庫全書 ed.) 3.12.
dynasty. In fact, Xiao Zhao completed a major commission for the temple around the time of its completion in 1144. A colorful anecdote about the temple appears in *A Record of Things Seen and Heard at Four Courts*, a private history by Ye Shaoweng 葉紹翁 (fl. 1200-1250):

The Hall of Coolness at Mount Gu is an unsurpassably wonderful place on West Lake. The hall’s proportions are magnificent, and beneath it plum trees were planted in the hundreds to prepare for an imperial outing. The hall was completed, but inside were four unpainted walls measuring nearly three *zhang* (3.65 yards each). Gaozong was about to lead the imperial procession the next day. Some eunuchs were discussing among themselves, saying “His Majesty is about to depart, but the walls are blank! They should be painted.” So in His Majesty’s presence, they urgently called on Xiao Zhao to go and compose some landscapes. Xiao Zhao accepted the order and humbly requested four pecks of wine from the imperial provisions. He left for Mount Gu at dusk. With every sounding of the drum (at the five watches of the night), Xiao drank a peck; when the peck was finished, a wall was complete, and such was how he painted. When the four paintings were completed, Xiao was also drunk. The Emperor arrived and walked from wall to wall to study and admire them. He knew that they were drawn by Xiao and rewarded him with gold and silk. Although Xiao does not paint for as long as others, only he can make the wanderer feel as though they are immersed in famous mountains and superb waterways, not knowing that it is merely a picture.

Ye Shaoweng is less concerned with the temple’s history than with the contours of Xiao Zhao’s outsized artistic persona. The story begins with a flurry of preparations for Gaozong’s visit to the site, and Xiao Zhao is summoned for a seemingly impossible task: to decorate its walls in one

---

181 A peck is the equivalent of 2.2 gallons!

182 Sounding of the drum to indicate the five watches (geng 更) of the night.

night. The compositions would have been monumental in scale, the blank walls each measuring more than 30 feet in width. Xiao Zhao rises to the occasion and wins the praise of both the emperor and the author. The number of plum trees in the hall’s courtyard, the gallons of wine Xiao Zhao consumed, and the speed and energy with which he worked all appear larger than life.

The anecdote fills in some blanks in our knowledge of Xiao Zhao’s creative process, which is cast as a physical rather than an intellectual endeavor. Ye Shaoweng does not describe how the painting was conceived, what the artist was thinking, or even how the compositions appeared in a concrete sense. He focuses instead on the gestures of drinking and movement from wall to wall, and on the viewer’s absorption into the final work. With the rhythmic element of the drums, Xiao Zhao’s motions take on the quality of a dance. Furthermore, his body’s change from stasis to inebriation—brought on by the wine—parallels the transformation of blank walls into art. Xiao Zhao’s bravado, spontaneity, and lack of concern for appearing drunk in the presence of the emperor indicate a life force in his art that wholly convinces its audience.184

Painting was not just a visual experience but a multi-sensorial immersion into the picture’s space, allowing the viewer to momentarily suspend their sense of reality. There is an alchemical aspect to the process of artistic creation that recalls the original miraculous sighting of the Four Sages.

Also of note is the friendly rapport between Gaozong and Xiao Zhao, which extends beyond that of patron and artist. The author and Gaozong share an admiration for the artist’s talent and also for his free-spirited ways. One can imagine how the two men may engage not just

---

as emperor and subject, but as collaborators when working together on a fan painting. The political implications of a major commission in a space designed to promote the Zhao clan loom large in Ye Shaoweng’s passage. By personally making the trip, Gaozong signals his recognition of the Zhao’er omen that inspired the building of the temple. Ye Shaoweng’s short passage presents the most direct evidence yet for why Xiao Zhao’s career and Prince Kang’s succession were connected in the collective memory of Lin’an residents. Qian Shuoyou 潛說友 (1216-1277) also quotes Ye’s passage in his local Lin’an gazetteer in the section on imperially sponsored Daoist institutions, so the association between the artist and the temple was well documented.\(^{185}\)

4.2 Xianying guan (Temple of Manifesting Responses)

In 1154, another structure was built to promote the legitimacy of Gaozong’s succession, the Xianying guan 顯應觀 or the Temple of Manifesting Responses. The temple was located on the bank of West Lake and was dedicated to Lord Cui, who was credited with saving Prince Kang in Cizhou by preventing him from going further north into Jin territory (Fig. 2.7). The deity’s roots were in North China and had a number of followers; the Southern Song government tried from the 1130s onwards to win over his northern supporters by emphasizing that Lord Cui had supported Gaozong.\(^{186}\) Many of the same sources describing the Four Sages Temple also

\(^{185}\) Qian Yueyou, (Yanchun) Lin’an zhi (咸淳) 臨安志, (Airusheng Zhongguo jiben gujiku 中國基本古籍庫 digital ed. of Wenyuan Siku Quanshu 文淵閣四庫全書 ed.), 93:22.

include the Temple of Manifesting Responses, indicating that both institutions’ associations with the succession was well-known.\textsuperscript{187} When writing on beautiful sites of the capital, Zhou Mi notes that the temple used to attract many visitors and sightseers on Lord Cui’s birthday, the sixth day of the sixth month.\textsuperscript{188}

In addition to its popular deity, the Temple of Manifesting Responses was also known for its art: a landscape by Xiao Zhao and a wall painting (or paintings) by fellow court artist Su Hanchen 蘇漢臣 (active 1120s-1170s?). The subject of Su Hanchen’s work is unrecorded, but he was known to be an expert in Buddhist and Daoist subjects, in addition to the many paintings of children that are attributed to him today. None of the temple’s paintings survived into Zhou Mi’s time in the early Yuan, but they stood as firm indications that painters worked closely with the court to complete a site that promotes another Jingkang era omen.\textsuperscript{189} Judging by the crowds that the temple attracted, many Lin’an residents would have seen the paintings.

That Su Hanchen worked with Xiao Zhao unlocks a range of possibilities with regards to authorship and interpretation of Illustrations. As with Xiao Zhao, Yuan sources by Zhuang Su and Xia Wenyan give some sense of who the artist was and how he painted. Su Hanchen reportedly was a native of Kaifeng and worked in the Hanlin Painting Academy, although he is

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{187} See for instance Li Xinchuan, \textit{Jianyan yilai chaoye zaji} 建炎以來朝野雜記, juan 2; Lou Yao 楼鎬 \textit{(1137-1213), Gong kui ji 攻媿集, juan 54; Qian Yueyou, \textit{(Yanchun) Lin’an zhi} (咸淳) 臨安志 juan 13; Wang Xiangzhi 王象之 \textit{(jinshi} 1196), \textit{Yudi jisheng} 輿地紀勝, juan 1; Wu Zimu 吳自牧 (13th c.), \textit{Mengliang lu} 夢粱録, juan 8, among many more. Moreover, Lord Cui was also known for supporting Gaozong’s heir: Emperor Xiaozong’s mother dreamed of the deity holding a lamb and subsequently gave birth to him. Qian Yueyou, \textit{(Yanchun) Lin’an zhi} (咸淳) 臨安志, (Airusheng Zhongguo jiben gujiku 中國基本古籍庫 digital ed. of Wenyuange Siku Quanshu 文淵閣四庫全書 ed.), 13.16-17.
\textsuperscript{188} Zhou Mi 周密 (1232-1308), \textit{Wulin jiushi} 武林舊事 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991), 3.3-4.
\textsuperscript{189} Zhou Mi, \textit{Wulin jiushi} 武林舊事, 5.1.
\end{flushright}
also said to be a southerner from Qiantang (near Lin’an). His expertise lay in figure painting, images of children, and Buddhist and Daoist themes. In other words, his interests in the human condition and the sophisticated narration of religious art would seem to make him a more likely candidate for the authorship of Illustrations than Xiao Zhao, an artist who predominantly painted landscapes. Su Hanchen worked for Gaozong and Xiaozong, who granted him the title chengxin lang (承信郎, “Gentleman of Trust”) in 1163 after the completion of a Buddhist image. Given the Song restrictions on creating and viewing of imperial likenesses, it is almost certain that Xiaozong’s court approved Illustrations about his adoptive father, and its artist would have been known and trusted in court. Lastly, the earliest date for the Temple of Manifesting Responses’ mural is 1154, so it is conceivable that Su Hanchen continued to be active into the 1170s when Illustrations was created.

When trying to understand Su Hanchen’s style and artistic practice, one faces the familiar problem of numerous attributions and few authentic works. Many later paintings carry his name simply because they depict children, despite his command of a wide range of figural representation. A close comparison to Illustrations can be found in Lady at Her Dressing Table in a Garden, a painted fan in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (Fig. 4.8). In this small but

---


Chengxin lang is a prestige title with rank 9b, Hucker, A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China, 127.

191 The artist’s body of work is inflated likely because his son, son-in-law, and grandson trained to paint in his style. It was common for court painters to form a family-based school by training their sons to specialize in a certain style. See Huiping Pang, “Southern Song Freelance Painters (1127-1279): Commerce Between the Imperial Court and the Lin’an Art Market,” Journal of Chinese History 中國歷史學刊 5, no. 1 (January 2021): 27-29.
intricate painting, a woman is seated in front of a polished bronze mirror and examines her reflection while her maid waits for instruction on the side. Her dressing table holds a tiered tortoiseshell box, cut flowers in a vase, small jars, and a censer, enclosed by a towering screen with an abstract wave pattern. Another console in the foreground displays potted plants, and the hand of the gardener is further evident in the bamboo and flowering plum tree planted behind a large garden rock. The painting is signed on the lower left edge in small regular script, and the second and third characters have been partly trimmed (Fig. 4.9). Despite its compositional focus on the lady studying her appearance and its outward displays of wealth, the mood of the work is introspective. Unlike the easily deciphered expressions of joy on the faces of the children, the lady and her thoughts remain inscrutable to the viewer. Based on the quality of the drawing, the carefully arranged composition, and psychological depth of the main figure, I agree with Cahill’s opinion that it is likely genuine and by the Song master.192

In its subject matter, execution, and interest in the psychological interiority of its subject, *Lady* bears a striking resemblance to *Illustrations*. Groups of women feature prominently in both paintings, along with the world of feminine spaces and belongings that Su Hanchen is known for depicting. The scenes which feature Consort Wei—numbers one, two, five, and seven—are especially informative. *Lady* is a compact composition, but it is dense with detail that can be used as a basis of comparison. In both works, the artist relies on a firm, unwavering line to describe the figures and their surroundings and fine-tipped brushwork using inorganic pigments for a variety of textures. For instance, the garden rocks in *Lady* and *Illustrations* are similarly modeled with patches of light to medium gray ink wash and a pronounced dark gray outline (Fig. 4.10-4.11). The underplanting of low-lying shrubs around the base of trees are depicted the same

---

192 Cahill lists thirty works and believes four are especially important: the fan discussed here and three other paintings of children. Cahill, *An Index of Early Chinese Painters and Paintings*, 174-75.
way: trimmed so that they form a green halo of rounded, small-leafed foliage (Fig. 4.10, 4.12). The artist of both works uses a stippling technique of light and dark green ink to create an inviting cushion of grass, especially when compared to the more cursory and schematic drawing in another Gaozong period handscroll, _Duke Wen of Jin Recovering His State_ (Fig. 4.13). Furthermore, the trunk of the plum tree in _Lady_ and those of the deciduous trees in _Illustrations_ are outlined in heavy ink and have prominent knots, which tend to be positioned where the trunk has grown in a different direction. By contrast, the plum blossoms and cut narcissus blossoms on the dressing table are rendered with small dots of white mineral pigment. Falling snow in the mid-winter river crossing scene of _Illustrations_ are depicted in the same way (Fig. 4.14).

In addition to ephemeral matter such as flower petals and snow, precious materials are also painted in a similar manner with inorganic pigment. In _Illustrations_ when the prince’s mother and wife bid him farewell, they are framed by sumptuous textiles: gold paint stands in for gold thread embroidery on the valances, and an overlay of white pigment is used to decorate the large round fans. On the fan, the jewels—perhaps pearls—in the women’s hairpins are drawn with a white, grainy pigment applied in tiny dots. Surfaces that shine, glimmer, or reflect are treated in this way, as can be seen in the stroke of white that runs down the mirror’s edge as a glint of light. Moreover, on the fan and in scenes of _Illustrations_ the artist juxtaposes gold and bright vermilion; these are seen on the lady’s lacquer tray with a flattened gold jar, the gold trim on the railing of Lord Cui’s temple, a sliver of the icon seen behind a painted column of the temple, and gilt hooks for shades hanging above decorative knots (Fig. 4.16-4.18). By

---

193 Large fans were used at court to shield or reveal the emperor on formal occasions. On the Double Fifth Festival, when the gifting of fans was widespread, the emperor also gave the empress and palace women fans made with kingfisher feathers and gold thread embroidery. For an excellent discussion of Song painted fans as social objects made to be handled and exchanged, see Ankeney Weitz, “Two Tales of Song-Dynasty Painted Fans,” _Archives of Asian Art_ 69, no. 1 (2019): 76-80.
reserving mineral and metallic pigments for small parts areas, the paintings create a sense of
textural and material contrast. It is precisely in this blend of compositional realism and details
that draw attention to the artifice of painting where the sophistication of Southern Song court
painting is evident.

The quality of the figure drawing in Lady is superior, owing in part to the extensive
repairs and repainting that mar the Long Museum scroll. In Illustrations, some of the figures’
faces are awkwardly filled in, and their features appear malformed and asymmetrical. The efforts
at repair are particularly noticeable in the early sections, likely due to more frequent unrolling
and viewing (Fig. 4.19). Much of the in-painting responds to the abrasion of a base layer of light
pigment, likely inorganic and grainier in texture,194 which has resulted in some figures becoming
faceless. Nevertheless, the image of Consort Wei as a prisoner of the Jin army in section seven
and the lady in the fan are rendered in the same way. She stands at a table with her servants
behind her as she throws chess pieces onto the board. In this moment of contemplation and
uncertainty, her image and the mood of the scene bear a striking likeness to Lady and her
reflection seen in the bronze mirror, once again raising the likelihood that Su Hanchen could
have painted the fan and the narrative scrolls (Fig. 4.20-4.21). Both faces are slightly tilted and
oval in shape, with straight, thin eyebrows, a fleshy nose, full cheeks, and a small mouth. One of
the servants standing behind Consort Wei clutches a round lacquer box as she leans forward, like
the maid in Lady. The pieces of furniture in the scene have the same flush-sided, corner-leg
construction and the legs end in hoof feet. Compared to the lady’s elegant dress and hairpins,
Consort Wei’s outfit is modest: a blue tunic and simple headdress without jewels. She is no
longer the high-ranking consort of an emperor, but a prisoner whose dire situation is hinted at by

194 John Winter, East Asian Paintings: Materials, Structures and Deterioration Mechanisms (London:
the rustic wooden fence and the plainness of the furniture and screen.\textsuperscript{195} Still, Consort Wei does not give in to panic but rather redoubles her efforts at praying to the Daoist deities.\textsuperscript{196}

Without more evidence, it can only remain conjecture as to whether Su Hanchen was the artist of both paintings or if they simply share the techniques, aesthetic values, and philosophical concerns of Southern Song painting. \textit{Lady} carries a partial signature by Su Hanchen and is perhaps by the hand of another talented but unknown artist whose work was appropriated by a false signature. Another possible scenario is one of collaboration between multiple artist, whose expertise in various areas of painting figures, architecture, landscapes, textiles, and plants and animals came together in the extensive project of making a fifty-foot scroll.\textsuperscript{197} Nevertheless, Xiao Zhao is at best an awkward fit in terms of subject matter, signatory practices, or style. Collective memory and local records associate him with the Shaoxing era temple projects of Yanxiang guan and Xianying guan to promote the omens, even though the paintings for the most part did not survive the dynasty. Such a connection may have been enough for later viewers, who were faced with the same lack of Song and Yuan sources as modern researchers when taking a

\textsuperscript{195} For an account of the privations and abuse the Jin hostages endured, especially women, see Patricia Buckley Ebrey, \textit{Emperor Huizong} (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 475–503.

\textsuperscript{196} The consort vows to bow forty times in thanks for the auspicious sign. This act should be viewed not simply an expression of her personal piety but also an exchange of devotional acts for the deity’s demonstrable \textit{ling} or miracle working powers. For the importance of the concept of \textit{ling} to the development of Song religion, see Valerie Hansen, \textit{Changing Gods in Medieval China, 1127–1276} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

\textsuperscript{197} Jonathan Hay argues that two well-known Song paintings, \textit{Traveling on a River after Snow} at the Palace Museum and \textit{Water Mill} in the Shanghai Museum may both be collaborative works in “Collaborative Painting at the Early Song Directorate of Construction,” \textit{Zhejiang University Journal of Art and Archaeology Supplementum 1}, January 1, 2017, 441–503.
guess at authorship. Xiao Zhao enjoyed a level of national name recognition and a widespread collecting base, so linking him to the painting would also have elevated its status.\footnote{Pu Shougeng 蒲壽庚 (fl. ca. 1250-1281) in Quanzhou 泉州, Shu Yuexiang 舒岳祥 (1219-1298) in Jinling 金陵 (modern Nanjing), and others had works by Xiao Zhao in their collections in the Song and early Yuan. Pu Shougeng, Xinquan xueshi gao 心泉學詩稿 (Airusheng Zhongguo jiben gujiku 中國基本古籍庫 digital ed. of Wenyuange Siku Quanshu 文淵閣四庫全書 ed.), 6.8-9; Shu Yuexiang, Lang feng ji 閬風集 (Airusheng Zhongguo jiben gujiku 中國基本古籍庫 digital ed. of Wenyuange Siku Quanshu 文淵閣四庫全書 ed.), 9.2-3.}

It is problematic, however, that no surviving painting or transmitted source suggests an interest on Xiao Zhao’s part in complex figural compositions, architectural structures, or religious art, reflected in the narrative structure of the scroll. In such areas, Su Hanchen is a known expert and a more natural choice. Wang Keyu 汪珂玉 (1587-?), author of the book \textit{Shanhu wang}《珊瑚網》(The Coral Net) on collecting in the late Ming, was of minority opinion when he recorded a version of \textit{Illustrations} painted by Su Hanchen. In the same catalogue, he also records three other copies of the painting as attributed to Xiao Zhao. Wang Keyu’s attribution was picked up by Li E 厲鶚 (1692-1752), writing in the Qing on Southern Song court painting, but did not seem to gain much traction.\footnote{Wang Keyu, \textit{Shanhu wang}珊瑚網 (Airusheng Zhongguo jiben gujiku 中國基本古籍庫 digital ed. of Wenyuange Siku Quanshu 文淵閣四庫全書 ed.), 25.9; 47.50; Li E, \textit{Nan Song yuan hualu} 南宋院畫錄 (Airusheng Zhongguo jiben gujiku 中國基本古籍庫 digital ed. of Wenyuange Siku Quanshu 文淵閣四庫全書 ed.), 3.19-25.}

Nevertheless, among the names recorded by Ming experts when \textit{Illustrations} became a popular theme and circulated widely, Su Hanchen remains the best choice.

Su Hanchen’s murals in the Temple of Manifesting Responses and the stylistic, compositional, and thematic engagements in his surviving works make him a more likely

\footnote{The Qing period frontispiece and three colophons on the Long Museum painting make no references to Wang Keyu or Li E’s records, nor to Su Hanchen as a possible artist.}
candidate as the artist of *Illustrations*. Moreover, it explains why the scroll has much in common with both illustrated hagiographies and portraits. Much less is known from Song sources about Su Hanchen’s life or artistic practice than is known about Xiao Zhao, and it is unclear if Su Hanchen enjoyed a similar level of fame and appreciation on the part of collectors. What is evident is that Su Hanchen held a title of the same rank as Xiao Zhao and completed similar commissions, indicating that the court held him in high esteem and likely allowed a similar level of access. Later viewers’ attachment to Xiao Zhao, a scholar-official favorite, may also reflect the ascent of scholarly genres and styles and the decline of prestige in skill-driven specialties of painting. Their eagerness to define *Illustrations* misses the human elements at the painting’s core, a challenge that Su Hanchen was well-equipped to meet.

The painting’s multitude of figures and what they see play a central role, as the import of an omen depends on who its witnesses are and how it can be verified. Each scene takes place either in a public space or groups the prince or his mother with servants, even when the omen plays out in a dream. The inclusion of various figures explicitly pointing to the action urges the others in the scene to participate in looking and the viewer to do the same. These invitations to join the space of the painting bring us to a central question in its understanding, that of the who, when, and how of viewership in the Song. Despite the sense of narrative and stylistic immediacy, *Illustrations* is ultimately a depiction of an emperor, and so one must consider the viewing practices and taboos surrounding imperial portraiture to fully understand its meaning.

### 4.3 Imperial Likenesses, Imperial Icons

Prince Kang appears nine times in the course of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*. He remains the central figure in many of the compositions and his presence is key to their narrative flow. The repeated depiction of the future Gaozong raises questions about what protocols were
followed when creating and viewing images of an imperial likeness. These images are part of a web of painting, writing, temple building, portrait statuary, and regalia that constituted the material culture of the imperial cult. The Zhao house stood to benefit from impressing upon their subjects the accomplishments of their ancestors and the sanctity of their origins, and not necessarily from Confucian ideology, such as that backed by reformers like Wen Yanbo 文彦博 (1006-1097) and later Southern Song historians. According to Charles Hartman, the Song monarchy’s priorities lay in earning broad-based support and achieved it by being nonsectarian, eclectic, and by promoting the “adulation of the royal house” in its veritable records.200 I argue that the same approach guided the court’s deployment of the visual arts, which were diverse in mediums, styles, and ideas borrowed from Buddhist and Daoist traditions.

One of the most direct and effective ways for the Zhao clan to promote itself was to create likenesses of emperors and empresses and to carefully control access to them. Here, the term “portrait” is used to describe a representation of a specific person that is shown in isolation and focuses on the sitter’s physiogonomic traits and social status through dress and accessories.201 The more general term “likeness” is inclusive of portraits and can be used in other contexts, such as when a royal family member is placed into a historical narrative or an extensive hagiography. Examining when imperial portraits were seen and what types of restrictions were placed on their circulation helps explain why Illustrations was created and how it was understood.


201 Chinese terms include xiang 像, chuan xie 傳寫, xie mao 写貌, xie zhen 写真, and others. As the word zhen indicates, portrait claim a degree of truth through verisimilitude. For a full discussion of the history of portraiture terminology, see Dora C. Y. Ching, “Icons of Rulership: Imperial Portraiture During the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644)” (Ph.D., Princeton University, 2011), 27–42.
Over the course of the Song, the government tried various measures to control representations of rulers and to promote the imperial cult. In the case of portraits, the formats and mediums usually dictated how viewers engaged with the images. A sharp contrast stood between different types of imperial likenesses, which existed on a spectrum of visibility from the very public to the closely held and private. On the public end of the spectrum were large portrait statues, which required settings of the appropriate size and grandeur to house them and to spark a sense of awe when encountered by viewers. On the other end were smaller formats such as hanging scrolls, which were used in the palace in private ceremonies by the current monarch.\footnote{Patricia Buckley Ebrey, “The Ritual Context of Sung Imperial Portraiture,” in Arts of the Sung and Yüan: Ritual, Ethnicity, and Style in Painting, ed. Cary Yee-Wei Liu and Dora C. Y. Ching (Princeton: The Art Museum, Princeton University, 1999), 68-93.}

Similar to notions about the aura of religious icons, all imperial likenesses were supposed to be treated by viewers as if they were the real person, or at least that they contained a trace of the presence of the depicted person and were therefore deserving of ceremonious treatment.

Buddhist and Daoist temples, with their icons and prescribed rituals for viewing them also were ideal settings for the display of imperial portraits. Early in the dynasty, Taizu donated his military headquarters in Yangzhou to form Establishing Ascendance Monastery (Jianlong si 建隆寺). The monastery installed a painted portrait of Taizu in 1005 and replaced it with a portrait statue in 1037, both of which the court provided.\footnote{Li Tao 李燾 (1115-1184), Xu Zizhi Tongjian Changbian 續資治通鑑長編 (China: Zhejiang shuju, 1881), 120.12.} The physical infrastructure of religious institutions encouraged display of signifiers of the imperial cult. Moreover, one of the most concrete and visible connections between the emperor and local Buddhist temples was the celebration of the current ruler’s birthday. It was common practice to rename temples and
request them to host annual celebrations: in Huizong’s time, a Buddhist temple in every
prefecture was given the name of the reign period Chongning 崇 and held birthday services.
Daoist temples also were given the name Tianning 天寧, the name of Huizong’s birthday.204
These Buddhist and Daoist spaces of worship, however, were a somewhat counterintuitive
choice, since they have their own hierarchies of divine beings and deities, and the emperor was
not necessarily seen as the head of either religion.205 Rather, representations of the emperor were
superimposed on the physical and ritual infrastructure of Buddhist and Daoist spaces,
demonstrating imperial support for these religions and also following Confucian ritual practices.
Moreover, as spirit tablets—traditional commemorations of members of the imperial house were
non-figurative, Buddhist and Daoist temples were better settings for figurative likenesses.

New temple networks were also created when an auspicious event bearing on the
imperial family occurred. Zhenzong ordered a Temple of Heavenly Felicity (Tianqing guan 天慶
觀) to be built in every prefecture upon the discovery of the Heavenly Text at the palace gates in
1008, which was seen as an auspicious omen confirming the Song’s legitimacy. These temples
were then used to house images of the Holy Ancestor—of whom he had a vision in 1012 and
claimed as ancestor of the Zhao clan—in halls named Shengzu dian 聖祖殿 (Palace of the Holy
Ancestor).206 When faced with criticism over his spending on temple construction, Zhenzong

204 Patricia Buckley Ebrey, “The Emperor and the Local Community in the Song Period,” in Chūgoku no
rekishi sekai: Tōgō no shisutemu to tagenteki hatten 中國の歴史世界: 統合のシステムと多源的發展,

205 As discussed in Chapter One, Song Zhenzong claimed the Sacred Ancestor as the divine forefather of
the Zhao family, but did not suggest that any living emperor of the Song was to be worshipped.

206 Ibid., 79.1797-98; Ebrey, “Portrait Sculptures in Imperial Ancestral Rites in Song China,” 52–53;
Suzanne E. Cahill, “Taoism at the Sung Court: The Heavenly Text Affair of 1008,” Bulletin of Sung and
justified the expense as “ancestral establishment” (zuzong zhizhi 祖宗之制).\textsuperscript{207} Within such
temples, portrait sculptures were a key feature of the imperial cult. One way the state
choreographed their display of these images was by staging elaborate processions, which were
well documented and vividly captured by firsthand accounts.\textsuperscript{208} Public processions in which
statues were carried to temples in the capital followed the ritual calendar, and the installation of
these works offered a chance for a wide range of residents to participate and view the images.\textsuperscript{209}
The Temple of Spectacular Numina (Jingling gong 景靈宮) became the most important location
for portrait statues; it was built in 1014-16 by Emperor Zhenzong mainly to honor the Sacred
Ancestor, the Daoist deity claimed to be the progenitor of the Zhao family (Fig. 4.22). The
complex was continuously enlarged—with a major renovation between 1080 and 1082—in order
to accommodate the growing number of portrait statues of past emperors and empresses.

The shrines for the relics of the imperial cult were quickly built in the Southern Song
when Lin’an was selected as the new capital. The first to be erected was the Supreme Shrine (Tai
miao 太廟) in 1135, which housed the Zhao family’s ancestral tablets and was considered the
most important and formal of ritual spaces. After the 1141 peace treaty with the Jin and the

\textsuperscript{207} Huang, “Imperial Rulership and Buddhism in the Early Northern Song,” 163.

\textsuperscript{208} The study of statuary and large-scale paintings in their ritual contexts is discussed thoroughly in Ebrey,
“Portrait Sculptures in Imperial Ancestral Rites in Song China,” and Ebrey, “The Ritual Context of Sung
Imperial Portraiture,” 68-93.

\textsuperscript{209} Aside from the elite men publicly involved in such rituals—the emperor, clansmen, officials, and
clergy—women and commoners also had a chance to view large scale portraits. The empress dowager led
the princesses and titled women from the capital to visit the Temple of Spectacular Numina on several
occasions. There, portrait statuary and wall paintings went hand in hand. In 1064, when a hall was built at
the temple to house a statue of the recently deceased Emperor Renzong 仁宗 (r. 1022-1063), its walls
were decorated with portraits of seventy-two important officials. After current officials visited to make
offerings to the imperial portraits, the empress and titled ladies also took a trip of their own to view the
hall and its artworks. From 1082 onwards, it became routine for the empress dowager or the empress to
lead a group to visit the sculptures on death-day commemorations the day after the chief councilor
subsequent return of Empress Wei and the imperial coffins, the Temple of Spectacular Numina was completed the next year. Every attempt to assert continuity with the Northern Song temple was made: the name and layout were the same, and a statue of Sacred Ancestor occupied the foremost hall. The original statues that were rescued during the Jin invasion were sent to Wenzhou 溫州 in 1129-30, then to Lin’an to be installed once the temple was complete.\textsuperscript{210} The processions between the palace and the temple were more publicly visible as the two were located further apart than they had been in Kaifeng.\textsuperscript{211} How the statues were displayed, housed, and venerated did not change much after the move to the south, and construction at the Temple of Spectacular Numina continued until the end of the dynasty in the Xianchun period (1265-74).\textsuperscript{212}

Like a statue of an emperor, a painted portrait derived its power from its likeness to the imperial subjects and from a sense that something of the aura of the individual himself was embodied in the sculpted image. The sanctity accorded these images probably explains why neither imperial portraits nor statues were signed by their makers. Full and half-length portraits of the Song ruling house also do not have artists’ names attached, implying the impropriety of the painter asserting creative ownership over an imperial image. The variety of distinct facial features captured in Illustrations indicates that the artist was interested in differentiating the figures, despite their small size within the composition. The resemblance of the prince to his

\textsuperscript{210} Ebrey, “Portrait Sculptures in Imperial Ancestral Rites in Song China,” 72-74.

\textsuperscript{211} In a late Southern Song account of the imperial entourage traveling to the temple for the seasonal sacrifices, movement within the city was restricted and residents were prohibited from climbing to high points to watch. The event spurred enough interest and excitement that sixty-two hundred soldiers were dispatched to patrol the city. Zhou Mi 周密 (1232-1308), \textit{Wulin jiushi} 武林舊事 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991), 1.1b.

\textsuperscript{212} Wu Zimu 吳自牧 (13th c.), \textit{Meng Liang Lu} 夢粱錄 (Yangzhou: Guangling shushe, 2003), 8.195.
other portraits—a prominent, rounded nose and long, slender eyes—means the artist intentionally created a likeness to the real person (Fig. 4.23-4.25). Though *Illustrations* shares more in common with history painting or pictorial hagiography, it nevertheless belongs to the material culture of the imperial cult and would have been viewed under special conditions due to its subject.

Although the elaborate processions which featured portrait statues allowed for many members of Song society to see the imperial likeness, the viewing still took place under ritualized circumstances. The excitement the processions generated points to how special they were perceived to be, and otherwise viewings of the portrait statues were still restricted according to social status and gender.\(^{213}\) Even more efforts were made by the Song government to control access to other types of imperial likenesses, such as smaller format paintings. For example, in 1006, Emperor Zhenzong banned the roadside display of imperial portraits from successive dynasties. Those displayed at ancestral and religious temples appear to have been accessible only to members of the imperial family or court officials, and protocol required the images to remain behind curtains.\(^{214}\) Representations of the emperor in narrative paintings also were avoided. In the handscroll *Four Events of the Jingde Era*, the artist was careful not to depict

\(^{213}\) For instance, during Zhenzong’s reign, four bronze statues of Taizu, Taizong, the Jade Emperor, and the Sacred Ancestor were cast near modern Yangzhou 揚州 before being brought to Kaifeng along various waterways. Officials and their retinues greeted the statues along the way, and after they were installed at the Temple of Reflecting and Responding to the Realm of Jade Purity (*Yuqing zhaoying gong* 玉清昭應宮), “gentlemen and commoners” were allowed to visit for three days. Viewings were eventually permitted in the first month of every year. Likewise, in 1030 statues of Taizu, Taizong, and Zhenzong were brought from Kaifeng to Yong’an near the imperial graves. After installation at the Assembled Sages Temple, the statues were open to visits from “gentlemen and commoners” for five days. Ebrey, “Portrait Sculptures in Imperial Ancestral Rites in Song China,” 53-55, 58-59.

the deceased Zhenzong. The first scene “Receiving the Khitan Envoys” and the last scene “Viewing Books at the Pavilion of Great Purity” both place Zhenzong behind a curtain, much as an imperial portrait would have been concealed (Fig. 4.26-4.27). Toward the end of the Northern Song in 1111, another category of images was banned by edict: the use of the long dragon motif in textiles.\(^{215}\) The prohibitions of symbols of the imperial family were such that even indirect signifiers were regulated. These restrictions mirror the taboos imposed on personal names of rulers and a notion of secrecy surrounding the actual person on the throne.\(^{216}\) Thus, attempting to limit the visibility of emperors was an important measure of the cultivation of the imperial cult.

Authorship of imperial images in the Song is also difficult to attribute. Neither imperial portrait statues nor full and half-length portraits of the Song ruling house have artists’ names attached, implying the impropriety of the maker asserting creative ownership over an imperial image. It is understandable, therefore, that Illustrations, with its multiple likenesses of the future Gaozong was not signed. Moreover, in light of the carefully controlled access and ritualized display of imperial portraits, it is likely that access to the scroll of omens presaging Gaozong’s succession to the throne was limited. Who, then, saw the painting and read its accompanying texts? The same sources that describe the Temple of Perpetual Auspiciousness and the Temple of Manifesting Responses also specify which institutions in the capital area were given calligraphy by various Song emperors. Icons, murals, and writing such as plaques and smaller works of imperial calligraphy in temples were well documented, and it is unlikely that a significant work such as Illustrations would have escaped notice had it been stored at a temple. The scroll almost

\(^{215}\) Such proscriptions were also in place in Liao and Jin. Patricia Buckley Ebrey, “Huizong and the Imperial Dragon: Exploring the Material Culture of Imperial Sovereignty,” in Beyond Text: New Perspectives on Material Culture Studies (Xinzhu: National Tsing Hua University Press, 2011), 52.

\(^{216}\) Liu, “Empress Liu’s ‘Icon of Maitreya,’” 180.
surely was conceived within the palace walls and remained in the imperial stores until the end of the dynasty. Given the lack of seals from before the Ming, we can deduce that the painting was not seen as a collectible art object, but rather commanded the same respect as other types of portraits and was seen to possess an aura tied to the real person it represents.\textsuperscript{217}

As discussed in Chapter Three, one possibility is the use of Illustrations as a ritual object honoring the Southern Song founder and seen before viewing actual auspicious items. In this context, it would be meant to enforce the relationship between the Zhao lineage, the legitimacy of the Song government, and physical objects that are the proof of its virtue. The audience would be a group of intimates to the current emperor Xiaozong and the retired Gaozong such as Cao Xun himself. Ultimately, the work may be in service of self-persuasion as much as the convincing of others of the rightfulness of Gaozong’s succession and subsequent history.\textsuperscript{218}

Though there was a clear political motivation behind the project, Illustrations was not created to be reproduced on a large scale or to convince a wide viewership of the aims of the restoration government. The murals in the temples better served this function, as did large-scale statues and publicly displayed imperial writing. In short, the painting was not a work of propaganda in the modern sense of the word. It was made for an exclusive audience attuned to the sophistication of court painting and the nuances of restoration politics, and who understand the implications of viewing the image of an emperor. Access to the court must have been a precondition for being allowed to view such a work. At the end of the Song, a limited amount of

\textsuperscript{217} In the Qing, the court also separated current and pre-Qing portraits, treating the former as ritual objects and the latter as artworks. Dora C. Y. Ching, “Icons of Rulership: Imperial Portraiture During the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644)” (Ph.D., Princeton University, 2011), 25.

\textsuperscript{218} Thank you to Robert Hymes for the suggestion of self-persuasion as a possible motivation when viewing the scroll.
evidence indicates that the painting was likely transferred to the Yuan imperial collection in Dadu 大都, remained out of general circulation, and may have been studied by foreign dignitaries and high-ranking officials.

4.4 The Song Imperial Collection during the Yuan Dynasty

By Zhou Mi’s time in the Song-Yuan transition, two of the four walls in the Hall of Coolness were still intact. He explains that Emperor Lizong (r. 1224-1264) built the Western Taiyi Temple on the grounds of the Temple of Perpetual Auspiciousness and changed the building’s name to Huangting Hall.219 Perhaps owing to contemporary politics, the Lizong court acted to distance itself from Gaozong and the period of dynastic restoration represented by the temple.220 Reflecting on the end of the Song, Zhou Mi writes,

The petal-laden palace and spacious halls known as Huangting, Emerge and float to the highest layer of the clouds. The five merits and its noble deities could not stay, Its pond emptily reflecting the nine-branch lamps.


cihō ōdōhō shōbō kōhō, 
 toushi ōzō isō kōshō. 
 gōkoku kōshō ko bōku, 
 suzō kōshō kōki zō. 

219 瀛嶼：在孤山之椒，舊名凉堂。四壁蕭照盡山水。理宗易今名，今為太一宮黃庭殿。Zhou Mi 周密 (1232-1308), Wulin jiushi 武林舊事 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991), 4.4.


221 西太乙宮：舊四聖觀園。理宗朝建，今黃庭殿乃昔涼堂也。兩壁蕭照盡山水。亭館名並見御園類。弁陽 [Zhou Mi’s hao] 詩云：藻宮廣殿號黃庭，突兀浮雲最上層。五福貴神留不住，水堂空照九枝燈。Zhou Mi 周密 (1232-1308), Wulin jiushi 武林舊事 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991), 5.8.
The temple and its halls were striking, but the poem suggests that their beauty signified little: the five merits of its followers could not keep the deities from leaving and a once holy space from losing its sanctity. The buildings became nothing more than their component parts, and a sense of transience is conveyed by imagery of flowers and clouds. The nine-branch lamp—a popular form of light in the Han Dynasty—evokes a distant past. The lamp also carries funerary connotations, as the type was commonly used as mingqi in Han tombs and in rituals for the recently deceased in the Song. A painting by Liang Kai 梁楷 (late 12th c.-after 1246), *Illustration of the Classic of the Yellow Court*, depicts a group of men bowing in front of such a lamp next to a central image of a Daoist deity. Aptly for the end of the Song, the discourse of dynastic restoration and its representations had shifted to one of melancholy and loss. Such a shift colors the way any post-Song viewer would understand and interpret *Illustrations*.

When their army reached Lin’an in early 1276, the Mongols had already prepared a plan for the confiscation and relocation of the Song imperial art collection. Thanks to the work of officials within Khubilai Khan’s (r. 1260-1294) government, such as the director of Yuan Imperial Archives Jiao Youzhi 焦友直 (fl. 1273-?), the Southern Song collection was kept mostly intact. Jiao Youzhi submitted a memorial in the fall of 1275 urging Khubilai to have a plan for the Song Imperial Archives and its “occult books and documents, as well as classic books, works

---


of calligraphy, paintings, etc.” and for the books and printing blocks circulating in southern provinces.\textsuperscript{224} Lin’an surrendered without a fight when Mongol general Bayan arrived in 1276, sparing its records and collections from destruction. Jiao Youzhi, in his capacity as Pacification Commissioner of Liangzhe Circuit 兩浙路, was dispatched to collect books, paintings, paper, brushes, ink, and ink stones from the Song collection. He shipped them to Dadu 大都 later in the year, where they were absorbed into the Yuan Imperial Archives.

Wang Yun 王恽 (1228-1304), a Yuan scholar-official, had an opportunity to see and catalogue some of the works of calligraphy and paintings upon their arrival in Dadu. Included in his records are twelve portraits of emperors and empresses, whose history and eventual passage into the Ming and Qing imperial collections and the National Palace Museum in the twentieth century have been well documented.\textsuperscript{225} This group was comprised of single portraits, starting with the father of the Song founders Zhao Hongyin 趙弘殷 (899-956) or Xuanzu 宣祖 to Emperor Duzong 度宗 (r. 1264-1274). What Wang Yun recorded is not an exhaustive list but rather a small fraction of what was taken from the Song Imperial Archives. *Illustrations* is not included in his list, but since there are no indications that it entered private hands, the scroll was likely part of the much larger group of items that remained within the imperial collection in the Yuan.

When the Song imperial collection travelled to Dadu, it was absorbed into the multicultural and cosmopolitan matrix of the Yuan court. A piece of evidence for the inclusion of *Illustrations* with the shipment does not come from the hand of a local artist but instead from the

\textsuperscript{224} Fu, “Princess Sengge Ragi: Collector of Painting and Calligraphy,” 57.

\textsuperscript{225} Ching, “Icons of Rulership: Imperial Portraiture During the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644)” (Ph.D., Princeton University, 2011), 14-26.
Korean scholar-official, poet, and artist Yi Chehyŏn 李齊賢 (1287-1367). The painting *Crossing the River on Horseback* is currently held in the National Museum of Korea and is a close copy of section eleven in *Illustrations* (Fig. 4.28).226 The Korean work is a rectangular composition done in ink and color on silk, and if it were once in scroll format, has been remounted and appears to be glued to a backing. The grouping of the figures, their articulation, the winter setting, and the arrangement of the landscape are clearly informed by Prince Kang’s Yellow River crossing (Fig. 4.29).

In the Korean work, five riders are making their way onto the surface of a frozen river. Two men lead the group: one guides a white steed who feels out the ice with its left hoof and the other a black horse with elegant proportions. The two men turn to look for the rest of their group: three riders on shore who are perched at the edge of the embankment, and their horses with strained necks who are pulling back in fear. A cliff looms over the three men on shore, and an evergreen hangs tenaciously onto the bare rock. To the right of the exposed roots of the tree are the characters 益齋, Yi’s style name, written in small regular script followed with a seal associated with Yi. In addition to serving as a diplomat many times over to Dadu, Yi Chehyŏn was also friends with Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫 (1254-1322), the famous painter, calligrapher, and member of the Zhao clan.227 Yi Chehyŏn studied painting with the older Zhao Mengfu, who may have introduced his Korean colleague to the painting either in the Yuan imperial collection or in a private collection. The truncated *Crossing the River* compositions raises some future research.

---

226 Thank you to my colleague Yeo-rae Yoon at the Institute of Fine Arts who introduced this painting to me.

227 Li Yan 李岩 et al., *Chaoxian wenshue tongshi* 朝鮮文學通史, 3 vols. (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2010), 400.
questions around access and transmission of Song painting during the Yuan: how did the Yuan imperial collection circulate? What value was placed on works with an express political agenda? What role did painting play in cross-cultural exchange at high levels of government? If Yi Chehyŏn’s painting can be dated accurately, then the conventions around viewing *Illustrations* started to shift in the fourteenth century, a preview of its accessibility and popularity in the Ming.
Chapter 5: Recovering the “Ancestors’ Old Things”: Ming Copies and Composites

During the Song and Yuan periods, *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses* was known only to a select few, but the Ming Dynasty saw a renewed interest in the theme among Jiangnan area elites and the proliferation of an extraordinary number of works claimed to be the original. Much of how the painting is understood today is distilled in Ming writings: the scroll’s title and author, estimations of its artistic and historical value, and how it symbolizes a period of Chinese history before the Mongol Yuan. In the Qing period *Illustrations* once again made its way into the imperial art collection, but its political message was less welcomed. There are more extant versions of the painting than can be addressed by the current study, so this chapter will focus on four handscrolls, the provenance of which can be known with some certainty. As other versions of unknown provenance are held in private collections, and more surely will come to light, this chapter offers not a comprehensive catalogue but a study of patterns of Ming and Qing transmission and reproduction of the scroll. The chapter will show that the meanings attributed to *Illustrations* in the mid-to-late imperial period differed vastly from anything its creators and original viewers could have imagined.

5.1 Wu Kuan on Gaozong’s Legacy and the Role of Omens

The handscroll in the Long Museum West Bund Museum, hereafter identified as the Shanghai scroll, likely left the palace collection in the late Yuan or early Ming. As discussed in Chapter Two, stylistic and inscriptive evidence both point to this work as the Song original, of which there were no known copies made until the mid-Yuan. Its seals indicate that it was circulating in the Jiangnan region by the fifteenth century (Fig. 5.1). An inscription by Wu Kuan (1435-1504)—originally from Suzhou and active in its artistic circles—speaks of a work he saw
that was likely the Shanghai scroll. Wu Kuan calls the painting *Illustrations of Shaoxing Auspicious Responses* and places it into the collection of fellow official Lu Yuan 陸完 (zi Quanqing 全卿) (1458-1526). The colophon is no longer attached to any known versions of the painting but is preserved in Wu Kuan’s *Paoweng jia cang ji* 《匏翁家藏集》 (*Writings on the Paoweng Private Collection*). The colophon was attached after the painting and begins:

Alas! Midway through the Song, its encounters with foreign aggression were grave. Luck be it that at the moment of the Song’s destruction, Gaozong succeeded to the throne and for a brief time made better the fate of the nation. Otherwise, the Middle Kingdom would be filled with those with unkempt hair and left-facing lapels. Undoubtedly [the Song’s] courting of disaster began with men, but its end not going as far as extinction is a matter of Heaven. To say that Gaozong did not serve the Song people honorably, who would believe this to be true? Yet, the nation’s borders were shrinking by the day. He exercised sovereignty over a small portion of the country and in the end, was not able to recover the ancestral lands. To say that Gaozong served the Song, again who would believe this? I once ventured to weigh the merits of these events: when Gaozong was a feudal prince, could it be that he had designs upon the vessels of imperial power? Once disaster struck, suddenly he came forth as the one who various ministers endorsed and obeyed; could it be that things exceeded [his] expectations? For this reason, a peace agreement is easily reached, but sincere advice is difficult to advance. The legacy of [the Song’s] dynastic restoration suddenly seems shameful compared to [the works of] Han Shizu.

呜呼宋至中世其遭外侮甚矣！幸而垂亾之際，高宗嗣位以少延國祚，不然被髪左衽中國皆其人矣。蓋召禍出於人，其終不至於絕者天也。謂高宗無功於宋人，誰信之然？而國土日蹙，偏安一隅卒不能復祖宗舊物。謂高宗有功於宋，又誰信之？吾嘗竊論其事，高宗為諸王時，豈有意於神器？一旦禍變，忽生為群臣推奉，得非所有出於望外。故和議易成而忠言難進。中興之功，卒視漢世祖愧焉。228

Wu Kuan is immediately drawn to the questions provoked by the fall of the Southern Song: the role of human agency, Gaozong’s achievements (or lack thereof), the validity of omens, and the tenuousness of historical writing and representations of historical events. His opinions of the painting are couched within historical and political commentary, subjects he is more comfortable

---

228 Wu Kuan 吳寬 (1435-1504), *Paoweng jia cang ji* 匏翁家藏集, vol. 11 (Chanzhou: Wu Shi 吳奭, 1508), 55.98-99.
navigating than how the handscroll came to be. Wu Kuan was well-known for his practice of
calligraphy but not painting; he modeled his writing on that of Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101) and
taught other Wu area artists such as Wen Zhengming 文徵明 (1470-1559). He was also close
friends with the preeminent scholar-painter of the time, Shen Zhou 沈周 (1427-1509), and often
wrote on Shen Zhou’s paintings. As a commentator, Wu Kuan takes a more balanced approach
than the laudatory texts on the painting, questioning Gaozong’s motivations throughout the
Song-Jin war and after the peace treaty with the Jin was reached. However, he clearly aligns
himself with the Song and not the foreign, “uncultured” threat the Jin represented.

Wu Kuan sees a pattern in Gaozong following the lead of others and responding to
circumstances as they arose. The prince did not object to taking the throne when his supporters
were vocal, and it was easier still to sue for peace rather than to try to recover the “ancestors’ old
things.” Wu Kuan’s criticism of Gaozong is subtle: in suggesting that his weakness lay in a sort
of passivity when faced with difficult decisions, he voices doubt that the prince’s actions were
premeditated or that he organized his supporters in order to seize the throne. On one hand, this
interpretation absolves Gaozong of the act of betraying his brother and using a moment of
national crisis for personal gain. On the other hand, in Wu Kuan’s view, the same lack of
assertiveness led to the peace treaty with the Jurchen and a legacy that fell far short of the
dynastic restoration accomplished by Han Guangwu. Wu Kuan argues that Gaozong essentially
stumbled into his position by luck and then failed to use it to advance the Song’s cause. In
essence, Gaozong is treated as the contradictory historical figure that he was, displaying in turn
propriety, indecisiveness, or cowardice depending on the observer. Wu Kuan continues,

Attendant Censor Lu Quanqing showed me the Illustrations of Auspicious Responses
in his personal collection to peruse. He believes that the events depicted stem from
Heaven. Undoubtedly since antiquity, when the monarch accepts the Mandate [of
Heaven] there must be auspicious omens. One need not find this strange. Certainly

132
after Gaozong took the throne, paintings and historical records recounted his affairs and wrote about them as so-called stemming from Heaven. If they were created by men, one would see it [discussed] in the historical biographies, so who would be willing to write such a thing? There are twelve pictures and each one has an encomium. I do not know by whom it was made, only that the skill in painting is delicate and exquisite, being no vulgar work. Those who are familiar with painting can surely decipher it.

陸全卿[sic]侍御以家藏瑞應圖，見示覽之，信其事之出於天也。蓋自古帝王受命，必有禎祥，固不必怪此。必高宗禪位後，畫史追述其事，寫此所謂出於天者。若其出於人者，則見於史傳，人其肯寫之乎？圖有十二，各有贊詞。不知作于何人，獨其畫手精妙，非俗工。可到知畫者必能辨之。229

Here, we are given some insights as to what mid-Ming views were on omens as supernatural phenomena and a framework for legitimizing power. The specific version Wu Kuan was commenting on belonged to the collection of fellow bureaucrat Lu Yuan 陸完 (zi Quanqing 全卿) (1458-1526), who saw the scroll’s depictions “stemming from Heaven” rather than manipulated by men. Wu Kuan appears to accept the principle that the Mandate of Heaven was manifested in omens. His next sentence, however, assuring the reader that “one need not find this strange,” indicates some skepticism. Apparently Gaozong himself, perhaps in reaction to his father’s obsession with documenting auspicious events, was ambivalent toward omens.230 Wu Kuan doubts that the events depicted in the scroll were wholly fabricated because discerning historians of the Song would have recognized and written about such fabrications. The twin discourses on omens as moral critiques of a ruler and a concurrent Confucian duty to warn

229 Wu Kuan 吳寬 (1435-1504), 11:55.98-99.

230 As Robert Hymes argues, belief in omens in the Song was ubiquitous, but so was doubt. The Songshi 宋史 gives at least three examples over the course of several decades of Gaozong’s dislike of omens, in 1128, 1131, and 1155. The conflict stems from how officials are inclined manipulate omens for their own gain, including Qin Gui 秦檜. Wang Yu 王瑀, “Zhongxing Ruiying Tu Chuangzuo Qingjing de Kaocha 《中興瑞應圖》創作情境的考察,” Meishu Yanjiu 美术研究, no. 2 (2013): 68; Robert P. Hymes, Way and Byway: Taoism, Local Religion, and Models of Divinity in Sung and Modern China (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 12.
against over-reliance on them provide the basis for Wu Kuan’s argument. Yet Wu remains ambivalent about the historicity of the scenes in *Illustrations*, most likely to avoid offending his host who had presented the scroll for discussion.

As in the Song, documentation of auspicious signs continued to play in ideological discourse of the early Ming. The relationship between auspicious signs and imperial rule during the fifteenth century can be attested by the production of the *qilin*-giraffe paintings dating from the Yongle period 永樂 (r. 1403-1425) (Fig. 5.2). A giraffe, originally a gift from the Bengal Sultan Saif al-Din Hamzah Shah (r. 1410-1411 or 1412), was construed as the quasi-mystical and auspicious *qilin* in the context of the Ming court. The painting of the animal was created and promoted as evidence that a benevolent ruler sat on the throne, and more specifically that he inspired peace in the foreign lands surrounding the Ming empire. Omen images provide an accessible map of the imperial house as the crucial intermediary between Heaven and man and in this case, between foreign and native.

An echo of Gaozong’s struggle to frame his succession can be seen during Yongle’s rule, which was established when the Prince of Yan 燕王 usurped the throne of his own nephew the Jianwen 建文 Emperor. As the third ruler of the Ming, Yongle began his reign by conducting a bloody purge of his predecessor’s supporters, including many officials based in the southern capital at Nanjing. Yongle’s administration therefore needed to prove its moral and cultural legitimacy, and, in addition to the painting of the giraffe, documentation of auspicious signs can

---


232 Wu Kuan 吳寬 (1435-1504), *Pao weng jia cang ji*, 11:75-158.
be found in other paintings, literature, and musical drama from his reign. Examples include the *Ruiying tu* 瑞應圖 handscroll in the National Palace Museum and the *Miracles of the Mass of Universal Salvation Conducted by the Fifth Karmapa for the Yongle Emperor* handscroll in the Norbulingkha Palace collection in Lhasa.\(^{233}\)

The recent history of Yongle’s process of legitimation surely was on Wu Kuan’s mind as he debated the nature of auspicious signs and their interpolation by men. In light of the persecutions Yongle energetically pursued, Gaozong’s path to the throne appeared more benign; and it becomes apparent that Wu Kuan condoned Gaozong’s succession for the sake of the preservation of the state. Perhaps the succession did “stem from Heaven,” and Wu Kuan’s critique was aimed at Gaozong’s squandering of the opportunity to do more to restore the Song. The acknowledgement of circumstances beyond the capability of one person, even the recipient of the Mandate of Heaven, places a limit on the amount of blame or credit that can be assigned to Gaozong. In other words, the irresolvable tension Wu Kuan presents is one between the appeal of predetermination and another of moralistic critique within the tradition of biographical writing.

From its seals, we know the Shanghai scroll was circulating among circles of Suzhou collectors in the fifteenth century in which Lu Wan and Wu Kuan were both active. The Shanghai scroll may well be the painting Lu Wan owned and Wu Kuan admired for its “delicate and exquisite” rendering. A colophon with even a hint of disdain for foreign invaders of China might have been at risk of removal when it entered the Manchu imperial collection. Given Wu

Kuan’s measured tone and his dismissal of the Jin, the passage may well have been trimmed, its absence further obscuring the recent history of the scroll.

Wu Kuan’s own path to the upper echelons of the government is depicted in the late sixteenth-century book Zhuangyuan tukao (Illustrated Study of Optimi). To place as a zhuangyuan in the imperial examinations was to rank first among all entrants, an exceedingly rare accomplishment in the competitive examination environment of the Ming. In 1472, Wu Kuan became one of only eighty-nine men over the course of the dynasty to achieve this honor. He subsequently had a brilliant career in government and was named Minister of Rites in 1503. On the two facing pages of the book depicting Wu Kuan, the young student is asleep in his study: his head rests on a desk, which is sparsely decorated in scholarly taste with an incense burner, a small rounded container, and a ru-shaped vessel punctuated with two lingzhi mushrooms (Fig. 5.3). A dream bubble—a familiar conceit by now—emerges from his head and reveals an image of the young man riding into the sky on a dragon. Two great pine trees grow in the courtyard of what looks to be a wealthy abode, perhaps a nod to the Wu family’s status. Wu Kuan’s dream reveals that he is destined for greatness—a feat achieved not through the pedestrian methods of hard work and study but through divine revelation. It must have seemed like nothing short of a miracle to join the ranks of the “optimi,” a feat almost as rare for the common reader as a prince with an unremarkable upbringing becoming emperor. In both instances, an omen presenting itself as a dream helps to explain the otherwise unattainable. Although Wu Kuan did not subscribe to such a belief, his admirers in the Ming apparently did with enthusiasm.

---

5.2 The Taipei “Li Song” Scroll and Ming Discourses of the Foreign

The National Palace Museum has two versions of Illustrations, both of which appear to date from the middle to late Ming period and are less expertly painted than the Southern Song scroll. We will first address the longer scroll, a close copy of the Shanghai painting attributed to Li Song 李嵩 (fl. 1190-1230). The handscrew includes four scenes no longer arranged in the correct order corresponding to sections twelve, nine, four, and five of the Shanghai painting (Fig. 5.4). They are separated from one another by strips of cream-colored brocade, much newer than the yellowed paintings; if there had been passages of text following the paintings, they were removed at some point. The mounter spaced each painting several inches apart and created another break between section five and the two colophons at the end; the spacing acknowledges that what the viewer sees are parts of a longer composition that has become shortened over time. Given that the city gates in sections nine and four and the roof structure in section five all appear truncated compared to the Shanghai version, it is likely that the top edge of the Taipei scroll has been trimmed by one to two inches. Despite the many alterations it has experienced, the Taipei scroll is crucial to understanding the historical and art historical significance that Illustrations acquired in the Ming.

The scroll opens without a frontispiece onto the early morning sights of section twelve. A soldier is seen stretching with his right hand raised—unknowingly to him—toward the scene of exchange between the prince and Emperor Qinzong. The tents and their flags sit in the same arrangement as in the Shanghai scroll, with a striking difference in the opaque, bright blue

---

235 Li Song is another twelfth century painter who was affiliated with the court but was active slightly later than the 1171-1174 timeframe of the Shanghai scroll. For a discussion of Li Song’s artistic practice, see Jeehee Hong, “Theatricalizing Death and Society in ‘The Skeletons’ Illusory Performance’ by Li Song,” The Art Bulletin 93, no. 1 (2011): 60-78.
pigment used to depict the tent fabric (Fig. 5.5-5.6). The character men ㄇ and the trigrams
decorating the flags near Prince Kang’s tent have been omitted, while the tiered enclosure
surrounding his tent is painted the same vivid blue as the soldiers’ tents. The saturated purple
robe of the man standing beneath the dream bubble also displays a pigment not seen in the
Shanghai scroll and is also found in the remaining scenes (Fig. 5.7). This purple pigment was
commonly used in Ming painting, as were the salmon pink and green color combination found in
the brackets and eaves of the palace building in section five (Fig. 5.8).236

Aside from changes in pigments and their use, the remaining sections of the Li Song
 attribution are faithful replicas of the Shanghai scroll. In section nine, for example, the distant
mountain range, the Dong Yuan-stye inlet that reaches into the river, and the trees and rocks on
the outcropping in the mid-ground all mirror the arrangement in the Shanghai scroll (Fig. 5.9–
5.10). This passage in the Tianjin Museum Illustrations is simplified: the expansive waterways
and mountains are replaced by a walkway lined with two willow trees and an undecorated three-
tiered railing, and the undulating wave pattern of the Taipei scroll that stretches from the bottom

236 A recent study of thirty-seven Song and Yuan paintings at the Freer found only a limited number of
pigments used to create greens, blues, and purples, namely atacamite, malachite, azurite, and indigo.
Jennifer Giaccai, Jeffrey Joseph, and John Winter, “Pigments in Song and Yuan Paintings from the Freer
Giaccai (London: Archetype Publications, 2021), 7–18. There are few naturally occurring purple or violet
substances that were used in East Asian painting. John Winter, East Asian Paintings: Materials,

The curators at the Taipei museum who kindly accompanied me at a viewing in 2018, Chiu Shih-hua 邱士華, Chen Yunru 陳韻如, and Fang Ling-kuang 方令光, pointed out that the lilac and greens seen here
are typical of Ming Suzhou area copies. For an excellent illustration of the particularities of the southern
art market at this time, see the catalogue that accompanied the 2018 exhibition “Fineries of
Forgery: ‘Suzhou Fakes’ and Their Influence in the 16th to 18th Century.” Shih-hua Chiu, Li-jiang Lin,
and Yu-chih Lai, eds., Wei haowu: 16 zi 18 shiji Suzhou pian ji qi yingxiang 偽好物: 16至 18世紀蘇州片及其影響 Fineries of Forgery: ‘Suzhou Fakes’ and Their Influence in the 16th to 18th Century,
(Taipei: Guoli gugong bowuyuan, 2018). See also Ellen Johnston Laing, “‘Suzhou Pian’ and Other
edge to the further riverbank is replaced by a light blue-grey wash suggestive of either sky or water (Fig. 5.11). The abbreviations made by the Tianjin Museum artist are not trivial, since the introductory landscape occupies a quarter of the composition and disguises the subject of the painting until the placard pierced with three arrows becomes visible. Further along in the scene, the composition of the large single-panel screen painting bears a close resemblance to the corresponding screen in the Shanghai scroll (Fig. 5.12-5.13). Minor differences include additional waterbirds in the Song work and a heavier application of azurite in the Ming painting, also seen elsewhere in the scroll.

The last two segments of the Taipei scroll are almost identical to the corresponding sections in the Long Museum work. In section four (third segment in the Taipei scroll), the reds and ochres of the men’s robes are replaced with more vivid pigments, such as violet, peach, sage green, and bright blue. In the front of the procession are four men on foot carrying staffs, followed by four riders wearing officials’ caps. Prince Kang rides in next, flanked by two members of his entourage, two flag bearers following behind, and the rest of the entourage taking a hilly path to the open city gate. Consistent with court apparel of the Song period, the prince, wearing muted ochre garments, is framed by two advisors in cinnabar red robes (Fig. 5.14-5.15). In the Taipei work, all three men are wearing the same violet color robes. The arrangement of the figures and their gestures may be identical between the two scrolls, but the choice of colors denies Prince Kang the compositional focus of the scene. In a work of such complexity, it is impossible for the copyist to reproduce every detail: the official riding closest to the prince in green also had the “ears” on his cap left out. Such changes and omissions indicate that though the copyist was technically proficient, he did not consider the organizing principles
of the original. The copyist was more interested in achieving a balance of colors rather than using certain shades to indicate rank and status of the figures in the unfolding narrative.

The same vivid palette of green, blue, and violet is seen again in the garments of the four Spirit Kings and in the group of palace ladies standing behind them in the last segment (section five) of the Taipei scroll (Fig. 5.8). The garden rock is painted with a wash of blue, and the architectural accents painted in malachite in the Song version appears in the beams above the standing figures. In this case, the select use of blue-green mineral pigments to denote sacred spaces is put aside in favor of creating a field of color. The blues and greens are bright and attractive, becoming a counterweight to the rainbow of tones in the garments of the figures. By being applied more liberally, the surface effects of the pigments dominate over what they signify in a socio-cultural or art historical sense. A similar palette can be found in other mid-to-late Ming Suzhou-area works such as *Qingming in Ease and Simplicity* 清明易簡圖 and Qiu Ying’s *Spring Dawn in the Han Palace* 漢宮春曉 (Fig. 5.16-5.17). It is very likely that the Taipei scroll was made in a Suzhou-area professional workshop to cater to the demand for works purportedly by Song and Yuan artists and for paintings in Qiu Ying’s widely popular style. In sum, the copyist remained faithful to the structure and composition of the original work but altered his model to appeal to contemporary Ming tastes and aesthetic priorities.237

Section five is followed by two colophons, purportedly written by the mid-Ming collector Xiang Yuanbian 項元汴 (1525-1590) and Dong Qichang (1555-1636). The two are written on the same paper backing, but another brocade strip separates the colophons from section five, thereby calling into question the relationship between the inscriptions and the painting. For

---

reasons that will be explained below, neither colophon can be accepted as authentic, but both contain interesting information that appears to be factual.

The first colophon (Fig. 5.18) states,

To the right is one juan of Illustrations of Auspicious Responses. Indeed, it depicts the events from the time of Song Gaozong’s passage to the south. In the Chunxi period [1174-1189], Li Song of the Painting Academy composed this picture and presented it as tribute in order to document the sagely auspicious signs of the time. In the Yuan it was dispersed among the people. Yuan Qingrong (dates?) sought it out and acquired it. When the current dynasty was established, it entered the collection of Wei [?]. Recently, Chu Huangda sought to offer it up for consideration and showed it to me. The inscriptions, however, have been removed. In due course I’ve come to accept it. In the summer, the painting was remounted. As I want to record the year and date: Jianqing xinchou [1541], the first ten days of the first month of autumn [7th month]. The Ink Forest Recluse from Zuili [Jiaxing], Xiang Yuanbian, writing in the Tianlai Pavilion.

右瑞應圖一卷。迺宋高宗南渡時事也。淳熙間畫院李嵩寫圖進呈，以紀一時聖瑞。元時散落人間。袁清容物色得之。國初復入魏府。近楚黃大賈舉以示余。而題識割去。遂為易之。夏日重裝。因記歲月云。嘉靖癸丑（西元一五四一年）孟秋上浣。檇李墨林山人項元汴書於天籟閣。

Though the painting’s provenance is credible, its entrance into Xiang Yuanbian’s collection is more suspect as he would have been just sixteen years old at the time. The colophon claims that the Taipei painting was once accompanied by texts, but by the time it reached Xiang Yuanbian they had been removed. Based on the extent to which the artist of the Taipei scroll used colors typical of the Ming, it is unthinkable that a leading collector such as Xiang Yuanbian would accept the work for a Song original. Moreover, Xiang Yuanbian was said to have started painting in 1542 at age seventeen and plausibly began collecting more actively after receiving his father’s inheritance in 1563.238 It is therefore unlikely that this colophon is genuine, but the history of the

painting in the Yuan and Ming may still hold some truth. A later hand may have decided to pair the colophon with the Taipei pictures based on theme and a convenient lack of inscriptions in order to bolster the supposed provenance of the scroll.

Whether or not the calligraphy and the seals are reliable, this colophon brings to light some aspects of the history of *Illustrations* not found elsewhere. We learn that the Li Song attribution was admired in the sixteenth century and that Li was once credited with presenting the scroll as tribute to the court. The colophon correctly names Xiaozong’s reign as the period of the work but its author either did not know that the painting was described in *Songyin ji* or did not mention it. According to the passage’s unnamed source, *Illustrations* stayed in the palace until the Yuan, which is consistent with the findings in Chapter Two. A certain Yuan Qingrong acquired the painting, which was then passed to the Wei collection in the early Ming, and Chu Huangda is named as the dealer who brought the painting to Xiang Yuanbian himself. In other words, there had been plenty of opportunities for the painting to be remounted, reproduced, and otherwise altered. By 1541, some two hundred years after the end of the Yuan, the painting had lost its inscriptions and was remounted when Xiang Yuanbian purchased it.

According to some sources, Qiu Ying was able to study and copy *Illustrations* when he lived at the estate of the Xiang family. There are several questions this scenario raises, most

---

239 The colophon is written in a neat small regular script and surrounded by seven seals, more of which are seen on the painted portions. According to the paintings database of the museum, the scroll’s seals are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seal Mark</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>松雪圖書</td>
<td>嘉興項氏</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>永存珍祕</td>
<td>天籟閣（重一）</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>項子京家珍藏</td>
<td>真賞</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>平生真賞</td>
<td>橋李</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>元汴</td>
<td>子京所藏</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>子子孫孫永保</td>
<td>墨林項季子章</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>宮保世家</td>
<td>文獻世家</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>都□□（半印）</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
importantly whether the Shanghai scroll ever belonged to Xiang Yuanbian and whether Qiu Ying’s painting, now in the Palace Museum in Beijing, is a direct copy of it. Qiu Ying likely started living with Xiang Yuanbian in 1547 and died circa 1552, giving him around five years of access to the collection as Xiang’s artist in residence. Ellen Laing points out that Xiang Yuanbian was only in his late twenties at the time and lived four more decades after Qiu Ying’s death; Qiu Ying therefore could not have seen most of the works that eventually entered into his patron’s hands. Moreover, judging from the seals it bears, the Shanghai scroll continued to circulate in the Jiangnan area after Lu Yuanxiang and Wu Kuan’s time but no seals of Xiang Yuanbian’s appear on it (Fig. 5.1). Textual evidence also suggests that Xiang Yuanbian had a six section scroll of Illustrations and that Qiu Ying’s version originally had six sections before it was trimmed down to its present state. It then seems unlikely that the Shanghai scroll was in Xiang Yuanbian’s possession.

The colophon attributed to Dong Qichang (Fig. 5.19) is also suspect but provides an additional perspective on the circulation of the work:

Illustrations of Auspicious Responses by Li Song of the Song. It’s a famous object throughout the country, and of those who appreciate and evaluate [paintings], not one neglects to speak of it. Today I observed that its brushwork and application of color are elegant and unadorned, in an incomparable sense. When Xiang Zijing [Yuanbian] purchased and acquired it, the inscriptions were already missing. Nowadays it has been duplicated, scattered, and dispersed so that there are eight scrolls. I feel deeply regretful [about this]. Although the ancients [left us] only a small portion of their writings and paintings, to behold one feels like [acquiring] a bi-like treasure. It is even more so with this scroll. It ought to be kept safe forever. Appraised and authenticated by Dong Qichang.

---


Much of the passage attempts to drum up interest in the scroll and prove its worth by repeating things stated in the colophon attributed to Xiang Yuanbian. The calligraphy itself is an enervated interpretation of Dong Qichang’s running script style. There are no comments tailored to this scroll, no dates, nor other information such as where Dong Qichang viewed the painting that appears in the two Dong Qichang colophons on the Shanghai scroll. The Taipei colophon is clearly spurious, and the curators at the museum pointed out that false Dong Qichang colophons were also commonly seen on Suzhou-produced forgeries. The spurious colophon does believably state that there were many copies of *Illustrations* in collectors’ hands and on the art market by the late Ming. Secondly, the forged Dong Qichang colophon points to an association between the version of *Illustrations* in Xiang Yuanbian’s collection and Dong Qichang’s high opinion of it, so much that it inspired copycat colophons in order to boost the value of other copies on the market. Eventually, the Li Song version reached Taipei by way of the Qing imperial collection; stewards of the collection decided it was important enough to acquire but clearly of lesser status than the Shanghai scroll, which carries Qianlong’s frontispiece.

Although the Taipei work only retains four segments of painting, its Li Song attribution is a clue to understanding the reception history of *Illustrations* in the Ming. The association between the Taipei scroll and the artist Li Song can be found in the mid-Ming book *Master Sun’s Excerpts from Books and Paintings*《孫氏書畫抄》 by Sun Feng 孫鳳 (b. 1466?) or Sun

---

242 Another point made by Chen Yunru during our viewing.

243 In conversations with Cecie Riley, she also holds the view that the Taipei Dong Qichang colophon is a forgery, while the Long Museum colophons are “entirely genuine.”
Mingqi 孫鳴岐. The painting is described under the slightly altered title *Song Gaozong’s Illustrations of Auspicious Responses* 宋高宗瑞應圖. As the first post-Song record of the painting to include the textual passages, Sun Feng’s book is crucial to dating the proliferation of Ming copies in relation to one another and to their Song model. Not much is known about Sun Feng, but he was reputed to be a connoisseur in Suzhou who liked to mount paintings and to record their poems and inscriptions. He was a friend of Wen Zhengming’s son Wen Jia 文嘉 (ca. 1501-1583), although his interest in mounting seems to indicate a somewhat lower social status. Sun Feng’s writings provide a window into an important life stage of a painting as it sheds an old mounting and acquires a new one. Remounting may happen when a new owner acquires a painting; it necessarily destroys some information and gives the scroll a new appearance and framing. Sun Feng’s entry was presumably written when physical alterations were made to the scroll and contains eleven of twelve encomiums (without section nine) and records the “missing text” of the foreword.

A closer look at the text in *Master Sun’s Excerpts* indicates that Sun Feng was actually writing about a much edited and altered version of *Illustrations*. Sun’s record of the scroll begins with the second encomium recounting Consort Wei dreaming in her chambers, differing from the Long Museum text by only two characters. After this passage, however, the two works diverge. The reader quickly realizes that the next section is out of order as it jumps to the rabbit hunting scene, incorrectly labeled as taking place in Yunzhou 鄱州 instead of Cizhou. The encomiums are not in chronological and thematic order, and compared with the Shanghai scroll there are

---

anywhere from two to twenty-seven characters that are either changed or missing.\textsuperscript{245} There are enough typographical differences between what Sun Feng records and the Shanghai painting that Sun was clearly working with another copy that had already been altered and edited. There is no evidence on the Shanghai scroll, nor of the other known versions I have studied in person, that they have been separated and reattached to a backing in the order Sun Feng describes. There are no noticeable seams on the Shanghai scroll between sections, suggesting that the main panel of the painting has survived intact despite being remounted at least once when Qianlong’s frontispiece was attached. Nevertheless, the Taipei scroll is the closest to the Shanghai scroll in terms of style and execution; it roughly follows the order of texts in Sun Feng’s record and has a number of so-called Xiang Yuanbian seals and a false colophon. Whoever sold the Taipei scroll worked diligently to convince a prospective client of its authenticity and provenance, even though Songyin ji, Master Sun’s Excerpts, and the Xiang Yuanbian colophon describe manifestly different works.

Some of the textual differences between Sun Feng’s record and the scroll appear to be mistakes of transcription, while others seem to be intentional substitutions. For instance, Sun Feng writes shengren yingyun 聖人應運 (“the sagely one responds to destiny”) in the section ten poem on the rabbit hunt. The scroll says shengren yingyun 聖人膺運, which means for the sagely one—Prince Kang—to assume the throne. The similarity of the characters and the loss of specificity in “responding to destiny” indicates that it was an error made during the copying process. There is a general carelessness about place names and official titles, both of which could have been easily verified against the Songyin ji text. But the category of intentional edits presents

\textsuperscript{245} The order of the sections are as follows: 2, 10, 12, 7, 4, 8, 6, 5, 11, 3, 1. See Appendix B for full text.
a more interesting case of how the painting’s meaning changed over time, especially in relation to contemporary Ming politics.

Of the textual differences, there is a deliberate and consistent substitution of the term lu (虜 caitiff; outlander) for the words Jin 金 and di 敵 (enemy). Lu does not appear on the Shanghai scroll but appears in Sun Feng’s record eleven times. This change of wording, implying a generalized derogation of foreigners, undermines the idea of an evenly matched rivalry between the Song and the Jin implied by the word di and the historical specificity of events depicted in the original work commissioned by Cao Xun. The first Ming Emperor Taizu (r. 1368-1398) capitalized on anti-Mongol sentiment when trying to legitimize his rise in Han-nativist terms, blaming the fall of the Mongols on practices ranging from their dress and diet to their language and ritual practices. A proclamation he issued just prior to an attack on Dadu (Beijing) in 1367 uses the term lu repeatedly and contains the memorable phrase: “[That] the barbarian lu’s fortunes can never last out a hundred years’ is today again proven true.”246 In order to encourage defectors among Mongols and Inner Asians, Ming Taizu had to strike a balance between the standard language of the Mandate of Heaven and a rhetoric of ethnocentrism. It was to his benefit to be broad-minded at this point in his career, but he was also appealing to the concerns of the southern literati about what they saw as the undue influence of Mongol culture and norms during Taizu’s reign.247 The substitution of the word lu for other terms found in the earliest versions of Illustrations surely reflects the disdain for non-Chinese peoples, be they Jurchen or Mongols, that was part of the discourse of Ming Taizu’s reign. The nativist language


247 Mote, Imperial China, 900-1800, 561.
continued to have a receptive audience in the southern, educated men whose interests in the themes of *Illustrations* led to its many copies being made.

By Sun Feng’s time in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century, the Shanghai painting had been circulating and copied outside of the palace for some time. In Sun Feng’s text there are a number of errors in place names and in Cao Xun’s official title; he is described as being posted in Zhaoqing jun 昭慶軍, rather than Zhaoxin jun 昭信軍 seen on the Shanghai scroll. The work that Sun Feng remounted appears to have been a composite of purposeful edits in light of current political concerns and mistakes on the part of a copyist who did not check Cao Xun’s *Songyin ji*. The version recorded by Sun does not correspond with any known paintings, and he is also the only viewer to suggest Li Song as the painter of *Illustrations*. The attribution seems unlikely as Li Song practiced several decades later than the 1171-1174 dating of the scroll. In sum, the Sun Feng excerpt is more significant as a Ming record of the changes the painting had already undergone than a reliable record of Song painting practice.

In fact, the textual disparities between the Shanghai scroll and two versions of *Songyin ji* can be clarified by comparing them to the Sun Feng record. *Lu* and its explicitly xenophobic overtones appear more than thirty times in the version of *Songyin ji* published in the Republic Era compilation *Jiaye tang congshu ben* 《嘉業堂叢書本》. In contrast, the neutral and more historically exact “Jin” is used in the edition in the Qianlong period *Qinding Siku Quanshu* 《欽定四庫全書》 in which *lu* appears only twice. This choice of words on the part of Qianlong’s

---

248 昭慶軍 is another name for Wuxing 吳興/湖州 in the Liangzhe Circuit 兩浙路. The copyist seems to have confused two areas of Southeastern China.

249 Liu Chenggan 劉承幹, *Jiaye Tang Congshu* 嘉業堂叢書 (Wuxing: Jiaye tang, 1918); Ctext digital ed. of *Qinding siku quanshu* 欽定四庫全書 ed., Zhejiang University Library.
compilers is a corollary to his reign’s editing of, and sometimes destruction of, historical materials that denigrated the “foreign” dynasties of the Liao, Jin, and Yuan.250 The true version of events then depended on which side of the so-called “Sino-barbarian dichotomy” one was positioned: the Republic era editor chose the strand of history told by the Ming, which valorizes the Song, while the Qing edition elevates the perspective of the Jin, claimed as ancestors by the Manchus.

5.3 The Scroll Reproduced in Xie Zhiliu’s Tang Wudai Song Yuan mingji

According to Xie Zhiliu, writing in 1957, the scroll titled Illustrations of the Auspicious Responses during the Restoration 中興禎應圖 included twelve painted segments and their encomiums.251 Its present location is unknown, and it may yet emerge from a private collection in mainland China like other works in Xie’s catalogue titled Tang Wudai Song Yuan mingji (Famous works of the Five Dynasties, Song, and Yuan). Four of the sections (four, five, six, eight) are reproduced in black and white illustrations in the catalogue, which provides the only available visual record of this work. The illustrations, though grainy and incomplete, represent a painting closely related to the Shanghai scroll in terms of composition and level of artistry. The artist tackled the complexity of the compositions with a confident hand: palaces and halls are rendered in great detail but do not overwhelm the lively figures (Fig. 5.20–5.21).252 The trees that


251 Xie Zhiliu 謝稚柳, Tang Wudai Song Yuan mingji 唐五代宋元明迹 (Shanghai: Gudian wenxue chubanshe, 1957), 65-81.

252 Freda Murck has suggested to me that due to vitality of the figures in Xie Zhiliu’s reproduction, the scroll and the Shanghai painting could both be copies of a lost Song original. The figures, especially in the heavily repainted sections of the Shanghai scroll, are weaker in execution than its other aspects: the
punctuate the landscape—some reaching as high as the city gates—are laden with foliage and perched on jagged, rocky terrain drawn with sweeping axe-cut strokes (Fig. 5.22). The style and execution of the scroll resemble those of paintings attributed to Li Tang’s student Xiao Zhao (fl. ca. 1130-1162) and reasonably led Xie Zhiliu to conclude the painting was by this artist.

Nevertheless, details in the illustrations suggest the painting studied by Xie Zhiliu is a well-executed reproduction dating to no earlier than the Ming. Section five deserves special attention: its encomium is the only one reproduced in Xie’s catalogue and is placed before—not after—the painted segment (Fig. 5.23). The encomium itself follows the Shanghai Museum text more closely than it does the transmitted version in Songyin ji. This fact, along with the precise brushwork of the painting segments, make it likely that the copyist had direct access to the Shanghai scroll. The text, however, bears a telltale sign of Ming editorial intervention: the word lu (caitiff) appears in lieu of the words Jin and bi 彼 (other) (Appendix B).

Sections four and five illustrated in Xie’s catalogue also depart from the Shanghai scroll in terms of compositional and narrative logic. The procession led by the prince is lengthened: the officials who ride immediately ahead of the prince are placed farther away, and additional onlookers and a willow tree are added to the scene. The symmetry so carefully created in the Shanghai scroll by the two advisors in red robes framing the prince is replaced by a more linear procession by removing the man to the left of the prince (Fig. 5.15, 5.20). The prince’s departure from the palace has been more drastically altered: the composition is entirely reversed. Instead of opening onto a scene taking place outside the palace and slowly building to the revelation of the architecture, landscapes, botanical features and animal drawings. In my opinion, the overall strengths of the Shanghai painting indicate that its figures can be explained by a combination of repainting due to damage and perhaps a less experienced hand if the scroll were executed collaboratively as discussed in Chapter 4. The relationship between the scroll photographed by Xie Zhiliu and the Shanghai scroll can hopefully be more fully understood if and when the Xie Zhiliu version is rediscovered and made available for study.
Four Spirit Kings, the Xie Zhiliu scroll flips the composition so that the palace women, the Spirit Kings, and the prince are immediately visible (Fig. 5.23-5.24). The segment ends with a street scene and unknowing pedestrians chatting with each another, watching a puppet vendor, resting against a wall, and the first figures of the prince’s retinue preparing to leave. Their actions are not related to the miraculous sighting within the palace and are clearly meant to set the stage rather than to provide a sense of resolution (Fig. 5.25). Through the copyist’s misinterpretation of the scene’s ordering, its narrative tension is ineffectual, and the departures from the Shanghai scroll identify the one published by Xie Zhiliu as a relatively free copy. Lastly, the title of the painting contains zhen 禎 as a substitution for rui 瑞, a character decreed taboo in the early Ming owing to its use in the courtesy name of Emperor Taizu, Guorui 國瑞. Although the scroll probably dates from no earlier than the fourteenth century, it is an excellent work that later copyists and collectors may have taken to be the original Song painting. The Xie Zhiliu scroll may well be the source of a Ming lineage of Illustrations that developed its own salient characteristics.

5.4 The Tianjin Museum Scroll

The origin of the Tianjin Museum handscroll comes into clearer focus in light of its subtle but substantive textual and painterly departures from other sources. The work consists of three segments presented in the correct order (sections seven, nine, and twelve) and their matching encomiums (Fig. 5.26). There are no seals or signatures; strips of pale brocade with a flying phoenix motif separate each segment. The inscriptions, the confident hand of the artist, and the excellent condition of the scroll, which shows few signs of abrasion, repair, or other damage, may convince the viewer that it is a well-preserved work of an early date. Upon closer

---

scrutiny, however, it becomes apparent that the Tianjin scroll is a pastiche of visual and textual sources created after the *Illustrations* theme had become popularized in the Ming.

The Tianjin scroll’s encomiums give a great deal of information about its temporal and ideological placement. They are written before each painting instead of afterward, but the ordering of the scenes does not constitute evidence for the date of the scroll. Within each inscription, characters are spaced inconsistently. In some areas, the artist leaves a blank space before titles such as *shang* 上 (Your Majesty) and (Empress) Xianren (Fig. 5.27). Spacing for honorifics of this kind reflects the procedure of starting new lines in epistolary practice and is consistent throughout the Shanghai scroll (Fig. 5.28). In the two remaining encomiums, however, the artist misses several spaces that should have been placed before *shang* (Fig. 5.29–5.30). This omission is especially glaring in section twelve, where two *shang* characters are repeated: the first is the object of *yi* 衣 as Qinzong removes his robe and dresses the prince; the second is the start of a new phrase. Otherwise, the repeated character does not serve a grammatical or stylistic purpose. The evidence points to the painter or scribe of the Tianjin scroll copying a model that was itself a copy of *Illustrations*, one whose text either contained mistakes or was missing the encomiums. In other words, there was already some distance between the Tianjin scroll and the original Song work at the time of its making. What seems evident is that the artist knew the Song illustrations should have been accompanied by Cao Xun’s texts and subsequently sought out the text to incorporate into his reconstructed, “whole” version of the painting.

The Tianjin scroll’s artist could have used the Shanghai scroll, two editions of *Songyin ji*, or Sun Feng’s book as sources. If the account of the Shanghai scroll’s history in the false “Xiang Yuanbian” colophon is more or less correct, it must have exited the palace during the mid-to-late Yuan and likely remained a treasured object in private collections. Careful copies of the
illustrations were made over time, but the inscriptions received less attention. Aside from the errors in spacing, another indication that the Tianjin copyist was not directly following the Shanghai scroll are the repeated substitutions of modern variants of certain words for older ones: meng (dream) 夢 was changed to 夢, and shi (era, generation), 世 to 世 (Appendix B). Of the texts in the Shanghai scroll, two editions of Songyin ji, and Sun Feng’s book, the wording of the Tianjin scroll is the most similar to that of Songyin ji. In section twelve, the two passages are almost identical except for the Tianjin scroll’s repetition of the character shang (Your Majesty); the copyist looking at the character printed twice may easily have missed how they should be spaced out as the end of one clause and the beginning of the next one. The text of section nine in the Tianjin work is also nearly the same as the corresponding passages in the Songyin ji, evidence that the artist was savvy enough to find a copy of Cao Xun’s book to make his work as convincing as possible. Nonetheless, the process of copying between printed and handwritten materials leads to an imperfect transference that reflects the distance between the Tianjin scroll and the Shanghai scroll.254

Although Sun Feng’s printed record contains many errors and substitutions, it shares one salient feature with the Tianjin scroll: the use of the term lu (caitiff). As discussed above, this derogatory term is not used in the Shanghai scroll but appears many times in the scroll Sun Feng records; the Tianjin scroll uses the term three times in place of both Jin 金 and di 敵 (enemy), pointing to a Ming date for the scroll (Appendix B). It is worth noting also that Sun Feng’s record misses entirely the repetition of the shang character in section twelve and that in general

254 Li E’s 厲鶚 (1692-1752) record in the Qing, in which he was looking at the Shanghai scroll and taking the detailed notes, also carries a number of transcription errors and substitutions. The avoidance of taboo characters explains some of the substitutions, but there are still quite a few that appear to be genuine mistakes. Li E 厲鶚 (1692-1752), Nan Song Yuan Hualu 南宋院畫錄 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin meishu chubanshe, 2016), 3.19-26.
the Tianjin scroll’s texts are more accurate and complete than Sun Feng’s version. It follows that the works probably share a model dating from the early Ming.

Although the Tianjin scroll’s composition follows the Shanghai painting for the most part, its rendering of landscapes and architecture is more rigid and done in bold lines and saturated ink. As discussed above in relation to the Taipei painting, the first portion of the archery scene has been drastically simplified and its meandering waterscape removed. Gnarled, exposed tree roots grow from slabs of rock in the chess scene, and the prince’s encampment is framed by a barren looking landscape dotted with low-lying brush (Fig. 5.31, 5.33). The same scenes in the Shanghai scroll are by comparison drawn in a softer manner: the hillocks in the Consort Wei scene are not described with slashes of ink but instead a diffuse green wash and slender blades of grass. Likewise, the sleeping prince is cocooned by the undulating forms of the hills around him, and ropey strands of light green follow the contours of the hills (Fig. 5.32, 5.34). There is little trace of the descriptive angularity of Li Tang’s axe-cut strokes in the Shanghai scroll, whereas such a sharpness is seen in the Tianjin scroll’s rock surfaces and hard edges of the buildings, gates, and fences.

Among extant versions of Illustrations, the Tianjin painting bears the closest stylistic resemblance to that in Xie Zhiliu’s catalogue. Although conclusions drawn from photographic reproductions must be provisional, the calligraphy and draftsmanship in the two works appear similar in style and execution. In both scrolls the encomiums are organized into neat columns that contain thirteen to fifteen characters each, depending on the spacing. The regular script characters in both Ming scrolls are larger than in the Shanghai scroll and are rendered with more heavily saturated ink, and the Tianjin scroll’s calligraphy appears especially fleshy (Fig. 5.23, 5.27-5.30). In addition, the architecture, the landscape, and the vegetation of the two later scrolls
have more in common with one another than with the Shanghai scroll. For instance, in both Ming scrolls thick bands of black ink outline the architectural frames of buildings and rooftops (Fig 5.21, 5.35). The outlines of the trees and the slabs of bare rock on which they grow are also depicted with heavily inked edges and diagonal texture strokes (Fig. 5.22, 5.31). The repetition of unwavering lines emphasizes the horizontality of stone foundations, city gates, and ropes binding together a fence. The scroll’s simplified execution makes sense in the context of the artist efficiently meeting market demand for a popular composition. The Shanghai scroll, in contrast, uses dilute ink and green-brown wash of various shades to show the textural contrast between rope and the knotty, untreated wood (Fig. 5.36, 5.37). The non-figurative components of the painting such as the fence receive equal attention as the royal personage it confines, another sign that the Shanghai work is the expertly craft and singular Song original meant for the palace.

By comparison, the Tianjin painting is schematic and unfinished: the group of women in section seven have yet to be fully colored in, and only their hair and the red pigment of Consort Wei’s robes and a lacquer box has been applied (Fig. 5.35). Moreover, all three scenes have been trimmed at the top (Fig. 5.26). Despite these flaws, the Tianjin scroll is a well-executed copy incorporating widely known elements of the style of Li Tang and Xiao Zhao. Two groups of scrolls in the Ming begin to emerge: one—including the Taipei Li Song work—which is modeled more closely on the Song original. The other developed distinct Ming characteristics in draftsmanship and textual edits and includes the Xie Zhiliu scroll, the Tianjin scroll, and the painting discussed below attributed to Qiu Ying.

5.5 The Qiu Ying Scroll in Beijing

Of the Ming versions of Illustrations, the painting by Qiu Ying 仇英 (ca. 1494-1552) in the Palace Museum is most accurately described as an interpretation of the original source
material rather than a reproduction. The frontispiece by Dong Qichang refers to the scroll using term *lin* 临, which denotes not a brushstroke-by-brushstroke reproduction but a freehand copy. The painting originally had six segments, but only four are extant: sections ten, twelve, eleven, and seven without encomiums (Fig. 5.38). While the narrative progression of the scenes is largely the same as that in the Shanghai scroll, some areas of the landscape and the architecture, including the brackets framing Consort Wei in section seven and the number of windows of the hall, have been significantly altered and expanded. Even the rustic fence that keeps her captive has grown to occupy a third of the composition, tracing a meandering path of diagonals across a wide swath of the painting surface (Fig. 5.39). In addition, section twelve opens with the addition of a waterway, several more tents, and an array of red, white, and blue military banners. In this section color is more freely applied, especially in the use of a uniform wash of bright blue on the military tents. Qiu Ying concentrated the application of pigment on the figures, buildings, and textiles while leaving the backdrops relatively muted in tone. The emphatic contrast between the figures and their surroundings produces the effect of a stage set with actors in jewel-toned costumes (Fig. 5.40). Overall, the expansions of ornamentation, color, and landscapes heighten the drama and sense of performativity of the painting.

The river crossing at Ligudu in section eleven is illustrative of how Qiu Ying’s approach to orchestrating narrative tension differs from that of the artist of the Shanghai scroll. The Song work sets the scene in the depths of a cold spell in the last month of 1126, when a large division of the Song dynasty army—the Hebei troops, belonging to the administrative circuit immediately to the north of the Yellow River—needed to cross the river (Fig 5.41). The first rider in the group peers down at the surface of the ice. His horse feels out its next step with a gingerly outstretched hoof, and another follows closely behind. On shore, a group of four horses shrinks from the edge
of the riverbank, while bannermen and other members of the cavalry can be seen threading through the hills in the distance. The blanket of snow stretches to the horizon as the scene unfolds and abruptly reveals a horse who has fallen in (Fig. 5.42). The pitiful animal belongs to Gao Gonghai 高公海, who had disregarded the prince’s orders that everyone to cross before he did; by some miracle, the ice had held up beneath the weight of horses and supply carts until the very last rider crossed after which the breakup of the ice prevented the Jin army from reaching the Song troops.

The composition of scene eleven in the Beijing scroll is familiar: the trees are bare, and the frozen expanse of the Yellow River separates its two snow-covered banks (Fig. 5.43). Yet, the scene is dramatically altered by Qiu Ying’s removal of the figures on the right and his expansion of the distance between the two shores. It is not until three-quarters of the way into the scene, viewing from right to left, that the figure of Gao Gonghai pulling on his horse’s bridle appears. Every soldier in the group turns to look—their gazes fixed on the man’s back—with a few pointing and others leaning over to see better. Their blue hats, red and ochre robes, and green saddle blankets stand out against the snowy backdrop (Fig. 5.44). Although the surface effects of ornamentation are enhanced and the number of figures increased, the Beijing scroll is conceptually altered by these changes. The Ming artist chose to remove the temporal loop created by the river, which shows the first rider in the procession on one bank followed by the last one on the other side. The crossing of the river becomes simply one moment in time, before the figure of Gao Gonghai is revealed. Likewise, in section twelve the miniature tree that plays a role in the dream of Qinzong has been colored a brighter shade of green than the full-size trees outside of the dream bubble (Fig. 5.45). As argued in Chapter Two, the trees within and without the bubble in the Song painting are intentionally depicted in an identical manner. The painter
does so in order to question the distinction between dreaming and reality and to lend validity to the subjective, self-reported nature of dreams. The Beijing scroll instead uses the tree to point to the difference between the dream and the waking world and to emphasize the unusualness of the dream state. Qiu Ying’s interpretation of the narrative focuses on human affairs, using the figures to act out the drama of war against a beautifully crafted backdrop.

A close study of section twelve shows that the Qiu Ying scroll should be grouped with the Xie Zhiliu and Tianjin scrolls, though it is not a direct copy of either work. In section twelve in the Tianjin and Beijing scrolls, the banners by the prince’s tent are emblazoned with a large character men 门 (gate) on the reverse side. The Shanghai scroll has the same banner, but the men character is seen from the obverse (Fig. 5.46-5.48). Another flag on the Tianjin and Beijing scrolls shows a winged demon resembling a bat, while the same flag in the Shanghai scroll contains a green oval with the graph ya 牙 (tooth; fang) indicating the general’s headquarters (Fig. 5.49). There are, however, some areas where the Qiu Ying scroll and the Shanghai scroll are more similar in composition. Section seven shows seven women waiting on Consort Wei in both works, and three kidney shaped stools are arranged around the chess table. In contrast, the Tianjin scrolls shows eight female servants and only one stool behind the consort (Fig. 5.35, 5.50, 5.51). It also lacks Qiu Ying’s addition of an extra bay in the building and the elongation of the surrounding fence.

A plausible explanation for the tangled genealogy of the works is that a Ming artist made a six section copy of the Xie Zhiliu scroll (Fig. 5.54). The six-section version must have copied the second half of the scroll from sections seven through twelve, the only ones found in this grouping. Zhang Chou 张丑 (1577-1643) writes in 1616 that the Xiang Yuanbian version uses the term zhen 稔 (compact) in the title instead of rui 瑞 to mean auspicious. The character
appears to be a transcription error for zhen 禎, which is seen only in the Xie Zhiliu title and reflects the Ming Taizu era taboo. Zhang Chou also viewed the Qiu Ying scroll and describes it as representative of its own time. The six section scroll entered Xiang Yuanbian’s collection when he was relatively young, and it was at his residence that Qiu Ying had the opportunity to study it and create his own version. From a stylistic perspective, the Tianjin scroll also appears to be a copy or perhaps an unfinished study of the scroll descended from the Xie Zhiliu painting. Qiu Ying’s work subsequently became well known, and various copies were created in the mid-to-late Ming, seen today in various iterations. For example, two versions of section seven belong to the Taipei and Metropolitan Museum of Art collections and follow the Qiu Ying work closely (Fig. 5.52-5.53). Through the many instances of copying and reinterpretation, this secondary lineage of Illustrations paintings likely diverged from the Shanghai scroll (and close imitations such as the Taipei “Li Song” scroll) sometime in the early Ming and acquired a momentum of its own.

5.6 The Later History of the Shanghai Scroll

When the Shanghai scroll entered the Qing palace, Qianlong performed a collector’s sleight of hand: despite the circumstances of the painting’s creation, it was nevertheless

---

Note that the Xiang Yuanbian scroll stands apart from the six section scroll once in the disgraced official Yan Song’s 嚴嵩 (1480—1567) collection, which Wen Jia described as convincing but ultimately a copy. 蕭照《中興瑞應圖》：一圖凡六段，筆法全師李唐，幾於亂真照畫。余[4]見惟此及《讀碑圖》耳。Wen Jia 文嘉 (1501-1583), ed., Tianshui bingshan bu: fu qianshan tang shuhua ji 天水冰山錄: 附鈐山堂書畫記 (Shanghai: Gushu liutong chu, 1921), 12a.
important enough to be brought into his own collection. In fact, he cared a great deal about the painting and its history. The Qing imperial collection had more than one version of Illustrations, but the Shanghai scroll was thoroughly studied, and Qianlong takes care to set apart quotations of earlier commentators from his own opinions and interpretations.\footnote{The two versions in the National Palace Museum were also previously part of the Qing collection. Li Zongtong and Wu Ying, \textit{Yi Peiji deng qinzhan Gugong guwu an jiandingshu} 易培基等侵佔故宮古物案鑑定書, 2 vols. (Beiping [Beijing], 1937).} He frames himself as the authoritative voice on Illustrations—diligent in his research, knowledgeable about its shortcomings, and yet appreciative of its significance. This is evident also from the image over which the emperor’s poem and exegesis are written: an imperial five-clawed dragon is drawn in dilute gold paint and centered on the creamy, slightly yellowed paper (Fig. 1.18). It is writhing, flying through the air and framed by four ruyi shaped clouds and a flaming pearl centered above its sinuous torso. In some areas, the black ink of the writing and the shimmering gold of the drawing blend together, creating a tension between surface and representation (Fig. 5.56-5.57). The flying dragon was drawn first and the inscription was written over it; where the ink of the inscription is saturated, it masks the shimmering effect of the dragon’s scales and limbs. In some characters written in dry ink, gold granules commingle with the ink, obscuring the distinction between background and subject (Fig. 5.58). The dragon’s writhing body is filled with a tensile energy and contrasts visually with the neatly arranged rows of calligraphy in Qianlong’s signature running script (Fig. 5.59). Two symbols of imperial authority, the five-clawed dragon and imperial brush traces, together express the finality of Qianlong’s judgment of the painting.

The layout of the foreword—the number of characters, their spacing, and their relation to the decorated ground—is meticulously designed and executed. Its characters are uniform in size and neatly arranged in rows. Excluding the signature and date, the prose section contains twenty-
nine rows of writing with thirteen evenly spaced characters in each. The poem is written with slightly smaller indentations at the top of the row, in order to accommodate the fifty-six characters of the eight-line poem. Moreover, the painted dragon is almost entirely contained within the text; only the tip of a claw and trailing whiskers from a leg escape onto the blank ground, along with several cloud tendrils (Fig. 5.60-5.61). Such a calculated deployment of calligraphy leaves little room for the spontaneity seen in other colophons, such as that by Dong Qichang. Moreover, the foreword does not emphasize a personal response to the work. At age 75 and five decades into his reign, Qialong was determined to imply a contrast between Gaozong’s revanchist policies and his own militaristic regime marked by territorial expansion into Inner Asia and repeated campaigns in Southeast Asia.257 Unmentioned, of course was the financial burden incurred by Qianlong’s aggressively expansionist campaigns, in contrast with which Gaozong’s arguably more fiscally responsible strategy of suing for peace does not seem unreasonable.258

Qianlong’s double identity as emperor and connoisseur shaped the contours of the imperial collection in ways both obvious and subtle. Though such a study is beyond the scope of the current project, recent scholarship on Qianlong as a collector supports the notion that he was sometimes driven by conflicting motives, and adept at using artworks to frame himself as an exemplary Confucian ruler. For instance, Qianlong’s handling of Illustrations is consistent with his poetic writings on Ming period carved lacquer objects, in which he uses the images as a starting point for an ekphrastic critique of the corruption of the Jiajing 嘉靖 (r. 1522-67) and


Wanli 萬曆 (r. 1573-1620) periods. The sixty-one poems he had carved onto the lids of Ming lacquer boxes and other items, together with his patronage of lacquerware from his own reign, show a simultaneous admiration for Ming handicraft but also sharp criticism of the decadence, both material and moral, associated with the late Ming luxury goods.\textsuperscript{259}

Qianlong’s subsequent discussion of the painting’s various versions and the Ming collections they passed through supports his strategy of condemning the content of the Illustrations while admiring its impressive provenance. A number of well-known experts had seen or owned the work, although authorship of the scroll is complicated by Wu Kuan’s silence on the matter and Sun Mingqi’s suggestion that Li Song was the artist. Qianlong does not mention Su Hanchen, though the existence of such an attribution would have been known to his researchers at the Imperial Study had they consulted Li E’s writings. It is clear that the researchers had not read the Sun Feng text carefully; otherwise, there would have been no political or art historical reason to consider the version Sun Feng had remounted as the same one in the imperial collection. Reviewing the painting’s lack of signature and seals and expressing some skepticism about the attributions to Xiao Zhao, Qianlong’s foreword decides to follow Dong Qichang’s attribution, even though Dong focuses on calligraphy rather than painting style.\textsuperscript{260} There is no evidence, however, that “those with mediocre skills” remounted and

\textsuperscript{259} A similar political self-awareness can be found on the sixty-one poems by Qianlong that were inscribed on carved lacquerware, written between 1172 and 1792. The lacquers date to the Yongle period (1403-24) or later, and he was especially interested in writing on objects with figural motifs. Qianlong used his poems to critique the use of auspicious signs by Ming emperors he thought to be weak: Jiajing (r. 1522-67) and Wanli (r. 1573-1620). Zhenpeng Zhan, “Artisanal Luxury and Confucian Statecraft: The Afterlife of Ming Official Carved Lacquer at the Qianlong Court,” *Late Imperial China* 42, no. 1 (2021): 55-62.

\textsuperscript{260} Dong Qichang wrote a second colophon on the painting in 1629, which names Chen Shengfu as the current owner: 崇禎二年[1629]，歲在己巳，春仲三日，再觀於陳生甫之聽躍。時余不見西湖九年。同觀者陳結深、孫仲魯、馮雲將、雷宸甫、楊彥沖、王見可、王玉燦。其昌書。主人陳階尺收藏。
removed Song or Yuan inscriptions. In fact, alongside the two Dong Qichang colophons on the Shanghai scroll there was another by the late Ming official Zou Zhilin 鄒之麟 (jinshi 1610):

If one does not unroll this painting, one does not see the lived experience of my generation. The joy of peace and tranquility is a matter of dreams and sleep. Woe and delight are woven together, of which those who only seek out ease and comfort are unaware. After I viewed it, I felt frustrated. As for the subtleties of the brush and ink, my elder Dong [Qichang] has more than done it justice. In the jiawu year of the Chongzhen period [1634], one day after Qingming, the calligraphy and painting were examined by Zou Zilin.

不披此圖，不見我輩生長。太平之樂，然夢寐之事。憂喜交集，則又偷安者之所不知也。觀之憮然。若夫筆墨之妙董先輩已不啻詳言之矣。崇禎甲戌清明後一日，鄒之麟以上書畫彚考。261

In 1634, the Manchus had already made significant headway against the Ming and were two years from declaring the founding of the Great Qing. The threat of the Manchu armies echoed the threat of the Jurchen armies of the Jingkang period, and Zou Zilin bears witness to history unfolding in a maddeningly familiar way. It should come as no surprise that Qianlong’s staff removed the colophon expressing Zou Zhilin’s sense of foreboding and regretful awareness of how fleeting security and happiness are in the face of cataclysmic political events. Provoking such a state of unease for later viewers was perhaps the true artistic achievement of Illustrations. Zou Zilin’s affective response was effaced through subtle and not so subtle manipulations of the history of Illustrations: advancing his own ideological agenda and relying on shaky art historical facts, Qianlong succeeded in shaping the ideas about the scroll that down to our own time have obscured an understanding of its significance.

261 Li E 厲鶚 (1692-1752), Nan Song Yuan Hualu 南宋院畫錄, 3.26.
Conclusion

In the Palace Museum in Beijing, there is a large hanging scroll titled *The Qianlong Emperor Attending Imperial Hunting Games* dated to 1755 (Fig 6.1). The emperor, 45 years old at the time, is seen drawing his bow at his target: a brown hare sprinting just a few steps ahead of the steed. With his elbow pulled behind his head and his forearm forming a straight line with the arrow, there is no doubt the arrow will find its mark. Three companions ride along on horseback, while several more are collecting animals felled by the hunting party and tying them to their saddles. Qianlong is the only figure dressed in black and placed near the center of the composition, while his princes and vassals in yellow are arranged in an oval ring around the emperor.

The two figures of Qianlong and the rider behind him on a white horse share the same poses as Prince Kang and a follower from the rabbit hunting scene in section ten of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses* (Fig. 6.2). The similarity between the two paintings indicates that *Illustrations* may have entered Qianlong’s collection by 1755 and that Giuseppe Castiglione (1699-1766) and the Qing court painters who worked on *Hunting Games* may have had access to it. In both works, the hunters turn their torsos toward the viewer and their focused expressions are fully visible, while the followers are positioned toward the rulers with their backs turned to the viewer. All the horses are depicted mid-gallop, running at full speed and their hooves in the air. In the Song painting, the white rabbit struck by the arrow—symbolic of the Jin—would have been the first indication of the scene’s subject. Some distance further along the scroll the prince comes into view, followed immediately by one companion in blue and then by a long train of
other riders carrying banners and emerging from the Cizhou city gates. Cao Xun’s text informs us that this event took place when the prince was moving his calvary to the suburbs of the city, not on a hunting excursion. Like many of the other omens depicted, chance plays a central role and the scene’s organizing principle is the expression of spontaneity. The composition plays with the handscroll’s storytelling potential by revealing the finale before showing the chain of events—riding out from the city gates, galloping after the prey, and firing the arrow—that led to the rabbit’s demise (Fig. 6.3). In comparison, the proportions of the Qing hanging scroll are awkward; Qianlong is but steps away from his prey and the sight of four men working to route one rabbit looks more contrived than fearsome. By compressing a composition that relied on the horizontality of the handscroll format, the Qing artists removed its temporal and narrative progression.

Despite the political stance Qianlong held toward his predecessor Song Gaozong, *Hunting Games* demonstrates the ability of visual forms to be decoupled from their original contexts and used to new effect. In a departure from Song practices, portraits of Qing royal family members were displayed in the palace. The large size of *Hunting Games*, measuring 115 by 181.4 cm, suggests that it may have been made to be displayed on a spacious wall. In other words, the viewing circumstances of Qianlong’s painting would likely have been less restricted. The implications of the imperial hunt were also different under the Qing, as Qianlong proactively promoted aspects of Manchu nomadic life that he felt were under threat of disappearing under the assimilating pressures of mainstream Han culture. The image of Gaozong firing his arrow is in turn likely derived from hunting scenes such as *The Stag Hunt* 獵鹿圖 at

---

the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which depicts a Khitan rider in pursuit of a deer (Fig 6.4). In Hunting Games, Qianlong takes on the guise of a Manchu hunter, using the form of Song Gaozong, who in turn is depicted in a fashion associated with another nomadic group, the Khitans. The so-called Sino-barbarian dichotomy begins to break down in the face of the transferability of images across cultural and linguistic barriers.

The impact of Illustrations grew in the Ming dynasty as it became known outside of the palace, and generations of scholars, officials, collectors, and emperors grappled with its vision of the Southern Song’s founding. Perhaps the most enduring legacy of Illustrations is its ability to distill esoteric ideas from omen and legitimation discourses and Buddhist and Daoist miracles into an accessible visual language of emperorship. It is this language of presenting a theoretically eclectic but aesthetically unified vision of imperial authority that provoked the reactions of later viewers. The Song royal house made a variety of efforts to convey their authority through art and material culture, but its palaces, temples, and portrait statues did not survive into later times. By chance Illustrations did survive and gives voice to one perspective during the Song of the potency of culturalism without basing it in ethnic difference.
Illustrations

Figure i. *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, early 1170s, handscroll, ink, color, and gold on silk, Long Museum West Bund.

Figure 1.1. Section one of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.
Figure 1.2. Section two of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 1.3. Li Gonglin 李公麟 (ca. 1041-1106), *The Classic of Filial Piety*, ca. 1085, handscroll, ink and color on silk, Metropolitan Museum of Art.
Figure 1.4. Section three of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 1.5. Section four of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.
Figure 1.6. Detail of section five of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 1.7. Detail of section five of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.
Figure 1.8. Detail of section six of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 1.9. Detail of section six of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.
Figure 1.10. Section seven of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.
Figure 1.11. Section eight of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 1.12. Detail of section thirteen, *Eighteen Songs of a Nomad Flute* 胡笳十八拍圖, 12th c., handscroll, ink, color, and gold on silk, Museum of Fine Arts Boston.
Figure 1.13. Section nine of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 1.14. Section ten of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.
Figure 1.15. Section eleven of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 1.16. Section twelve of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.
Figure 1.17. Detail of section twelve of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.
Figure 1.18. Detail of frontispiece, Qianlong Emperor 乾隆 (r. 1735—1796), Illustrations, Long Museum.
Figure 2.1. Detail of section twelve, *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, early 1170s, handscroll, ink, color, and gold on silk, Long Museum West Bund.
Figure 2.2. Detail of section twelve of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.
Figure 2.3. Detail of section twelve of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.
Figure 2.4. Detail of section twelve of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.
Figure 2.5. Detail of section twelve of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.
Table 1: The Five Elements: Cycles and Corresponding Colors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELEMENTS</th>
<th>CREATES</th>
<th>CONQUERS</th>
<th>COLOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Earth</td>
<td>Metal</td>
<td>Water</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metal</td>
<td>Water</td>
<td>Wood</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>Wood</td>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood</td>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>Earth</td>
<td>Blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>Earth</td>
<td>Metal</td>
<td>Red</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2.6. Table of the Five Elements: Cycles and Corresponding Colors. Reproduced from Yuan Chen, “Legitimation Discourse and the Theory of the Five Elements in Imperial China,” 2014, 327.
Figure 2.7. Anonymous, 12th c., Seated Portrait of Emperor Song Gaozong, hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, National Palace Museum. Image from museum website.
Figure 3.1. Detail of section four of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, early 1170s, handscroll, ink, color, and gold on silk, Long Museum.
Figure 3.2. Detail of section four of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.
Figure 3.3. Detail of section four of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.
Fig. 3.4. Detail of *Divination by Astrological and Meteoromatic Phenomena* 天文氣象雜占, Mawangdui Tomb #3, early Western Han Dynasty (206—168 BCE), ink and color on silk, Hunan Provincial Museum. Reproduced from Qiu Xigui, ed., *Changsha Mawangdui Han mu jianbo jicheng* 長沙馬王堆漢墓簡帛集成, vol. 1 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2014), 204.
Fig. 3.5. Detail of *Divination by Astrological and Meteoromatic Phenomena*, Hunan Provincial Museum. Reproduced from Qiu Xigui, ed., *Changsha Mawangdui Han mu jianbo jicheng* 長沙馬王堆漢墓簡帛集成, vol. 1 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2014), 205.
Fig. 3.6. Detail of *Divination by Astrological and Meteoromatic Phenomena*, Hunan Provincial Museum. Reproduced from Qiu Xigui, ed., *Changsha Mawangdui Han mu jianbo jicheng* 長沙馬王堆漢墓簡帛集成, vol. 1 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2014), 207.
Fig. 3.7. Detail of *Divination by Astrological and Meteoromatic Phenomena*, Hunan Provincial Museum. Reproduced from Qiu Xigui, ed., *Changsha Mawangdui Han mu jianbo jicheng* 長沙馬王堆漢墓簡帛集成, vol. 1 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2014), 206
Fig. 3.8. “Intertwining Trees,” Wu Liang shrine omen slab 2, second century CE, reconstructed rubbing of stone carving, Shandong Province. Reproduced from Lippiello, *Auspicious Omens and Miracles in Ancient China*, 70.
Fig. 3.9. Detail of Dunhuang star atlas, manuscript Or.8210/S.3326, early Tang dynasty, ink on paper, British Library. Image provided by the British Library through the International Dunhuang Project (IDP).
Fig. 3.10. Detail of manuscript P.2683, late 6th c., ink and color on paper, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.
Fig. 3.11. Detail of manuscript P.2683, Bibliothèque Nationale de France.
Fig. 3.12. Plate from *Shan hai jing* (《山海經》, *Guideways through Mountains and Seas*), 1597 edition, reproduced from Richard E. Strassberg, *A Chinese Bestiary: Strange Creatures from the Guideways through Mountains and Seas*, 98.
Fig. 3.13. Emperor Huizong (r. 1100-1125), *Five-colored Parakeet on a Blossoming Apricot Tree* 五色鸚鵡圖, 1110’s, ink and color on silk, Museum of Fine Arts Boston. Image from www.mfa.org.

Fig. 3.14. Detail of *Five-colored Parakeet on a Blossoming Apricot Tree*, Museum of Fine Arts Boston. Image from www.mfa.org.
Fig. 3.15. “Birds Joined at the Wings,” Wu Liang shrine omen slab 2, second century CE, reconstructed rubbing of stone carving, Shandong Province. Reproduced from Lippiello, *Auspicious Omens and Miracles in Ancient China*, 71.

Fig. 3.16. Emperor Huizong (r. 1100-1125), Auspicious Cranes 瑞鶴圖, 1112, ink and color on silk, Liaoning Provincial Museum.
Fig. 3.17. Emperor Xuanzong (r. 685-762), *Ode on Pied Wagtails* 鴎鴒頌, 719, ink on paper, National Palace Museum.
Fig. 3.18. Banner, 9th C., ink, color, and gold on silk, Mogao Cave 17, Dunhuang, British Museum, 1919.0101.0.99.
Figure 3.19. Detail of section one, *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.
Figure 3.20. Banner, 9th C., ink and color on silk, Mogao Cave 17, Dunhuang, British Museum, 1919.0101.0.91.
Figure 3.21. Detail of section two, *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.
Figure 3.22. Detail of Siddartha shootings arrows, Yanshan si, Maṇjuśrī Hall, 1167, mural painting, Fashi County, Shanxi. Reproduced from Chang Le, Yanshansi xiang shi, 65.
Figure 3.23. Banner, ca. 701-850, ink and color on silk, Mogao Cave 17, Dunhuang, British Museum, 1919,0101,0.88.
Figure 3.24. Detail of section two, *Eighteen Songs of a Nomad Flute* 胡笳十八拍圖, early 15th c. copy of a 12th c. work, handscroll, ink, color, and gold on silk, Metropolitan Museum of Art.
Figure 3.25. Anonymous, detail of Illustrations of the Imperial Guard of Honor 大駕鹵簿圖書, ca. 1053-1065, handscroll, ink and color on silk, Museum of Chinese History, Beijing.

Figure 3.27. Detail of *Qingming shanghe tu*, Palace Museum, Beijing. Image from Asia for Educators, Columbia University website, http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/song-scroll/song.html.
Figure 3.29. Detail of section six, *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.
Figure 3.30. Detail of section six, *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.
Figure 3.31. Detail of section five, *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.
Figure 3.32. Detail of section six, *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.
Figure 3.33. Anonymous, 12th c., *Seated Portrait of Emperor Song Xiaozong*, hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, National Palace Museum. Image from museum website.
Figure 4.1. Attributed to Xiao Zhao 蕭照 (fl. 1130-1162?) , *Travelers in a Mountain Pass* 《關山行旅》, likely Ming work, album leaf, ink and colors on silk, National Palace Museum. Image from museum website.
Figure 4.2. Anonymous, inscribed by Emperor Gaozong 高宗 (r. 1127-1162), *Autumn River in Twilight* 《秋江暝泊圖》, fan mounted as album leaf, ink and colors on silk, Palace Museum.
Figure 4.3. Xiao Zhao, *Temple on the Mountainside*《山腰樓觀》, mid-12th c., hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, National Palace Museum.
Figure 4.4. Detail of Xiao Zhao, *Temple on the Mountainside*, National Palace Museum.
Figure 4.5. Detail of Xiao Zhao, *Temple on the Mountainside*, National Palace Museum.
Figure 4.6. Detail of section six from *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, early 1170s, handscroll, ink, color, and gold on silk, Long Museum.
Figure 4.7. Map of West Lake and the capital, 《（咸淳）臨安志》, woodblock print book, 1868 reprint of 13th c. edition.
Figure 4.8. Su Hanchen 蘇漢臣 (active 1120s-1170s?), *Lady at Her Dressing Table in a Garden*, mid 12th c., fan painting remounted as album leaf, ink, color, and gold on silk, Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Image from www.mfa.org.
Figure 4.9. Detail of Su Hanchen, *Lady at Her Dressing Table in a Garden*, Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Image from www.mfa.org.

Figure 4.10. Detail of Su Hanchen, *Lady at Her Dressing Table in a Garden*. (left)

Figure 4.11. Detail of section four from *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*. (right)
Figure 4.12. Detail of section nine from *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 4.13. Detail of Li Tang 李唐 (ca. 1070s-1150s), *Duke Wen of Jin Recovering His State* 晉文公復國圖, handscroll, ink and color on silk, Metropolitan Museum of Art.
Figure 4.14. Detail of section eleven from *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.
Figure 4.15. Detail of section 5 from *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.
Figure 4.16. Detail of Su Hanchen, *Lady at Her Dressing Table in a Garden*, Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Image from www.mfa.org.

Figure 4.17. Detail of Su Hanchen, *Lady at Her Dressing Table in a Garden*, Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Image from www.mfa.org.
Figure 4.18. Detail of section six of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.
Figure 4.19. Detail of section one of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.
Figure 4.20. Detail of Su Hanchen, *Lady at Her Dress Table in a Garden*, Boston MFA. (left)

Figure 4.21. Detail of section seven of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum. (right)
Figure 4.22. Map of major temples in Kaifeng with portraits of Song emperors, reproduced from Ebrey, “Portrait Sculptures in Imperial Ancestral Rites in Song China,” 44.
Clockwise from left:

Figure 4.23. Detail of section eleven of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum

Figure 4.24. Anonymous, 12th c., detail of *Seated Portrait of Emperor Song Gaozong*, hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, National Palace Museum.

Figure 4.25. Anonymous, 12th c., *Half Portrait of Emperor Song Gaozong*, album, ink and color on silk, National Palace Museum.
Figure 4.26. Detail of “Receiving the Khitan Envoys” from *Four Events of the Jingde Era* 景德四圖, Anonymous, ca. 1049, handscroll, ink and color on silk, National Palace Museum, Taipei.
Figure 4.27. Detail of “Viewing Books at the Pavilion of Great Purity” from *Four Events of the Jingde Era*, National Palace Museum.
Figure 4.28. Attributed to Yi Chehyŏn 李齊賢 (1287–1367), *Crossing the River on Horseback* 騎馬渡江圖, ink and color on silk, handscroll (?) mounted on board, National Museum of Korea.

Figure 4.29. Detail of section eleven of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.
Known Ming seals:

Sima Yin 司馬埜 (1439—?, jinshi 1472)  
司馬埜氏

Du Mu 都穆 (1459—1525, jinshi 1499)  
都穆  
都穆之印

Cui Shen 崔深 (?—?)  
松陵崔深

Liao Shouchu 廖守初 (?—?)  
廖氏守初  
守初

Zhang Huangyi 張凰翼 (?—?)  
凰翼
Figure 5.2. Anonymous, *A Qilin and Attendant*, with Shen Du’s 沈度 (1357–1434) inscribed eulogy and his preface dated 1414, hanging scroll, ink and colors on silk, National Palace Museum, Taipei.
Figure 5.3. The Optimus Wu Kuan, Zhuangyuan tukao 《明狀元圖考》 (Illustrated Study of Optimi), published 1643, Harvard-Yenching Library.
Figure 5.4. Attributed to Li Song 李嵩 (fl. 1190—1230), *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses* 瑞應圖, 16th-17th c., handscroll, ink and color on silk, National Palace Museum.
Figure 5.5. Detail of section twelve of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, National Palace Museum.

Figure 5.6. Detail of section twelve of *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, early 1170s, handscroll, ink, color, and gold on silk, Long Museum.
Figure 5.7. Detail of section twelve, *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, National Palace Museum.

Figure 5.8. Detail of section five, *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, National Palace Museum.
Figure 5.9. Detail of section nine, *Illustrations*, National Palace Museum.

Figure 5.10. Detail of section nine, *Illustrations*, Long Museum.
Figure 5.11. Detail of section nine, Anonymous, *Illustrations of Shaoxing Auspicious Omens*, handscroll, ink and color on silk, Tianjin Museum.
Figure 5.12. Detail of section nine, *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, National Palace Museum.

Figure 5.13. Detail of section nine, *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.
Figure 5.14. Detail of section four, *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, National Palace Museum.

Figure 5.15. Detail of section four, *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.
Figure 5.16. Attributed to Zhang Zeduan 張擇端 (1085—1145), *Qingming in Ease and Simplicity* 清明易簡圖, 16th-17th c., handscroll, ink and color on silk, National Palace Museum.
Figure 5.17. Qiu Ying 仇英 (ca. 1494–1552), *Spring Dawn in the Han Palace* 漢宮春曉, handscroll, ink and color on silk, National Palace Museum.
Figure 5.18. Colophon, *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, National Palace Museum.
Figure 5.19. Colophon, *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, National Palace Museum.
Figure 5.20. Detail of section four, *Illustrations of the Auspicious Responses during the Restoration* 中興禎應圖, reproduced from Xie Zhiliu, *Tang Wudai Song Yuan mingji* 《唐五代宋元明迹》 (Shanghai: Gudian wenxue chubanshe 1957), 66.

Figure 5.21. Detail of section six, *Illustrations*, reproduced from Xie Zhiliu, *Tang Wudai Song Yuan mingji*, 76.
Figure 5.22. Detail of section six, *Illustrations*, reproduced from Xie Zhiliu, *Tang Wudai Song Yuan mingji*, 65.
Figure 5.23. Detail of section five, *Illustrations*, reproduced from Julia Murray, “Ts'ao Hsün and Two Southern Sung History Scrolls,” 18.

Figure 5.24. Detail of section five, *Illustrations*, reproduced from Xie Zhiliu, *Tang Wudai Song Yuan mingji*, 68.
Figure 5.25. Detail of section five, *Illustrations*, reproduced from Xie Zhiliu, *Tang Wudai Song Yuan mingji*, 71.
Figure 5.26. *Illustrations of Shaoxing Auspicious Omens*, Tianjin Museum.

Figure 5.27. Encomium to section seven of *Illustrations*, Tianjin Museum.
Figure 5.28. Encomium to section seven, *Illustrations*, Long Museum.
Figure 5.29. Encomium to section nine of *Illustrations*, Tianjin Museum.

Figure 5.30. Encomium to section twelve of *Illustrations*, Tianjin Museum.
Figure 5.31. Detail of section seven, *Illustrations*, Tianjin Museum.

Figure 5.32. Detail of section seven, *Illustrations*, Long Museum.
Figure 5.33. Detail of section twelve, *Illustrations*, Tianjin Museum.

Figure 5.34. Detail of section twelve, *Illustrations*, Long Museum.
Figure 5.35. Detail of section seven, *Illustrations*, Tianjin Museum.
Figure 5.36. Detail of section seven, *Illustrations*, Tianjin Museum.

Figure 5.37. Detail of section seven, *Illustrations*, Long Museum.
Figure 5.38. Qiu Ying 仇英 (ca. 1494—1552), *Illustrations of Auspicious Omens*, handscroll, ink and color on silk, Palace Museum. Image from museum website.
Figure 5.39. Detail of section seven, Qiu Ying, *Illustrations*, Palace Museum.

Figure 5.40. Detail of section twelve, Qiu Ying, *Illustrations*, Palace Museum.
Figure 5.41. Section eleven, *Illustrations*, Long Museum.

Figure 5.42. Detail of section eleven, *Illustrations*, Long Museum.
Figure 5.43. Section eleven, Qiu Ying, *Illustrations*, Palace Museum.

Figure 5.44. Detail of section eleven, Qiu Ying, *Illustrations*, Palace Museum.
Figure 5.45. Detail of section twelve, Qiu Ying, *Illustrations*, Palace Museum.

Figure 5.46. Detail of section twelve, *Illustrations*, Long Museum.
Figure 5.47. Detail of section twelve, Illustrations, Tianjin Museum.

Figure 5.48. Detail of section twelve, Qiu Ying, Illustrations, Palace Museum.
Figure 5.49. Detail of section twelve, Illustrations, Long Museum.
Figure 5.50. Detail of section seven, *Illustrations*, Long Museum.

Figure 5.51. Detail of section seven, Qiu Ying, *Illustrations*, Palace Museum.
Figure 5.52. Anonymous, *Illustrations of Auspicious Omens* (catalogued as *Begging for Cleverness on Qixi* 七夕乞巧圖, 16th c. or later, handscroll, ink and color on silk, National Palace Museum.)
Figure 5.53. Anonymous, *Illustrations of Auspicious Omens* (catalogued as *Pavilion with Figures*), 16th c. or later, handscroll, ink and color on silk, Metropolitan Museum of Art.
Figure 5.54. A proposed history of *Illustrations*. 

Figure 5.58. Detail of frontispiece, Qianlong Emperor, *Illustrations*, Long Museum.
Figure 5.59. Detail of frontispiece, Qianlong Emperor, *Illustrations*, Long Museum.
Figure 6.1. Giuseppe Castiglione (1699-1766), *The Qianlong Emperor Attending Imperial Hunting Games*, 1755, hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, National Palace Museum. Image from museum website.

Figure 6.2. Detail of section ten, *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.
Figure 6.3. Section ten, *Illustrations of Auspicious Responses*, Long Museum.

Figure 6.4. Detail of *Stag Hunt 獵鹿圖*, attributed to Huang Zongdao 黃宗道 (active ca. 1120), handscroll, ink and color on paper, Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image from museum website.
Bibliography


Bossler, Beverly Jo. “‘A Daughter Is a Daughter All Her Life’: Affinal Relations and Women’s Networks in Song and Late Imperial China.” *Late Imperial China* 21, no. 1 (June 1, 2000): 77-106.


Ching, Dora C. Y. “Icons of Rulership: Imperial Portraiture During the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644).” Ph.D., Princeton University, 2011.


Feng Mingyang 冯鸣阳. “Nan Song huayuan renwuhua de zhengzhi gongneng yanjiu 南宋画院 人物画的政治功能研究.” Ph.D., Shanghai University, 2013.

Feng, You-heng. “‘Fishing Society at Hsi-Sai Mountain’ by Li Chieh (1124-before 1197): A Study of Scholar-Official’s Art in the Southern Sung Period.” Ph.D., Princeton University, 1996.


———. “‘Suzhou Pian’ and Other Dubious Paintings in the Received ‘Oeuvre’ of Qiu Ying.” *Artibus Asiae* 59, no. 3/4 (2000): 265-95.


Li Chensou 李澄叟 (13th c.). Hua shanshui jue 畫山水訣 (Preface Dated 1221). In Meishu Congshu 美術叢書 (Series on Art). Shanghai: Taidong tushu ju, 1922.


Pan Yongyin 潘永因 (17th c.). *Songbai leichao 宋稗類鈔*. Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1983.


Rorex, Robert A. “‘Eighteen Songs of a Nomad Flute’: The Story of Ts’ai Wen-Chi.” Ph.D., Princeton University, 1975.


Tsai, Chun-Yi Joyce. “Imagining the Supernatural Grotesque: Paintings of Zhong Kui and Demons in the Late Southern Song (1127-1279) and Yuan (1271-1368) Dynasties.” Ph.D., Columbia University, 2015.


Appendix A: Long Museum Handscroll Texts

Encomiums

Section One

顯仁皇后在北時因
徽宗問康邸祥異奏曰
上初誕育口有金光燦然耀室中並四聖從行事似非他兒比異日必膺大位臣謹賛曰

聖人挺生　咸臻上瑞
玉質金相　氣應必貴
榮光煒煒　異色煒煒
所以堯母　期得天位

When Empress Xianren was in the north [in Jin captivity], Huizong asked her whether Prince Kang was auspicious or unusual in any way. She answered, “At the time of His Highness’s birth, his mouth emitted a golden light, which shone forth brilliantly in the room. At the same time, four sages followed behind him. It seems like the event cannot compare to [the birth of] other children, and one day, he is sure to assume the throne.” Your subject respectfully praises:

Section Two

上未出閣
顯仁撫愛每賜以所食之物一夕夢神人告
顯仁曰爾勿以殘物食
上戒之甚至　顯仁驚寤即日嚴語諸御凡進上之食必取於庖廚不得以殘物臣謹賛曰

開先奕奕　神化拱極
力誚殘餘　勿繼玉食
母后亦悟　天真降跡
固知至尊　萬靈受職

His Highness had not yet left [his mother’s] quarters. Xianren loved him tenderly, often giving him food that she was eating. One night, she dreamed of being denounced by deities. Xianren said, “From now on, I will not feed him with leftover food.” The spirits admonished her to the
utmost extent. Xianren woke up with a start and each day, told the servants urgently that whenever they offer His Highness’s food, it must be from the kitchens and they cannot do so with leftovers. Your subject respectfuilly praises:

Section Three

When His Highness moved out of [his mother’s] quarters, in his spare time outside of lectures and studying he personally enjoyed riding and archery. Taking up two sacks of rice, each filled with ten dou of rice, he lifted them with both arms and walked one hundred steps. Everyone was shocked and yielded to him, to the extent that enemy kingdoms learned of this and not one was not in awe and respectful. Your subject respectfully praises:

Section Four

It was the beginning of the Jingkang [Period]. The Jin people rebelled; the defenses along the Yellow River fell, and they arrived directly at the capital city. The imperial court had no plan of action. His Highness said desolately, “Only by increasing reparations can we make peace.” Emperor Qinzong thereupon sent him [to negotiate] and entreated Zhang Bangchang (1081-1127) to assist him in meeting the second prince. The second prince said to his companions, “The vitality and appearance of the prince is extraordinary. I’m afraid of him crossing the river and being embraced and protected by the Song people, and even worse, he’ll easily command them.” The Prince of Su indeed went in place of him. Your subject respectfully praises:
顯仁皇后嘗宣諭曰靖康初遣親王使金所擇或未受命
上慨然請行 欽宗甚悅行日 顯仁 懿節送至廳事小女奴招兒指曰有四人甚長大或執槍戟
或持弓鞬從王馬後衆不見也
顯仁曰吾事四聖甚謹必獲保祐臣謹贊曰

帝王有真 畢彰殊應
天心既卜 護以上聖
凡目莫覩 母后黙敬
至磁無行 不墮彼境

Empress Xianren once declared that at the start of the Jingkang [Incident], the princes of the
blood who were chosen to be dispatched as emissaries to the Jin perhaps had not yet accepted
their orders. His Highness, deeply stirred, requested to go. Qinzong was very pleased. On the day
of departure, Xianren and Yijie accompanied [Gaozong] to the audience hall, where a girl
servant named Zhao’er pointed and said, “There are four very large men who are either holding
lance and halberd or wielding bow and sword, following the prince’s horse.” The crowd did not
see them. Xianren said, “I devote myself to the four sages very seriously, so surely [Prince Kang
will] receive their protection and blessing.” Your subject respectfully praises:

Section Six

上出使金國王雲副之至磁州忽郡民數萬同聲請 上謁崔廟
上翌旦至廟升自東廊見庭中一老人青巾秀異厲聲曰王雲不得邀王北去時雲從上即有數人持
雲下尋為民所殺
上令捕殺雲者，甚峻。顯應勿遣廳子馬以所乘小朱漆轝令 上乘歸 上曰吾人目豈敢乘是
日非民殺雲則雲邀 上北矣臣謹贊曰

雲不知幾 力邀北驅
應王殺之 天心所如
萬民共濟 乘以金輿
天命已兆 是為寶符

His Highness departed as emissary to the state of Jin and Wang Yun acted as his deputy. He
arrived in Cizhou when suddenly the residents of the prefecture numbering in the tens of
thousands requested in unison for him to visit Cui Temple. His Highness went to the temple the
next day at sunrise and while ascending from the eastern corridor, he saw in the courtyard an old
man wearing a blue-black headcloth.
This man said in an exceptionally stern voice, “Wang Yun cannot solicit Your Highness to go
north.”
At that moment, Wang Yun was behind the emperor, and a crowd of people grabbed him and
threw him down. Soon after, he was killed by the commoners.
His Highness ordered, “Arrest those who killed Wang Yun.” [The people thought] this to be an exalted manifestation. [They urged] to not send the bailiff’s horse [and instead] the small red-lacquered sedan was prepared for His Highness to ride. He said, “I and the others all see, how dare I ride [on Lord Cui’s ceremonial sedan?] On this day, if the common folk had not killed Wang Yun, he would have pressed me to go north!”

Your subject respectfully praises:

Section Seven

靖康丙午京城陷金盡取 二聖及天眷在南郊金謂守者云 上領兵河北旦夕即至俾守者聞其言紿寛 二聖之心 顯仁晉以像棋黃羅褁將子書 康王字晨起焚香祝曰若擲子在盤惟 康王子入九宮者 上必得大位擲下果如祝他子皆不入衆皆稱賀亟奏 徽宗大悅且異之臣謹賛曰

宗廟大慶 昙論春陵 三十二子 乾吉允升 克應咨祝 如叶大横 再造王室 萬福是膺

In the bingwu year of the Jingkang period, the capital was destroyed. The Jin captured both emperors [Huizong and Qinzong] and all of their families and were camped in the southern suburbs. The Jin [commanders] said to the guards, “His Highness is leading his troops north of the river, morning and night. He’ll arrive soon.” This led the guards to be fooled by these words and reassured the two emperors.

Xianren once wrapped [a set of] chess pieces in yellow gauze and wrote Prince Kang’s name on one of them. She rose in the early morning, burned some incense, and prayed, “If in casting the pieces onto the board, only Prince Kang’s piece enters the Ninth Palace, then surely he will assume the throne.” She threw down the pieces and indeed as she prayed, none of the other pieces landed [in the Ninth Palace.] Everyone congratulated her and immediately reported this to the emperor. Huizong was both delighted and surprised by this. Your subject respectfully praises:

Section Eight

磁人以王雲欲挾 上北去民乃殺雲廟中 上猶駐磁而敵騎大集至郡東問路傍老婦曰 上在磁否婦紿曰 前日上已過山東敵驚嘆追已不及即退舎臣謹賛曰

上駐滏源 號召忠義 敵知霸府 追以精騎 問媪期實 妇乃左指 軍候不驚 可識天意

309
The people of Cizhou believed Wang Yun wished to intimidate His Highness into traveling north. The commonfolk thus killed Wang Yun in [Cui] Temple. His Highness was still staying in Cizhou when the enemy rode in a large gathering to the east of the prefecture. They asked an old woman on the side of the road, “Is His Highness in Cizhou or not?” The woman deceptively answered, “The day before yesterday, His Highness already passed east of the mountain.” The enemy exclaimed in surprise that it was too late to give chase and just after retreated and gave up. Your subject respectfully praises:

Section Nine

上經鄜州館於州治圃有榭曰飛仙臺 上意密有所卜命箭連中榜上三字無偏無側箭皆在字形中 上悦臣謹賛曰

霸府初建英雄林林
謀畫雑進率罄忠誠
上意有卜三箭葉心
曷求龜筮赫然有臨

His Highness was passing through Yunzhou and his residence was in the government offices. In the garden, there was a pavilion that was called “Terrace of Flying Immortals.” His Highness had the secret intention to use this to foretell his fate. The arrows struck the three words on the placard consecutively. Without slanting or leaning, the arrows were all centered on the words. His Highness was pleased. Your subject respectfully praises:

Section Ten

上駐鄜州晨起出郊騎軍從行馬首忽白兎躍起 上彎弓一發中之將士莫不駭服然兔色之異命中之的二事皆契上瑞臣謹賛曰

維是狡兎色應金方
因時特出意在騰駿
聖人膺運撫定陸梁
一矢殪之遂滅天狼

His Highness was stationed in Cizhou. In the early morning, he woke up and left for the suburbs, and the cavalry followed behind. In front of the horses, suddenly a white rabbit jumped up. His Highness bent his bow and with one shot struck it. Of the officers and soldiers, no one was not astonished or impressed. It is so that the strangeness of the rabbit’s color and the attainment of one’s fate are two events that both agree on the emperor as auspicious. Your subject respectfully praises:

Section Eleven
When His Highness was returning from Cizhou in the north, it was in the depth of winter and bitterly cold. He was crossing the Yellow River at Ligu Ford. His Highness commanded his retinue and horses to cross first, with only the rearguard to follow him. Only Gao Gonghai rode behind him, and His Highness had just reached the shore when the ice cracked and split with a loud sound. He turned around to see that Gao Gonghai’s horse was already trapped in the ice and Gao escaped holding only the horse’s bridle. Your subject respectfully praises:

Section Twelve

When His Highness accepted the orders to become Grand Field Marshal, he was ready to organize the troops and select generals in response to the call for help from the capital. He suddenly dreamed that Emperor Qinzong, as if everything were normal, was in the palace. [Qinzong] removed his robe, giving his tunic to His Highness. His Highness was fearful and startled, and at the moment when he was making an excuse and backing away, he woke up. Your subject respectfully praises:
To Your Majesty, the retired *Guangyao shousheng xiantian tidao* Emperor. Divine, mighty rulers are born with innate knowledge, and the virtues of Heaven become clear in their continuities. [Your Majesty] arose from a sagely birth and received Heaven’s numinous responses, none of which have been seen by prior generations. For instance, the characters in the change of reign period to Jingkang, which again confirms Your Majesty’s auspiciousness, is well known to those within and outside [of the Song]. In Zhongshan, I also received an imperial order from Emperor Huizong that Your Majesty succeed the throne. By declaring all the world’s omens and [heavenly] responses to be auspicious proof, [he] thereby recognized Heaven’s clear judgment.

---

263 Title given in the first month of 1171.

264 “Huizong sent his message through Cao Xun “sometime before reaching Yanjing.” (Ebrey, *Huizong*, 485). The convoy of prisoners passed through Zhongshan 中山, where they encountered a resistant Song prefectural commander, before they reached Yanjing. In the SYJ, there is consistent use of the term 燕山, which is probably indicative of Cao Si’s editorial voice. The *Beishou jianwen lu* (*Record of Experiences in Northern Captivity*) mentions both places. It’s not clear that Cao Xun accompanied the emperor to Yanshan, so the painting text is probably truer to the original timeline. In addition, the name of Yanshan was changed in 1125 to Xijin 析津府, although it looks like Yanshan continued to be used as a place name.


266 Administrative unit Qianzhou 虔州 in the Jiangnan Circuit 江南路.
Indeed, to accept one’s destiny and thus prosper is not something that can be won through planning and action! When I humbly received

The imperial inquiry
[I felt that] through special commands and the issuing of edicts, your subjects everywhere would see that the Mandate of Heaven is virtuous. [They] would persuade the hearts of the people, and in due course subdue all the regions of the country to achieve a lasting peace. Although [the Song] suffered the aggressions of a formidable enemy, once they learned of these miracles, all were in turn astonished and convinced. Your subject Xun carefully gathered various matters related to auspicious responses, ordered them into one scroll, connected them, and wrote summations at the end as an expression of my loyalty and devotion. Compiled by your subject Cao Xun, the Defender-in-Chief, Military Commissioner of Qianzhou and the Capital Security Office.

Songyin ji (preface 1191), juan 29

聖瑞圖贊并序

臣恭惟光堯壽聖憲天體道太上皇帝陛下聖文神武本於生知，天德地業復繇承聖，皆前代所未見。如靖康改元離析，已符上瑞，華夏具悉。

臣又燕山受徽宗帛書詔陛下即大位，顯仁宻得符應皆為瑞驗，所以擁>(()圖登大寶居人上無後艱者，以瑞應昭，昭可攷而知。臣仰䝉，顯仁皇后洎陛下行燕宣諭，並華夏所傳皆駭心動目，感化人心，遂日靖四方。再造王室，彼餘分閑位乃欲震耀一時，爭衡百代為可駭笑。今畧輯瑞應凡十有二，謹稽首頓首繫之以贊少，申臣子之忠誠。太尉昭信軍節度使提舉皇城司曹勛編。^267

^267 The author of this version seemed to have taken more liberties, changing the phrasing to be more casual and perhaps even more with phrases such as “駭心動目.” Huaxia 华夏 and Yanshan 燕山 is another example of parallelism done for the sake of evoking lost, distant northern territories rather than historical accuracy.
Appendix B: A Comparison of Encomiums

Scene 7

Long Museum
靖康丙午京城陷敌盖取二聖及天眷在南郊_envoyed守者云
上領兵河北旦夕即至俾守者聞其言紿寛二聖之心顯仁嘗以像棋黃羅裹將子書
康王字晨起焚香祝曰若擲子在盤惟康王子入九宮者上必得大位擲下果如祝他子皆不
入衆皆稱賀亟奏徽宗大悅且異之臣謹賛曰
宗廟大慶曷論舂陵
三十二子乾吉允升
克應祝如叶大横
再造王室萬福是膺

Songyin ji, Jiaye tang edition (Republic era)
靖康丙午京城陷敵蓋取二聖及天眷在南郊_envoyed守者云
上領兵河北旦夕即至俾守者聞其言紿寛二聖之心顯仁嘗以象棋黃羅裹將子書
康王字晨起焚香祝曰若擲子在盤惟康王子入九宮者上必得大位擲下果如祝他子皆不
入衆皆稱賀亟奏徽宗大悅且異之臣謹賛曰
宗廟大慶曷論舂陵
三十二子乾吉允升
克應祝如叶大横
再造王室萬福是膺

Songyin ji, Siku quanshu edition
靖康丙午京城陷敵蓋取二聖及天眷在南郊_envoyed守者云
上領兵河北旦夕即至俾守者聞其言紿寛二聖之心顯仁嘗以象棋黃羅裹將子書
康王字晨起焚香祝曰若擲子在盤惟康王子入九宮者上必得大位擲下果如祝他子皆不
入衆皆稱賀亟奏徽宗大悅且異之臣謹賛曰
宗廟大慶曷論舂陵
三十二子乾吉允升
克應祝如叶大横
再造王室萬福是膺

Tianjin Museum
靖康丙午京城陷虏盡取 二聖及天眷在南郊虜謂守者云 上領兵河北旦夕即至俾守者聞其言紿寛 二聖之心 顯仁嘗以象棋黃羅裹將子書
康王字晨起焚香祝曰若擲子在盤惟康王子入九宮者  上必得天位擲下果如祝他子皆不入衆皆稱賀亟奏 徽宗大悅且異之臣謹贊曰
宗廟大慶 易論春陵
三十二子 軋吉允升

克應密祝 如叶大横
再告王室 萬福是膺

Sun Feng
靖康丙午京城陷虏盡取 二聖及天眷在南郊虜謂守者云 上領兵河北旦夕即至俾守 者聞其言紿寛 二聖之心 顯仁嘗以象棋黃羅裹將子書
康王字晨起焚香祝曰若擲子在盤惟康王子入九宮者  上必得天位擲下果如祝他子皆不入衆皆稱賀亟奏 徽宗大悅且異之臣謹贊曰
宗廟大慶 易論春陵
三十二子 軋吉允升

允應密祝 如叶大横
再告王室 萬福是膺

Li E, Nan Song yuan hualu, Siku quanshu edition
靖康丙午京城陷虏盡取 二聖及天眷在南郊虜謂守者云 上領兵河北旦夕即至俾守 者聞其言紿寛 二聖之心 顯仁嘗以象棋黃羅裹將子書
康王字晨起焚香祝曰若擲子在盤惟康王子入九宮者  上必得天位擲下果如祝他子皆不入衆皆稱賀亟奏 徽宗大悅且異之臣謹贊曰
宗廟大慶 易論春陵
三十二子 軋吉允升

克應密祝 如叶大横
再告王宗 萬福是膺

Scene 9

Long Museum
上經鄞州館於州治園有榭曰飛仙臺 上意密有所卜命箭連中牓上三字無偏無側皆在字形中
上悅臣謹贊曰

霸府初建 英雄林林 謀畫難進 率罄忠誠 上意有卜 三箭葉心
曷求龜筮 赫然有臨

Songyin ji, Jiaye tang edition (Republic era)
上經鄆州館於州治圃有榭曰飛仙臺 上意密有所卜命箭連中榜上三字無偏無側皆在字形中
上悅臣謹賛曰
霸府初建 英雄林林
謀畫雜進 率罄忠忱
上意有卜 三箭叶心
曷求龜筮 赫然有臨

Songyin ji, Siku quanshu edition
上經鄆州館於州治圃有榭曰飛仙臺 上意密有所卜命箭連中榜上三字無偏無側皆在字形中
上悅臣謹賛曰
霸府初建 英雄林林
謀畫雜進 率罄忠忱
上意有卜 三箭叶心
曷求龜筮 赫然有臨

Tianjin Museum
上經鄆州館於州治圃有榭曰飛仙臺 上意密有所卜命箭連中榜上三字無偏無側皆在字形中
上悅臣謹賛曰
霸府初建 英雄林林
謀畫雜進 率罄忠忱
上意有卜 三箭叶心
曷求龜筮 赫然有臨

Sun Feng - missing

Li E, Nan Song yuan hualu, Siku quanshu edition
上經鄆州館於州治圃有榭曰飛仙臺 上意密有所卜命箭連中榜上三字無偏無側皆在字形中
上悅臣謹賛曰
霸府初建 英雄林林
謀畫雜進 率罄忠誠
上意有卜 三箭叶心
曷求龜筮 赫然有臨
Scene 12

Long Museum

上受命為大元帥方治兵選將應援京城忽夢  欽宗如尋常在禁中脫袍以衣  上

上恐懼辭避之際遂寤臣謹賛曰

靖康之初  上為愛弟
連將使指  敵畏英睿
解袍見夢  授受莫避
天命有德  中興萬世

Songyin ji, Jiaye tang edition (Republic era)

上受命為大元帥方治兵選將應援京城忽夢  欽宗如尋常在禁中脫袍以衣  上

上恐懼辭避之際遂寤臣謹賛曰

靖康之初  上為愛弟
連將使指  敵畏英睿
解袍見夢  授受莫避
天命有德  中興萬世

Songyin ji, Siku quanshu edition

上受命為大元帥方治兵選將應援京城忽夢  欽宗如尋常在禁中脫袍以衣  上

上恐懼辭避之際遂寤臣謹賛曰

靖康之初  上為愛弟
連將使指  敵畏英睿
解袍見夢  授受莫避
天命有德  中興萬世

Tianjin Museum

上受命為大元帥方治兵選將應援京城忽夢  欽宗如尋常在禁中脫袍以衣

上恐懼辞避之際遂寤臣謹賛曰

靖康之初  上為愛弟
連將使指  敵畏英睿
解袍見夢  授受莫避
天命有德  中興萬世

Sun Feng

上受命為大元帥方治兵選將應援京城忽夢  欽宗如尋常在禁中脫袍以衣

上恐懼辞避之際遂寤臣謹賛曰

靖康之初  上為愛弟
連將使指  敵畏英睿
解袍見夢  授受莫避
天命有德  中興萬世
上受命為大元帥[ ]治兵選將應援京師忽夢 欽宗如尋常在禁中脫袍以衣 上恐懼辭避之際遂寤臣謹賛曰
靖康之初 上為愛弟
選將使指 人畏英睿
解袍見夢 授受莫避
天命有德 中興萬世

Section 5

Long Museum
顯仁皇后嘗宣諭曰靖康初遣親王使敵所未受命 上慨然請行 欽宗甚悅啟行日
顯仁 懮節送至殿事小女奴招兒指曰有四人甚長大或執槍戟或持弓劔從王馬後衆不見也
顯仁日吾事四聖甚謹必獲保祐臣謹賛曰
帝王有真 毕彰殊應
天心既卜 護以上聖
凡目莫覩 母后黙敬
至磁無行 不墮彼境

Songyin ji, Jiaye tang edition (Republic era)
顯仁皇后嘗宣諭曰靖康初遣親王使敵所未受命 上慨然請行 欽宗甚悅啟行日
顯仁 懮節送至殿事小女奴招兒指曰有四人甚長大或執槍戟或持弓劔從王馬後衆不見也
顯仁曰吾事四聖甚謹必獲保佑臣謹賛曰
帝王有真 毕彰殊應
天心既卜 護以上聖
凡目莫覩 母后黙敬
至磁無行 不墮彼境

Songyin ji, Siku quanshu edition
顯仁皇后嘗宣諭曰靖康初遣親王使敵所未受命 上慨然請行 欽宗甚悅啟行日
顯仁 懮節送至殿事小女奴招兒指曰有四人甚長大或執槍戟或持弓劔從王馬後衆不見也
顯仁日吾事四聖甚謹必獲保佑臣謹賛曰
帝王有真 毕彰殊應
天心既卜 護以上聖
凡目莫覩 母后黙敬
至磁無行 不墮彼境

Xie Zhiliu
顯仁皇后嘗宣諭日靖康初遣親王使虜所擇或未受命 上慨然請行 欽宗甚悅啟行日
顯仁 懿節送至廳事小女奴招兒指曰有四人甚長大或執槍戟或持刀劔從王馬後衆不見也
顯仁日吾事四聖甚謹必獲保祐臣謹賛曰
帝王有真 毕彰殊應
天心既卜 護以上聖
凡目莫覩 母后黙敬
至磁無行 不墮虜境

Sun Feng
顯仁皇后嘗宣諭日靖康初遣親王使敵所擇或未受命 上慨然請行 欽宗甚悅啟行日
顯仁 懿節送至廳小女奴招兒指曰有四人甚長大或執槍戟或持刀劔從王馬後衆不見也
顯仁日吾事四聖甚謹必獲保祐臣謹賛曰
帝王有真 毕彰殊應
天心既卜 護以上聖
凡目莫覩 母后黙敬
至磁無行 不墮虜境

Li E, Nan Song yuan hualu, Siku quanshu edition
顯仁皇后嘗宣諭日靖康初遣親王使敵所擇或未受命 上慨然請行 欽宗甚悅啟行日
顯仁 懿節送至廳小女奴招兒指曰有四人甚長大或執槍戟或持刀劔從王馬後衆不見也
顯仁日吾事四聖甚謹必獲保祐臣謹賛曰
帝王有真 毕彰殊應
天心既卜 護以上聖
凡目莫覩 母后黙敬
至磁無行 不墮虜境

Sun Feng text in full:

《宋高宗瑞應圖》曹勛贊，李嵩畫
上未出閣 顯仁撫愛每賜所食之物一夕夢神人告
顯仁日爾後勿以殘物食 上戒之甚至
顯仁驚寤即日嚴誨諸 巡凡進 上之食必取於庖廚不得以殘物臣謹贛曰
開光奕奕 神化拱極 力誨殘餘勿繼玉食
母后益悟 天真降跡 固知至尊 萬靈受職 [Section 2]

上駐鄆州晨起出郊騎軍從行馬前忽白兔躍起 上弯弓一發中 賈士莫不駭服然兔色之異
箭中之的二 事皆契 上瑞臣謹贛曰
維是狡兔 色應金方 因時特出 意在騰駿
上受命為大元帥方治兵選將應援京城忽夢
欽宗如尋常在禁中脫袍以衣，上恐懼辭避之際遂寤臣謹贊曰
靖康初，為愛弟連將使指虜畏英睿
顯袍見夢，授受莫避，天命有德，中興萬世 [Section 12]

顯仁皇后嘗宣諭曰靖康初遭親王事虜所搆或未受命，上慨然請行，欽宗甚悅。行日
顯仁懿節送至幸小女奴指日有四人甚長大或執槍或持刀劍扮王馬後，衆不見也
顯仁日吾事四聖甚謹必獲保祐，臣謹贊曰
帝王有德，史彰殊應，天心既卜，護以上聖。
凡目莫覩，母后默敬，至德無行，不墮虜境。[Section 5]

上自磁州北回時窮冬沍寒，李固渡過大河。上令扈從馬先過獨殿其後惟高公海一騎從行，上纔及岸水作大聲拆裂，回視公海馬已陷水。

中公海惟持馬籠頭免臣謹贊曰。
胡塵濛天，朔方已隔，冰河千里，與雪同色。
御駕登岸，水遽觧拆，呼沱曷聖，惟德光宅。[Section 11]

上自奉命討虜征行之暇，以二囊各貯斛米，二臂舉之行數百步，人皆駭服，以至夷虜聞之莫不畏仰。臣謹贊曰。

顯仁皇后在中，則徽宗問康邱祥異奏曰。勑誕育有金光粲然，耀室中並從行，似非他兒比。異日果得位，臣謹贊曰。

顯仁皇后在中。徽宗問康邱祥異奏曰。勑誕育有金光粲然，耀室中並從行，似非他兒比。異日果得位，臣謹贊曰。

顯仁皇后在中。徽宗問康邱祥異奏曰。勑誕育有金光粲然，耀室中並從行，似非他兒比。異日果得位，臣謹贊曰。