Xuanhe Catalogue of Paintings

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When “the [Yellow] River issued the diagram, and the Luo [River] issued the writing,”¹ the tortoise and dragon delineations first made their appearance. The use of insect- and bird-[script characters] by later generations [indicates that] the general forms of the tortoise and dragon [delineations] were not yet lost.² By the time of Yu, they displayed the five colors and made depictions of tigers and monkeys [on official clothing], and due to this making of images, [painting and writing] were gradually separated. According to the Zhou Official System, the Sons of State were taught the six [kinds of] characters. The third of these was called “pictographic,” and here the so-called identity of calligraphy and

¹. Quoting from Yijing, Xici shang, in Shisan jing, 2 v. (Beijing: Beijing Yanshan, 1991), 1:80. Han-dynasty commentators such as Kong Anguo (ca. 156–ca. 74 BCE) and Liu Xin explain that in the time of the legendary culture-hero Fuxi, a dragon-horse emerged from the Yellow River and on its back the hair was swirled into the constellations, which was called the Dragon Diagram. From this, Fuxi drew the Eight Trigrams and invented milfoil divination. When Yu (ca. 2070 BCE) of Xia was channeling the waters of the land, a divine tortoise emerged from the Luo River and on its back were patterns of cracks. These patterns were like characters, so from them Yu made the “Nine Divisions.” See “Shangshu zhengyi,” in Ruan Yuan (1764–1849), ed., Shisan jing zhushu, 2 v. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), 12.75; 18.125; and Ban Gu (32–92), Han shu, annotated by Yan Shigu (581–645) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 27.1315.

². These scripts arose in the Spring and Autumn Period (770–476 BCE) and continued to be used into the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE). See Ma Guoqian, “Niaochongshu lungao,” Guwenzi yanjiu 10 (1983):139–176.
painting was still preserved.\(^3\) Thereafter, however, in order to recognize hill-spirits and to [let the people] know [the distinctions between] the helping and the harming spirits, they were engraved onto [bronze] bells and tripods;\(^4\) in order to clarify the rites and music and to display the laws and regulations, [imagery] was held aloft on banners and flags. The esteem for painting and drawing began with this. Hence, although painting is merely a skill, the ancient sages were never indifferent to it. From the Three Dynasties on, its ability to extol worthy service and to record [discrepancies between] reputation and reality was considered the way to complete the insufficiency of [words written] on bamboo and silk to describe great virtue.\(^5\) Thus the [portraits] in the Cloud Terrace and the Unicorn Pavilion were made, so that those of later times who looked at them were able to imagine these people.\(^6\) The purpose of

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4. This information is ultimately derived from Zuozhuan, although it only speaks of images cast into ding. Using the translation in K.C. Chang, Art, Myth, and Ritual: The Path to Political Authority in Ancient China (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 64.

5. The Three Dynasties refers to Xia (2070–1600 BCE), Shang (1600–1046 BCE), and Zhou (1046–256 BCE). Dates given here are those established by the Chinese government’s Three Dynasties Project.

6. For a thorough discussion of the Unicorn Hall (Qilin ge) and the Cloud Terrace (Yuntai), see Anthony J. Barbieri-Low, Artisans in Early Imperial China (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2007), 156–160. In the Weiyang Palace of Emperor Xuan of the Han (r. 74–49 BCE) was the Unicorn Pavilion, commis-
paintings is this: good people are [depicted] to show [their virtue] to their contemporaries and bad people to serve as a warning to those who come later. How could anyone take the variegations of the five colors merely as a worldly amusement? Now when the Son of Heaven has no business in the palace or imperial temple, when he continues the inheritance from the sages of successive dynasties whose enduring merit through the generations has brought the empire peace, when the watchman’s rattle is silent at Yuguan, and when there is no smoke of beacon-fires on the border, then he may concentrate on pictures and books,


8. As all commentators on Xuanhe huapu note, up to this point, the Preface is much indebted to Zhang Yanyuan’s “On the Origins of Painting,” the title of the first section of his Lidai minghua ji. For a translation, see Acker, Some T’ang and Pre-T’ang Texts, 1:61–80. See also Lidai minghua ji quanyi (hereafter LDMHJQY), annotated and translated into modern Chinese by Cheng Zai (Guiyang: Guizhou renmin chubanshe, 2009), 1–12.

9. In the opinion of Yue Ren and others, the use of the terminology “Son of Heaven” (Tianzi 天子) in this Preface indicates that it was not composed by Emperor Huizong. In Yue’s view, the emperor would have normally used the terms zhen 聿, the royal “We,” or guaren 貞人, “The Unworthy.” See Yue Ren, trans., Xuanhe huapu (Changsha: Hunan meishu chubanshe, 1999), 4n15. This section of the Preface appears indebted to Guo Ruoxu’s description of the involvement of Emperor Taizong in the arts, made possible by the peace secured by the Song and only as “fruitful relaxation from his myriad cares.” See Alexander Soper, trans., Kuo Jo-Hsiū’s Experiences in Painting (T’u-hua chien-wên chih): An Eleventh Century History of Chinese Painting Together with the Chinese Text in Facsimile (Washington, D.C.: American Council of Learned Societies, 1951), 6.

10. Yuguan, or Yumen guan, was the westernmost pass on the Chinese border with Central Asia. The lack of need for a watchman means peace on the western frontier.
with the hope that by seeing the good, he will take it as a warning against evil, while seeing the evil will make him think on the virtuous, as well as making him better acquainted with the names of many insects, fishes, grasses, and trees.\textsuperscript{11} Things that cannot be fully described in writing or whose appearance cannot be widely known can be seen completely in [pictures]. There is no lack of other people in addition to those recorded in this Catalogue, but their personalities and styles are common and coarse. Those not worthy of mention these days have been eliminated, and only those who will encourage those to come have been included. Therefore, what is compiled here from the holdings of the palace repository, by 231 famous painters from the Wei-Jin period onward, totals 6,396 scrolls, divided into ten categories and given critical rankings in chronological order.\textsuperscript{12} In the gengzi year of the Proclaiming Harmony era, on the day of the summer solstice.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{11} This is a paraphrase of the line in Lunyu, ch. 17 (Yang Huo), no. 8: “The Master said, ‘Young men, why do you not learn the Book of Songs? Songs can be of help to you in using metaphors, observing things, becoming gregarious, employing satire, serving your father nearby, serving your sovereign afar, and making you better acquainted with the names of birds, beasts, grasses and trees.” Adapted from The Analects of Confucius [Lun Yu]: A Literal Translation with an Introduction and Notes, Chichung Huang (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 168.

\textsuperscript{12} The artists in this catalogue are listed in roughly chronological order, with some exceptions, but there is no system of critical ranking employed.

\textsuperscript{13} This date would be around June 20–21, 1120. The spurious addition of “Proclaiming Harmony Hall, imperially composed” to the end of the Preface first appears in the edition reprinted in the compendium Jindai mishu, published in 1630 by the book collector Mao Jin (1599–1659). Since Proclaiming Harmony Hall was renamed Preserving Harmony Hall in 1119, this is patently anachronistic. See Xie Wei, Zhongguo huaxue zhuzuo kaolu (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 1998), 164.