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Unidentified artist or artists, *The Night Banquet of Han Xizai* (韓熙載夜宴圖), Northern Song dynasty. Handscroll, ink and colors on silk, 28.7 × 335.5 cm. Palace Museum, Beijing.



Tangwu scene from a tomb at Yingguancun in Mangshan zhen, Five Dynasties.



The Night Banquet of Han Xizai, section 4, detail.

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The Night Banquet of Han Xizai Revisited: Levels of Site / 場

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Abstract: This study of *The Night Banquet of Han Xizai* reconsiders its date, place of production, and authorship; analyzes the residential space depicted in the painting in relation to mortuary depictions of afterlife residences; discusses the textual record of the theme and the painting's relationship to anecdotal literature of the early Northern Song period; and proposes a new interpretation of the painting's visual strategies and purpose.

Keywords: Han Xizai, *Han Xizai yeyan tu*, Northern Song painting

Today, *The Night Banquet of Han Xizai* (韓熙載夜宴圖, Palace Museum, Beijing) is one of the most famous of all Chinese paintings, endlessly reproduced and discussed **(Fig. 1)**. In the scholarly world, it is the rare painting that has been the subject of its own monographs in English and in Chinese; [1] the present study is just the latest of many articles that have been written about the painting. Although the painting's vivid depiction of transgressive behavior certainly strikes a chord with our contemporary culture, the enduring fascination the work inspires owes just as much to the ambiguities of its disjunctive structure and attentional cues, which inspire questions about the narrative and scenic coherence of what we see and which parts of a residence are depicted. To what degree these ambiguities are due to modern lack of knowledge of the representational conventions in play and to what degree they were part of the artist's or artists' purpose, is one larger question that this study seeks to answer.

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1. De-nin D. Lee, *The Night Banquet: A Chinese Scroll through Time* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010); Zhang Pengchuan 張朋川, *"Han Xizai yeyan tu" tuxiang yanjiu* 《韓熙載夜宴圖》圖像研究 (An Iconographic Study of *The Night Banquet of Han Xizai*) (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe 北京大學出版社 [Peking University Press], 2016). See also an earlier short book by Michael Sullivan, *The Night Entertainments of Han Xizai* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008).

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Other kinds of question surround the painting as well. Is the work an original or a copy? If original, then, given that the earliest documentation on the surviving painting is a seal of the early-thirteenth century statesman, Shi Miyuan 史彌遠 (1164–1233), when was it painted? Was it under the Southern Tang, Northern Song, or Southern Song? Was it painted by one man or a team of painters? Was it commissioned by the last Southern Tang ruler, Li Yu 李煜 (ca. 937–978), as a warning to Han Xizai (902–970), or by the Song founder Taizu (Zhao Kuangyin 趙匡胤, 927–976) as political disinformation, or by a later Northern Song emperor as a way of retrospectively impugning Han Xizai and the Southern Tang regime? What is its relationship to the anecdotes found in Song private historical writing (*yeshi* 野史) about Southern Tang? These questions, too, are addressed in what follows.

As a way of connecting these diverse considerations analytically, my discussion will draw on the concept of site, in the sense of *chang* 場. Unlike art history's usual go-to concept of space as defined against time, site is both spatial and temporal: a site takes form through the events associated with it. The subject of *Night Banquet* is an architectural site that hosts a range of social activities. The painting itself is a site of encounter and collaboration between the pictorial image and the beholder, in which a rhetorical performance of transgressive behavior presents Han Xizai in a bad light while also encouraging the beholder to take pleasure in what is shown. On a more tangible level, the demarcated silk surface is the physical site of the inventive pictorial craft of brush, ink, and color that generated the pictorial images of which the painting is comprised. As we shall see, these various interlinked dimensions of site are all conditioned by a much more prosaic consideration: the painting's historical site of production.

I. The Fictional Architectural Site

A. Scenic Logic

Night Banquet purports to depict the residence of Han Xizai in the Southern Tang capital of Zhongling (modern Nanjing). The painting constructs the residence pictorially as the site of a series of fictional social activities and situations. Omitting walls, doors, windows, columns, and ceilings entirely, it leaves the architectural setting implicit. Modern scholars have generally approached the *Night Banquet* without addressing the architectural setting in any systematic way, contenting themselves with an experience of architecturally disembodied passage through a fictional residential environment. That approach treats what we see as analogous to a cinematic "long take," whereas a more appropriate cinematic analogy would

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be montage, which creates continuity across disjunctions.[2] To understand the montage logic of the composition, we may do better to start by trying to determine what kind of architectural layout the artists wished to depict.[3]

Han Xizai's real-life residence was located in a busy area of the southern part of Zhongling, in an area corresponding to the southern section of present-day Mingyang Street in the Qinhuai area of Nanjing.[4] His epitaph identifies the residence as a *guanshi* 官室, or government-issued mansion. For multiple reasons discussed below, the painters are unlikely to have had direct experience of Han Xizai's real-life residence. Their task as regards the implied architectural setting was simply to evoke a fictional residential environment recognizable as that of a *guanshi* or *guanzhai* 官宅 "official's mansion," which was subject to sumptuary constraints but also benefited from sumptuary privileges. Fortunately, modern scholars have been able to reconstruct the basic templates of such mansions under both the Tang and Northern Song dynasties.[5] Bringing their research to bear on *Night Banquet*, one

2. Others have also noticed the montage-like structure of the composition. See, for example, Gao Yuan 高源, "Qiantan *Han Xizai yeyan tu* zhong *mengtaiqi* siwei moshi de yunyong 淺談《韓熙載夜宴圖》中「蒙太奇」思維模式的運用 (A Brief Discussion of the 'Montage' Conceptual Approach in *The Night Banquet of Han Xizai*)," *Yishu pingjian* 藝術評鑑 (Art Evaluation), no. 6 (2018), pp. 18–20.
3. Two attempts have been made recently to reconstruct the architectural layout depicted in *Night Banquet*, with conclusions that differ from those reached here. See Jin Mingyu 靳銘宇, Wang Bingqi 王柄棋, and Ding Yanan 丁亞楠, "Ji yu jianzhu xingzhi suyuan de *Han Xizai yeyan tu* kongjian yanjiu 基於建築形制溯源的《韓熙載夜宴圖》空間研究 (A Study of *The Night Banquet of Han Xizai* on the Basis of a Reconstruction of Its Architectural Setting)," *Meishu xuebao* 美術學報 (Art Journal), no. 2 (2021), pp. 31–36; and Wu Dongyu 吳東宇, "Chongfan ye'an xianchang—*Han Xizai yeyan tu* de kongjian chongjian yu tuxu chongzu 重返夜宴現場——《韓熙載夜宴圖》的空間重建與圖序重組 (Returning to the Night Banquet Venue -- Spatial Reconstruction and Reorganization of Pictorial Sequence in *Han Xizai's Night Banquet*)," *Nanjing yishuxueyuan xuebao (meishu yu sheji ban)* 南京藝術學院學報（美術與設計版） (Journal of Nanjing University of the Arts [Fine Arts & Design]), no. 1 (2025), pp. 79–87+210. I am grateful to an anonymous manuscript reviewer for bringing these two articles to my attention.
4. See Zhao Yuanzhi 趙元植, "Han Xizai jiuju xiaokao 韓熙載舊居小考 (A Brief Study of Han Xizai's Former Residence)," *Jiangsu difangzhi* 江蘇地方志 (Jiangsu Local Chronicles), no. 4 (2015), pp. 70–73.
5. The following account is based on: Zhang Jian 張建, "Bei Song dongjing siyuan yu guanzhai—*Qingming shanghe tu* jianzhu er ti 北宋東京寺院與官宅—《清明上河圖》建築二題 (Temples and Official Mansions in Northern Song Dongjing—Two Architectural Topics Concerning *Qingming shanghe tu*)," *Tongji daxue xuebao (shehui kexue ban)* 同濟大學學報（社會科學版） (Journal of Tongji University [Social Science Edition]), vol. 17, no. 3 (2006), pp. 38–45; and, especially, Wang Hui 王暉 and Ye Jiacheng 葉佳成, "Bei Song zhuzhai zhong de zhongtang, tingshi he yingtang: ji yu Sima Guang *Shu yi* de kaocha 北宋住宅中的中堂、廳事和影堂：基於司馬光《書儀》的考察 (Zhongtang, Tingshi and Yingtang in Residences of the Northern Song Dynasty: A Study Based on Sima Guang's *Shu yi*)," *Jianzhu shi* 建築師 (The Architect), no. 1 (2022), pp. 68–74.

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discovers that the architectural implications of the scenes are much more specific than one might otherwise realize.

Under the Tang, most such mansions had a single courtyard precinct, but the most important officials had mansions similar to administrative yamens or the mansions of aristocrats, which combined outer and inner courtyard precincts. This more elaborate model then became standard for *guanzhai* mansions under the Northern Song **(Fig. 2)**. Both in real life and in the tenth-eleventh century imagination, the high status of Han Xizai meant that his mansion followed a two-courtyard-precinct model. Such a *guanzhai* mansion was an axially arranged architectural compound split into front and rear sections, oriented symbolic south to symbolic north; the front section was public-facing, while the rear section was the living space of the official and his family members. Mansions could be more or less elaborate, but the "spine" of the mansion had certain unalterable components. The front gate was large enough to include a room; the availability of such a room meant that its opening onto the street was not necessarily on the main axis of the mansion (**Fig. 3**, compound on the left), contrary to its opening onto the first courtyard. That outer courtyard precinct was dominated by a five-bay Reception Hall (*tingsha* 廳事). Behind the Reception Hall was a second, inner courtyard precinct dominated by a second five-bay building; this hall was called the Inner Hall (*zhongtang* 中堂 or *zhengqin* 正寢). Finally, on the (symbolic) north side of the inner courtyard behind the *zhongtang* was a building, the *xiashi* 下室, that could serve as a bedroom or be used for family rituals; the east and west sides of the courtyard also had buildings used for family living. The Reception Hall could potentially be joined to the Inner Hall, or the Inner Hall to the *xiashi*, or both, using a covered gallery. Outer and inner courtyard precincts could also potentially be separated by a wall with a central gate behind the Reception Hall. In the course of the eleventh century, there was an increasing tendency to treat the outer courtyard and Reception Hall as a male, public-facing space, with female activities confined to the inner courtyard precinct and the Inner Hall.

Equally important for understanding *Night Banquet* is the interior layout of the Inner Hall **(Fig. 4)**. From Tang to Song, a central square space 3 bays by 3 (*tangwu* 堂屋 or *zhengwu* 正屋) was surrounded by closed-off spaces on the (symbolic) east, west, and north sides. The most important of these was the 1- by 5-bay space in the rear part of the building, which variously comprised two or three rooms, and usually served either as marriage quarters or as the bedroom of the male official. The male official was thus the central figure in the inner courtyard precinct as much as the outer courtyard precinct, despite the former's otherwise female-dominated character.

Because the opening scene of *Night Banquet* **(Fig. 6)** depicts the interior of a building that includes a bedroom space, the building in question is recognizably an Inner Hall;

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bedroom spaces were not a feature of Reception Halls. The painting thus immediately locates us within the inner courtyard precinct of the mansion. The fixed-frame screen in front of which a young woman is playing the pipa indicates that the entrance to the hall is on the left, behind the screen, its position corresponding to symbolic south. An effort of pictorial engineering has redistributed the main elements of the depicted scene to suit the demands of the two-dimensional handscroll format. Despite the diverging angles, the couch on which the host sits together with an honored guest, the red-robed young man, should be understood as parallel to both the screen and the small table of a guest sitting opposite the host and his friend. The two remaining guests seated on chairs, one seen from the back, the other facing us, should be understood in turn as facing each other across the north-south axis of the Inner Hall. All these events take place in the central square *tangwu* space of the hall. The bed to the right of the couch, however, belongs to a rear architectural space separated from the *tangwu* by an undepicted wall; following the architectural convention described above, that space can be identified as the private apartment of Han Xizai himself.

A second architectural supplement to the banquet scene is visible in the top left of the scene, at the back, between two screens, where a glimpse of two tall drums indicates the courtyard that in real life might well have been visible if the south-wall doors to the *tangwu* were standing open. Archaeological evidence confirms that drums of this kind pictorially signify a courtyard. Such tall drums appear in several depictions of musical performances in tenth-century north-Chinese tombs **(Fig. 5)**. In mortuary representation, these performances are always associated with private courtyard spaces, identifiable as such either because they are seen through curtains from the coffin chamber (the most private residential space), or by their location on corridor walls just outside the coffin chamber.[6]

In the next section of the composition **(Fig. 7)**, the courtyard then becomes visible from a different angle as the setting for a performance of music and dance, with the host as drummer. The real-life relation between the right- and left-hand halves of this scene again requires

6. In the 924 tomb of Wang Chuzhi, the depictions are located in a sealed rear room corresponding to the inner quarters. Hsueh-man Shen has suggested that the painted curtains framing the stone-carved depiction indicate that the performance is to be understood as taking place in a private courtyard ("Tombs at the Crossroads of the Worlds of the Living and the Dead," in Katherine Tsiang and Wu Hung eds., *10th-Century China and Beyond: Art and Visual Culture in a Multi-centered Age* (Chicago: The Center for the Art of East Asia, University of Chicago, 2012), pp. 150–178. In the 943 mausoleum of Li Maozhen and the 958 tomb of Feng Hui, the performances are depicted on the walls of the corridor immediately outside the coffin chamber, and again should be understood as taking place in a private courtyard, updating a Tang convention for such corridors discussed in Jonathan Hay, "Seeing through Dead Eyes: How Early Tang Tombs Constructed the Afterlife," *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, 57/58 (2010), pp. 16–34.

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some reverse-engineering, which reveals that in this scene we are looking at the courtyard from the east. On the right, the host is flanked by retainers to his right and left, and given the proximity to the fixed-frame screen is probably to be understood as standing in front of the Inner Hall door facing (symbolic) south. He is accompanied by his young red-robed friend, whose chair is oriented in the same direction as the drum. A Buddhist monk fixes his eyes on the young man, who is watching a girl dance. The dancer has two accompanists, one a male retainer using clappers and the other a girl clapping and singing; the dancer is on the same axis indicated by the drum's orientation. It has been pointed out that the type of dancing that is depicted would normally require *pipa* rather than large-drum accompaniment, suggesting that this may be a moment of spontaneous improvisation after the *pipa* player's departure; in that case, the scene could be understood to extend to include a *pipa* player moving to the left, who otherwise seems to belong to the subsequent scene.[7] Alternatively, one might infer a deliberate confusion of genres meant to underscore the implied disorder of Han's household.

The subsequent section moves us back out of the courtyard into the interior of a building **(Fig. 8)**. As in the banquet scene, we are actually seeing two architectural spaces. In the foreground, the large couch denotes the main space of the building which extends to the right and includes the candlestick and the two approaching figures: the aforementioned *pipa* player and a girl carrying a tray. Both the couch and the bed are on the same axis, oriented toward an invisible door. The absence of a large fixed-frame screen, however, suggests that in this section of the handscroll we are looking at a private apartment: Han Xizai's apartment in the rear of the Inner Hall, which we have already seen from a different angle at the opening of the scroll. The bedroom behind the foreground scene is another room within this private apartment, which again should be understood to be separated by an undepicted wall.

Although at first sight the following section appears to depict an interior space, the absence of couches, beds, tables or candlesticks is one of several reasons to think that we may actually be looking at another inner courtyard scene **(Fig. 9)**. The fixed-frame screen on the left is most easily understood as the same one as in the opening scene, now seen from the other side. As can be seen in the detail from *Qingming shanghe tu* in Fig. 3, such screens were positioned to leave enough room for a person to sit in front of the screen facing the courtyard. The musical performance also suggests a courtyard location, as do the host's lecture-throne-like seat and his summer clothing, the warm weather further indicated by the two fans. The diverging orientations of the various protagonists are less confusing here: the host can be

7. Ding Tongjun 丁同俊, "*Han Xizai yeyan tu* yueqi kaoshi 《韓熙載夜宴圖》樂器考釋 (An Examination of the Musical Instruments in *Han Xizai yeyan tu*)," *Jiaoxiang—Xi'an yinyue xueyuan xuebao* 西安音樂學院學報 (Journal of Xi'an Conservatory of Music)," vol. 39, no. 3 (2020), pp. 24–31.

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understood as seated in the courtyard on the main axis, facing north toward the man keeping time with clappers (and thus the Inner Hall), with the undepicted rear door of the Reception Hall directly behind him. In this scene we see the inner courtyard from the west. The female musicians are seated in a line parallel to the axis. The privileged location of the man with the clappers, plus the presence of a subordinate standing at his side, indicate that he is a guest rather than a professional musician.

In theory, nothing actually depicted in the final section **(Fig. 10)** prevents the scene from being set in an interior, in which case it could signify either a building around the perimeter of the inner courtyard that the host has entered, or the *tangwu* space of the Inner Hall that he has re-entered, following an episode of drumming. But what is *not* depicted may be equally significant. Once again, there are no couches, beds, tables or candlesticks. Taking this together with the facts that the host is still wearing his drumming clothes and carrying his drumsticks, that the chair is at first sight (but not actually) identical to the one on which the host's red-robed friend was sitting earlier, now turned to face the other way and with a different occupant, and that the scene ends with a motif signifying displacement, there is more reason to think that the scene depicts another part of the inner courtyard.

In sum, I am suggesting that historical viewers familiar with *guanzhai* mansions are likely to have experienced the painting's depiction of architectural space very differently from the way that modern viewers have generally understood it. The five scenes of *Night Banquet* may depict only a very small part of a *guanzhai* mansion: the inner courtyard, the *tangwu* space of the Inner Hall, the private apartment in the rear of the Inner Hall, and potentially another building facing into the inner courtyard precinct. It is worth noting that this condensation of residential space was possible because the scenes are "stitched" together in montage fashion to imply a perceptual continuity that masks the composition's cognitive discontinuities. This depictive procedure of perceptual stitching had emerged at the end of the Tang dynasty as a reaction against the prior additive compositional approach.[8] It opened the way for the later procedure (first seen in the mid-tenth century) of a true perceptual continuum presupposing cognitive continuity at the epistemological level.[9] Perceptual stitching had a

8. See, for example, in the figure painting genre, *Court Ladies Wearing Flowers in Their Hair* 簪花仕女圖(Liaoning Provincial Museum), *Playing Weiqi in Front of a Double Screen* 重屏會棋圖 (Palace Museum, Beijing), or Wei Xian's *Lofty Scholar* 高士圖 (Palace Museum, Beijing); and in the landscape genre, Jing Hao's *Travelers in Snow-Covered Mountains* 雪景山水圖 (Nelson-Atkins Museum), *Autumn Mountains at Dusk* 秋山晚翠圖 (National Museum), or *Landscape with Weiqi Players* 山水圖 (Liaoning Provincial Museum, excavated from a Liao tomb at Yemaotai).
9. Among the earliest extant compositions featuring a perceptual continuum may be Dong Yuan's *Awaiting the Ferry* 夏景山口待渡圖 (Liaoning Provincial Museum) and Li Cheng's *Reading the Stele* 讀碑圖 (Osaka City Museum of Fine Arts), the latter known through a facsimile copy.

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long afterlife, however, and was still being occasionally employed even as late as the late eleventh century.[10]

B. A Comparison: The Afterlife *Guanzhai* Mansion

To provide a larger context for *Night Banquet*'s articulation of an architectural site, it is worth setting the painting against a second way of representing the *guanzhai* mansion: a tomb's afterlife home for the soul of the deceased. Tenth-century afterlife residences in general incorporate representational templates that imply real-life architectural layouts.[11] A sub-group is composed of underground architectural depictions of freestanding *guanzhai* mansions, of which a number dating from the Late Tang, Five Dynasties, and early Northern Song period have been excavated in the Luoyang area and beyond **(Fig. 11)**.[12] The coffin chambers of

10. See, for example, Zhang Xian's 1078 handscroll, *Ten Poems* 十詠圖 (Palace Museum, Beijing).
11. See Zheng Yimo 鄭以墨, "Wudai muzang meishu yanjiu 五代墓葬美術研究 (Studies on Five Dynasties Tomb Art)," (PhD diss., Zhongyang meishu xueyuan 中央美術學院 [Central Academy of Fine Arts], 2009); Chen Zhanglong 陳章龍, "Beifang Song mu zhuangshi yanjiu 北方宋墓裝飾研究 (Research on Northern Tomb Decoration under the Song Dynasty)," (PhD diss., Jilin Daxue 吉林大學 [Jilin University], 2010); Huang Jianbo 黃劍波, "Wudai shiguo bihua yanjiu—yi mushi bihua wei guancha zhongxin 五代十國壁畫研究——以墓室壁畫為觀察中心 (A Study of Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms Murals)," (PhD diss., Shanghai daxue 上海大學 [Shanghai University], 2015); Zhang Jingyi 張靜怡, "Luoyang xinchutu Tangmo Wudai bihuamu de yishu tese yanjiu 洛陽新出土唐末五代壁畫墓的藝術特色研究 (The Artistic Characteristics of Newly Excavated Mural Tombs of the Late Tang and Five Dynasties Period in Luoyang)," (M.A. thesis, Zhengzhou Daxue 鄭州大學 [Zhengzhou University], 2016); Sun Fengchen 孫豐琛, "Lizhi xiayi yu xisu shangxing: Bei Song muzang xingzhi suojian li su wenti yanjiu 禮制下移與習俗上行：北宋墓葬形制所見禮俗問題研究 (There is Vulgarity in Rituals and Ritual in Vulgarity: A Study of Ritual Issues in Northern Song Tomb Design)," (PhD diss., Xinan Daxue 西南大學 [Xinan University], 2021).
12. See Luoyang Shi wenwu kaogu yanjiuyuan 洛陽市文物考古研究院 (Luoyang Municipal Institute of Cultural Relics And Archaeology), "Luoyang Mengjin Xinzhuang Wudai bihuamu fajue jianbao 洛陽孟津新莊五代壁畫墓發掘簡報 (Preliminary Report on the Excavation of a Five Dynasties Mural Tomb at Xinzhuang Village in Mengjin County, Luoyang)," *Luoyang kaogu* 洛陽考古 (Archaeology of Luoyang), no. 1 (2013), pp. 29–36; Luoyang Shi wenwu kaogu yanjiuyuan 洛陽市文物考古研究院 (Luoyang Municipal Institute of Cultural Relics And Archaeology), "Luoyang Longsheng xiaoxue Wudai bihuamu fajue jianbao 洛陽龍盛小學五代壁畫墓發掘簡報 (Preliminary Report on the Excavation of a Five Dynasties Mural Tomb at Longsheng Primary School in Luoyang)," *Luoyang kaogu* 洛陽考古 (Archaeology of Luoyang), no. 1 (2013), pp. 37–47; Luoyang Shi wenwu kaogu yanjiuyuan 洛陽市文物考古研究院 (Luoyang Municipal Institute of Cultural Relics And Archaeology), "Luoyang Mangshan Zhen Yingzhuang Cun bei Wudai bihuamu 洛陽邙山鎮營莊村北五代壁畫墓 (Preliminary Report on the Excavation of a Five Dynasties Mural Tomb at Yingzhuang Village, Mangshan Township, Luoyang)," *Luoyang kaogu* 洛陽考古

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the tombs in question, reached along a corridor, favor a circular—or alternatively polygonal, almost circular—plan. There are no side chambers. The tombs compensate for their simplicity of construction with a decorative program that uses a combination of relief brick sculpture and painting to depict a more complex residential environment. The pictorial program consists of eight to twelve distinct scenes unified by a simulated architectural structure **(Fig. 12)**. The tombs are uniformly constructed on a (symbolic) south-north axis, with a depiction of the facade of a 3-bay building with a closed double door occupying the three northernmost sections of the coffin-chamber's wall. In some cases, an eight-part division may have a symbolic rationale, referencing a fundamental diagram of the eight trigrams.[13] What matters more for our purposes, however, is that the pictorial program resembles a handscroll in its continuity, making these Luoyang tombs a particularly pertinent point of comparison with *Night Banquet*.[14]

Symbolically, the façade stands for a larger five-bay Inner Hall, as the accompanying scenes make clear. The scenes immediately to either side of the façade, which vary in number from one to three, generally depict different aspects of life in the inner courtyard and Inner Hall of the mansion. The painted brick-relief elements show furniture straight-on or in profile **(Fig. 13)**; oblique views of objects, people, and animals are left for the mural-painted additions. The size of the painted figures relative to the height of the wall is comparable to that of *Night Banquet*'s figures relative to the height of the scroll.

(Archaeology of Luoyang), no. 1 (2013), pp. 48–57; Luoyang Shi wenwu kaogu yanjiuyuan 洛陽市文物考古研究院 (Luoyang Municipal Institute of Cultural Relics And Archaeology), "Luoyang Miaobei Cun bihuamu fajue jianbao 洛陽苗北村壁畫墓發掘簡報 (Preliminary Report on the Excavation of a Five Dynasties Mural Tomb at Miaobei Village in Luoyang)," *Luoyang kaogu* 洛陽考古 (Archaeology of Luoyang), no. 1 (2013), pp. 58-65; Hou Xiumin 侯秀敏 and Hu Xiaobao 胡小寶, "Luoyang daobei wulu chutu de wudai bihua mu 洛陽道北五路出土的五代壁畫墓 (A Five Dynasties Mural Tomb Excavated at Daobei Fifth Road, Luoyang)," *Wenwu shijie* 文物世界 (World of Antiquity), no. 1 (2013), pp. 70–72.

13. On this symbolism in late Northern Song tombs, see Yi Qing 易晴, "Tiandao zuoxuan, didao youxuan—Henan Dengfeng Heishangou Bei Song zhuandiaobihuamu tuxiang goucheng 天道左旋，地道右旋—河南登封黑山溝北宋磚雕壁畫墓圖像構成 (The Way of Heaven Revolves Leftwards, the Way of Earth Revolves Rightwards: The Compositional Program of Carved Brick and Mural Images in a Northern Song Tomb at Heishangou in Dengfeng, Henan)," *Zhongyuan wenwu* 中原文物 (Cultural Relics of Central China), no. 4 (2009), pp. 67–74.
14. I have discussed a range of other developments that participate in the same epistemological shift in "Tenth-Century Painting before Song Taizong's Reign: A Macrohistorical View," in Katherine Tsiang and Wu Hung eds., *10th-Century China and Beyond: Art and Visual Culture in a Multi-centered Age* (Chicago: The Center for the Art of East Asia, University of Chicago, 2012), pp. 285–318.

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The *tangwu* gathering space of the Inner Hall is depicted in one of two ways. In the first template, as in Fig. 12, it is shown adjoining the facade to the west and is symbolized by a table with two empty chairs facing each other. In one case, female attendants and female musicians populate the scene **(Fig. 14)**. Although the musicians are shown *behind* the table and seemingly in an interior space, it is also possible, given the association between performance and courtyards, that they were understood to be standing in the inner courtyard *in front* of the reception hall and its table. In the second coffin-chamber template **(Fig. 15)**, the depiction of the central gathering space of the Inner Hall is split between the two scenes immediately to east and west of the depicted facade. In the case of the tomb illustrated here, each scene shows a table with one empty chair, a female attendant and a group of female musicians.

The real-life *guanzhai* referents of the other rooms depicted in these pictorial programs, either adjoining the *tangwu* scene or on the other side of the three-bay façade, seem to belong either to an Inner Hall's suites of rooms (*xu* 序) surrounding the *tangwu* gathering space, or to secondary buildings around the perimeter of an inner courtyard. They include bedrooms signaled by accoutrements for dressing and applying cosmetics, as well as rooms with some sort of storage function, signaled, for example, by a large case being opened in front of a clothes rack **(Fig. 16)**.

The inner courtyard itself, implied by the façade, may also be signified by the southernmost scene of the pictorial program on either side of the entrance to the coffin chamber—for example, by a scene that shows a servant awaiting guests or the depiction of an outhouse (*cesuo* 廁所).[15] The outer courtyard is indicated by corridor murals that variously depict male retainers, guards, music masters, or musicians. The most complex pictorial programs in *guanzhai* tombs include up to twenty figures in total.

The design logic employed in such tombs had to reconcile the expectations of two distinct audiences. On the one hand there were the living viewers' expectations of architectural and pictorial representation, which were limited to its *ordinary transitivity*: that is, a representation's capacity to invite imaginative participation in a depicted world. On the other hand there was the assumption that the souls of the deceased had their own expectations of representation: they needed the combined architectural and pictorial representation to be capable of *hypertransitivity*, i.e., the magical transformation of mere depiction into actual enactment. The tombs inform us that tomb designers and painters had no difficulty translating into subtractive underground architectural form the residential spacetime of a

15. Hou Xiumin and Hu Xiaobao, "Luoyang daobei wulu chutu de wudai bihua mu," p. 71.

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freestanding above-ground official's residence. They trusted their living audience to be able to imaginatively reverse-engineer such a residence of familiar type from the subterranean mortuary environment in front of their eyes. Equally, they trusted tomb designers and ritual specialists to be able to invoke the help of the forces of the beyond to realize the hypertransitive potential of the tomb, i.e. its capacity to become a "real" afterlife residence on the *guanzhai* model once the tomb was sealed up. This potential lay partly in the diagrammatic dimension of the tomb's structure and partly in the realism of the different scenes making up its pictorial program. From the popularity of this program over several decades, one can infer that artists and audiences alike understood that pictorial depiction and the enactments it made possible belonged to the realm of ritual technologies, and that the desired ontological transformation entailed the most careful representational procedures in preparation for the tomb's ritual activation.

In their depictions of the inner courtyard and Inner Hall of a *guanzhai* mansion, the coffin chambers of tenth-century Luoyang tombs deploy their representational conventions according to a design logic with three working principles. First, a principle of *distribution* meant that the same building or courtyard or even furniture element could be enacted simultaneously by different parts of the tomb. This principle is shared by *Night Banquet*, with the difference that in the handscroll the same space is enacted by different images sequentially rather than simultaneously. Second, through a principle of *displacement*, the location of a depicted figure group in a mural does not necessarily correspond to its real-life placement in the kind of building that the chamber enacts. *Night Banquet* shares this principle, too, deployed using pictorial engineering. Third, a principle of *reduction of scale* allowed a 5-bay building to be signified by a 3-bay facade. Although *Night Banquet* does not share this last design principle, it employs a corresponding principle of *compression*, made possible by eliminating doors, windows, walls, and columns.

II. The Composition's Geographic Origin: South or North?

With the above picture of *Night Banquet*'s articulation of an architectural site in mind, I now turn to the prosaic but fundamental question of where in China the painting was produced. *Night Banquet* is usually thought to preserve a composition by a Southern Tang artist. The commonalities with Luoyang tombs noted above, however, open the door to a northern rather than southern origin for the composition, a hypothesis that can be tested against several kinds of stylistic evidence.

Figure Painting Style. The most effective way of narrowing the painting's place of production is by focusing on the style of figure painting. As others have recognized, *Night*

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Banquet may be a collaborative work, with one of the artists being a specialist of figure painting.[16] With the exception of the host, whose repeated depictions incorporate a portrait image of his face (discussed below), the human protagonists are presented to us as characters in a fictional world, sufficiently differentiated in the case of the principal male protagonists to encourage attempts to identify them with historical individuals—an encouragement that some recent scholarship has taken at face value. The figures do not conform to a single stylistic mode, but rather to a flexible reconciliation of the Tang dynasty Wu Daozi and Zhou Fang traditions in the service of post-Tang expectations of naturalism. Across the varied instantiations of this hybrid stylistic approach, which combines curves, straight lines, and angularity to different degrees depending on the type of figure being depicted, the artist consistently uses a line that is strikingly thin with limited fluctuations in width. Curves tend to predominate in depictions of both women and seated male protagonists of rank, the patterns of drapery folds differing in the two cases; by contrast, angularity and straight lines predominate in most of the standing male protagonists, including Han Xizai. Throughout, the linear effect is softened by avoiding an overly strong distinction between ink line and color. In some places we seem to see ink line through translucent color, in others it appears that the painter used ink mixed with color for the line itself. Moreover, color is generally privileged over texture, though for some figures the artist modulated the color tonally to suggest a surface topography using shading, or modified the depiction of a textile pattern to follow the contours of a female body. Overall, the painting's hybrid stylistic approach places the artist's drawing skills on display and puts a premium on precision, creating an effect of veracity without decorative flourishes.

As an approach to the depiction of contemporary figures, on present archaeological evidence this variable fusion of Wu and Zhou modes was a northern innovation, already popular during the Five Dynasties period. A more angular version of the style informs the six male attendants in a Luoyang tomb in Xinzhuang in Mengjin County **(Fig. 17)**, which are in turn slightly simpler versions of attendants in *Night Banquet* **(Fig. 18)**.[17] A memorial portrait in a tenth-century Dunhuang votive hanging scroll **(Fig. 19)** is in a very similar style, which can be compared with the standing three-quarters-view portrait of Han Xizai drumming **(Fig.**

16. Both Richard M. Barnhart ("The Five Dynasties and the Song Period [907–1279]," in Richard M. Barnhart et al., *Three Thousand Years of Chinese Painting* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997], p. 110) and De-nin D. Lee (*The Night Banquet A Chinese Scroll through Time*, p. 32) have noted the collaborative nature of the painting.

17. Luoyang Shi wenwu kaogu yanjiuyuan, "Luoyang Mengjin Xinzhuang Wudai bihuamu fajue jianbao."

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20). Some other extant works on silk also share the approach. *Nomads with a Tribute Horse* **(**Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, **Fig. 21)**, a handscroll depiction of a Liao prince and his entourage on horseback, is attributed to the Liao aristocratic painter Yelü Bei 耶律倍, also known as Li Zanhua 李贊華 (899–936). The fact that the dress and accoutrements possess a documentary accuracy suggests that the composition commemorates Li Zanhua's request for protection from the Later Tang regime.[18] Since the painting is not plausible as the work of a Khitan painter, and shows every sign of being a tracing copy, the most logical hypothesis is that it is a Song pictorial record of a Later Tang composition by a Luoyang painter. A second extant painting deserving mention is *Eight Princes on a Spring Excursion*, traditionally attributed to the Later Liang warlord and amateur painter Zhao Yan 趙嚴 (d. 923). Though very unlikely to be a Later Liang work, its figure painting style does sit comfortably in the tenth century **(Fig. 22**, center and right**)**, the horse riders being painted in a slightly more elaborate version of the style used for the male figures in the Mengjin County tomb.[19] Closing the loop, the figures in *Eight Princes* are closely related to some of the figures in *Night Banquet* **(Fig. 22**, left**)**.

If the figures mentioned above highlight the Wu-tradition side of the stylistic fusion, other male figures in *Night Banquet*, however, together with all the women, display a more flowing approach to line employing curves and softened angles in which the Zhou tradition makes itself more strongly felt. Compare, for example, the grey-robed male figures in the banquet scene **(Fig. 23)** with the depiction of a male retainer in the 973 Shunling mausoleum of the Later Zhou emperor Gongdi (Chai Zongxun 柴宗訓, 953–973) **(Fig. 24)**. Going back further in the tenth century, the male retainers in the 924 tomb of Wang Chuzhi 王處之 (862–923) provide an equally pertinent comparison **(Fig. 25)**. Although that tomb is located in Quyang, in the far north of Hebei, the patron appears to have invited a team of artists from the capital to decorate it. The depiction of the women in *Night Banquet*, meanwhile, can be usefully compared with the painted sculptures of female attendants in the Sage Mother Hall

18. As demonstrated by François Louis, "The Cultured and Martial Prince: Notes on Li Zanhua's Biographical Record," in Katherine Tsiang and Wu Hung eds., *10th-Century China and Beyond: Art and Visual Culture in a Multi-centered Age* (Chicago: The Center for the Art of East Asia, University of Chicago, 2012), pp. 319–349. See also Wu T'ung's entry on the painting in *Tales from the Land of Dragons: 1000 Years of Chinese Painting* (Boston: Museum of Fine of Arts, 1997).
19. Compositional similarities to *Literary Gathering* 文會圖 (National Palace Museum), an early twelfth century painting attributed to Huizong, and *Breaking the Balustrade* 折檻圖 (National Palace Museum), also thought to be twelfth-century in date, have led some scholars to date *Eight Gentlemen* to a later period. However, since both of these works are themselves likely to be based on earlier paintings, this argument is not very strong.

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(Shengmudian 聖母殿) at Jinci 晉祠 in Taiyuan, ca. 1023–1032 **(Fig. 26)**, whose demure demeanor is explained by the Shengmudian's status as a female ritual space. Reminiscent of the *Night Banquet* figures in body type, approach to posture, and some aspects of dress, the sculptures translate into plastic form a fluctuating brush trace in the Wu tradition, highlighting the contrastingly disciplined fine line used for their counterparts in the handscroll painting.

The portrait dimension of the scroll keeps us within the same stylistic world as its figure painting in general. The impassivity of Han's face reinforces the portrait image's claim to documentary veracity, and the shared specificity of the depictions supports the identification of the host as Han Xizai. In all the depictions, Han wears his signature headgear—a type of hat that he was said to have invented himself.[20] The treatment of Han Xizai's body in the final scene may also incorporate a portrait claim, since in the epitaph that Xu Xuan, a friend and colleague of Han, wrote in 970, Xu described Han as "handsome and cultivated, with a notably erect bearing."[21] In two instances, the host's head is shown in three-quarters view, following one of the established templates for portraiture, well attested by mortuary portraits, donor portraits, and portraits of eminent monks **(Fig. 27)**. Among surviving early images, perhaps the closest in style to the standing three-quarters-view portrait is the aforementioned Dunhuang memorial portrait (see Fig. 19). The profile view used three times for the host's face **(Fig. 28)** is notably different in execution from Southern Tang treatments of that portrait formula **(Fig. 29)**, which lack the close attention to tangible surface topography seen in Han Xizai's face and head.

As it happen, the only historical record of a portrait of Han Xizai concerns a northern artist working in the modernized Wu-style mode of figure painting, Wang Ai 王靄. The anecdote is transmitted Liu Daochun:

> Since the trifling eastern part of the Yangzi River had not yet been reintegrated into [Song] territory, Yizu [Song Taizu] planned to offer succor and punishment. He ordered Ai to don a disguise and travel to Zhongling. [Ai] then clandestinely depicted the physical

20. Tao Gu 陶穀, *Qingyi lu* 清異錄, *Baoyan Tang miji* 寶顏堂秘笈 edition, 3/21a, "Han jun qingluo 韓君輕格," *Zhongguo jiben guji ku* 中國基本古籍庫 (Airusheng shuzihua jishu yanjiu zhongxin 愛如生數字化技術研究中心, 2008).

21. "美秀而文，中立不。" Xu Xuan 徐鉉, "Tang gu Zongshu shilang Guangzheng dian xueshi chengyi Changli Han gong muzhi ming 唐故中書侍郎光政殿學士承旨昌黎韓公墓誌銘," in *Quan Tang wen* 全唐文, compiled by Dong Gao 董誥, 1814, *juan* 0886/5b-9a, *Zhongguo jiben guji ku* 中國基本古籍庫 (Airusheng shuzihua *jishu* yanjiu zhongxin 愛如生數字化技術研究中心, 2008).

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> appearance of Song Qiqiu 宋齊丘 (887–959), Han Xizai, Lin Renzhao (d. 972), and others as his Majesty had wished. He received the reward of a promotion.[22]

Implausible as this anecdote might appear at first glance, such espionage assignments had a long history.[23] Taizu's interest in portraits of his enemies is also confirmed by other records.[24] Portraiture was considered an essential part of military intelligence.[25] Han Xizai came to Kaifeng as an envoy in the tenth month of 961, so Wang Ai's assignment likely preceded Han's northern visit by a year or less.[26] *Night Banquet's* portraits of Han need not have been a result of Wang Ai's espionage trip, however, since he and other court portraitists had the opportunity in Kaifeng to sketch Han's likeness during his 961 Kaifeng sojourn.

Northern Song texts do not explicitly discuss the fusion of Wu and Zhou stylistic traditions and its relation to post-Tang expectations of optical veracity. However, some of Liu Daochun's other comments on late-tenth-century Luoyang-Kaifeng painters in his mid-eleventh century biographical history of Northern Song painting, *Shengchao minghua ping* 聖朝名畫評 may be relevant. For example, it is notable that when Liu discusses the

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22. "藝祖以區區江左未歸疆土，有意於吊伐，命靄微服往鍾陵，寫其謀臣宋齊丘、韓熙載、林仁肇等形狀。如上意，受賞加等。" Liu Daochun 劉道醇, *Shengchao minghua ping* 聖朝名畫評, in Lu Fusheng 盧輔聖, *Zhongguo shuhua quanshu* 中國書畫全書 (Compendium on Chinese Painting and Calligraphy) (revised edition, Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe 上海書畫出版社, 2009), vol. 1, p. 447.
23. Tao Yue 陶岳, *Wudai shibu* 五代史補 ("The Huainan [Kingdom's] Portrait of Taizu" 淮南寫太祖真) records that the Wu general, Yang Xingmi 楊行密 (852–905) sent an artist disguised as a merchant to make a secret portrait of Li Keyong 李克用 (856–908). Liu Daochun's *Shengchao minghua ping* (*juan* 1) records that Taizu's brother, the future Taizong, had a leading portraitist on his staff, Mou Gu 牟谷, who, after Taizong took the throne, was given a similar assignment to Wang Ai, in his case as part of a diplomatic mission to Vietnam. *Chanhua An congshu* 懺花盦叢書 edition, 2/1b-2a, *Zhongguo jiben guji ku* 中國基本古籍庫 (Airusheng shuzihua jishu yanjiu zhongxin 愛如生數字化技術研究中心, 2008).
24. Lu You 陸游 (*Nan Tang shu* 南唐書, *Lu Fangweng quanji* 陸放翁全集 edition, *juan* 14, *Zhongguo jiben guji ku* 中國基本古籍庫 [Airusheng shuzihua jishu yanjiu zhongxin 愛如生數字化技術研究中心, 2008]) notes a portrait of Lin Renzhao clandestinely copied from a portrait in a Wuchang monastery, later used by Song Taizong for disinformation purposes to alienate Li Yu from his general, whom Li Yu subsequently had poisoned as a result.
25. On espionage painting, see Yu Hui 余輝, "Huihua de teshu gongyong—Songdai diehua 繪畫的特殊功用—宋代諜畫 (A Special Function of Painting: Song Dynasty Espionage Painting)," *Yishu pinjian* 藝術品鑒 (Appreciation), no. 31 (2021), pp. 110-117.
26. I owe this calculation to a 2014 paper by Nicole Lingyao Zhong, "International Movement of Artists, 900–1100: Artists as Spies, Diplomats, Refugees and Prisoners of War," Seminar paper, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University.

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modernization of the Wu stylistic mode by Wang Guan 王瓘, he notes not only a new standard of naturalism but also Wang's integration of elements of other stylistic traditions into the Wu mode. Quoting another Henanese painter, Wu Zongyuan 武宗元 (d. 1050), he writes:

> When Master Wu (Wu Daozi) painted celestial maidens, their necks and their shoulders were unrefined and too compressed and their gaits were lopsided; moreover, the trees in his works are too flat and [their relative distances from the viewer] cannot be estimated in relation to one another. Guoqi rejected these shortcomings and, as a result, he represented actions and things with consummate skill.[27]

Liu then adds this critical assessment of Wang Guan's figure painting:

> He did away with the shortcomings of the Ancients and thereby created a standard for belated excellence. *By not adhering to a single tradition* [my emphasis], his purposeful brushwork was always subtle. Truly it can be said of him that there was no Master Wu before him.[28]

Another painter of the same period whom Liu lauds for his modernization of the Wu mode is the aforementioned Wang Ai, a Kaifeng native who was intermittently active at the capital between the 940s and 970s. Wang Ai was one of three Later Jin court painters taken back to Liao territory as prisoners-of-war when the Liao forces retreated from Kaifeng in 947. So important was he in Song Taizu's eyes that the emperor ransomed him immediately after coming to the throne in 960. Liu's assessment of Wang Ai's style reveals how he adapted the Wu style to contemporary taste:

> To depict the human form entails visualizing its energy field to completeness. Ai was able to lodge [this completeness] in the imaging of oblique views and views from the back, and in the differentiation of garments to suggest continuity of movement as they swirl in all

27. "虞部武員外宗元，亦河南人，每嘆曰：吾觀國器之筆，則不知有吳生矣。吳生畫天女頸領粗促，行步跛側，又樹石淺近，不能相稱，國器則舍而不取，故於事物盡工。" Liu Daochun, *Shengchao minghua ping*, *juan* 1. All translations are by the author except where otherwise noted. This translation modified from Charles Lachman, transl., *Evaluations of Sung Dynasty Painters of Renown: Liu Tao-ch'un's* Sung-ch'ao ming-hua p'ing (Leiden: Brill, 1989), p. 17.
28. "廢古人之短，成後世之長，不拘一守，奮筆皆妙，誠所謂前無吳生矣。" Liu Daochun, *Shengchao minghua ping*.

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directions, with no loss of subtlety.[29]

On the evidence of Liu's account, his style was notable for its subtle naturalistic treatment of three-dimensionality and movement.

One of Wang Ai's secular paintings depicting women, a four *fu*-width composition on the theme of the double-seventh festival (*Qiqiao tu* 乞巧圖), entered the Palace Library collection in the eleventh century through confiscation, having previously been owned by Ding Wei 丁謂 (966–1037), a preeminent political figure during the Zhenzong and early Renzong reigns. The painting is recorded by Dong You 董逌 (early 12th century), who disagreed with a new classification of the painting that demoted it from the "inspired" to the "competent" category. Dong here describes the painting and its differences from other versions of the theme that he had seen:

> The painting shows great brush strength and captures the appearances of people and objects to perfection, in a mode different from today's painters. To go further and rank it as high as Zhang [Sengyou], Wu [Daozi], and Gu [Kaizhi] would not be right. What one sees in the painting is generally similar to the [painting of the same theme] in Mr. Li's collection, except that there are more powdered women distributed over the ground and more pepper flowers in the sky, plus up above are painted the Milky Way with a white-mist radiance and multi-colored clouds, while down below the actions of reverence resemble a ceremony at a pleasure palace.[30]

Dong You goes on to note that Wang's pictorial interpretation was an erudite one, and wonders whether it was based on an older model or was Wang's own initiative.

The point here is not to attribute *Night Banquet* to a given artist or artists but, rather, to suggest that the impact of the northern stylistic innovations discussed by Liu Daochun may have informed the painting in one way or another. By Liu's account, Wang Guan and Wang Ai were two of the most influential early Northern Song figure painters at the capital. It seems

29. "靄之為畫也，可謂至矣。意思宛約，筆法豪邁，皆不下王扑，但氣焰少劣耳。夫寫人形狀者在全其氣宇，靄能停分取像，側背分衣，周旋變通，不失其妙。"

30. "然畫甚有筆力，而為人物狀深得圓成，法與今世之畫者異矣。其遂進而品於張吳顧非也。圖所見大致與李氏所收相類，多有散香粉鋪地及椒花空中者，又其上畫天漢白氣光輝，又有五色雲，其下望拜如行宮儀，此其異者。" Dong You 董逌, *Guangchuan huaba* 廣川畫跋, in Lu Fusheng 盧輔聖, *Zhongguo shuhua quanshu* 中國書畫全書 (Compendium on Chinese Painting and Calligraphy) (revised edition, Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe 上海書畫出版社, 2009), vol. 2, pp. 105-106.

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likely that leading capital-region figure painters of the next generation such as the versatile artists Wang Duan 王端 (son of Wang Guan), Wang Shiyuan 王士元 (son of Wang Ai's former colleague and fellow prisoner-of-war Wang Renshou 王仁壽), and Chen Yongzhi 陳用智/誌 developed their own figure painting styles with Wang Guan and Wang Ai as points of reference.[31]

III. The Date of the Painting

The evidence presented so far points not just to a Kaifeng or Luoyang origin for the painting but also to an early Northern Song date. In this section, I introduce several other types of evidence to confirm this dating and eventually narrow it down further.

31. Wang Duan 王端, the son of Wang Guan, was an unusually versatile painter who, according to Guo Ruoxu, mastered several genres, including landscape, religious subjects, men and horses, and portraiture (Guo Ruoxu 郭若虛, *Tuhua jianwen zhi* 圖畫見聞志 (ca. 1080), in Lu Fusheng 盧輔聖, *Zhongguo shuhua quanshu* 中國書畫全書 [Compendium on Chinese Painting and Calligraphy] [revised edition, Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe 上海書畫出版社, 2009], vol. 1, p. 482). He was also well educated; indeed, he was attached to *shi* status to the point of resisting appointment to the Painting Academy that was offered him after he painted a posthumous portrait of Zhenzong, probably at the very beginning of Renzong's reign around 1022. According to Liu Daochun, "he declined this reward, asking only for a studio in the National University." 敕端入圖畫院，讓而不受，止乞國子監書舍一部 The Emperor was pleased and gave him a low-level military appointment as Palace Duty Officer on the Right (*youban dianzhi* 右班殿直, rank 9b) with the prestige title Attendant of the Three Ranks (*sanban fengzhi* 三班奉直), which specified his position if he participated in a court audience. (Liu Daochun, *Shengchao minghua ping*, p. 450; Guo Ruoxu, *Tuhua jianwen zhi*, p. 482). Liu notes of Wang Duan that "his particular excellence could be seen in the way he captured the appearance (*xing* 形) and bearing (*biao* 表) of human figures." 王端寫人形表，尤見所長 (Liu Daochun, *Shengchao minghua ping*, p. 450) His colleague Chen Yongzhi 陳用智/誌, another versatile artist known for "Buddhist and Daoist subjects, men and horses, landscapes, and forests and trees," was made a Painter-in-Waiting (*zhihou* 祗候) at the beginning of Renzong's reign (Guo Ruoxu, *Tuhua jianwen zhi*, p. 480). By Liu's account, when it came to depicting figural subjects and horses, Chen was a technician. Of Chen's figure painting, he writes: "the subtleties of even the smallest details were exhausted." Of his horses, Liu notes that "he was particularly successful in his understanding of proportion and his clear comprehension of three-dimensionality." Yet, in his landscapes, "although his brushwork was liberated and unrestrained, it always achieved a sense of things as they naturally are." (Liu Daochun, *Shengchao minghua ping*, pp. 450, 455) One gets the sense of an artist with a painterly range analogous to that of a calligrapher able to write standard script and cursive script equally well. Both Wang Duan and Chen Yongzhi were already active at the capital by the Dazhongxiangfu era (1008–1016). See the entry on Gao Keming in Liu Daochu, *Shengchao minghua ping*, *juan* 1.

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A. Depicted Artifacts

Musical Instruments. The depiction of musical instruments as studied by Ding Tongjun supports the rough dating above.[32] The large drum (see Fig. 7) is well documented for the tenth century, as is the orchestral combination of vertical and horizontal flutes (see Fig. 9), the particular way of holding the *pipa* at a 45 degree upwards angle, and the *pipa*'s large-bodied form (see Fig. 33)—by late Northern Song, the instrument had taken on a different size and shape.

Furniture. Hang Kan has argued that the originally Central Asian type of high-backed chair prominently depicted in *Night Banquet* gradually became popular in the metropolitan region in the course of the tenth century under the influence of Hebei culture.[33] An older style of living, where people were seated closer to the ground, may have been more typical of the tenth-century south, as is archaeologically attested by the solely low furniture excavated from a Wu kingdom tomb at Caizhuang in Hanjiang (Jiangsu), as well as by some Southern Tang compositions such as *Playing Weiqi in Front of a Double Screen* (重屏會棋圖, Palace Museum, Beiijing) and *Scholars of the Liuli Hall* (琉璃堂人物圖, Metropolitan Museum of Art). Yet, the fact that other Southern Tang compositions, such as *Examining Books* (勘書圖, Nanjing University) and *Riverbank* (溪岸圖, Metropolitan Museum of Art) depict furniture comparable to *Night Banquet* shows that the northern fashion in furniture spread to the south by the third quarter of the tenth century.

Two styles of furniture are depicted, one solid, the other spindly. The evidence of archaeological depictions and transmitted paintings is that both styles were used in north and south China from the tenth century on, and were considered complementary. Spindly tables with reinforcing struts **(Fig. 30)** are of particular interest here because they are depicted in a number of the Five Dynasties-to-early Northern Song vernacular paintings that were discovered hidden in a southern pagoda in Jiangxi.[34] As Wu Dongyu has pointed out, they are

32. Ding Tongjun, "*Han Xizai yeyan tu* yueqi kaoshi."
33. Hang Kan 杭侃, "Shilun Tang Song shiqi yizi zai Zhongyuan diqu de chuanbo 試論唐宋時期椅子在中原地區的傳播 (On the 'Chair' Spreading into Central China in the Tang and Song Dynasties)," *Gugong bowuyuan yuankan* 故宮博物院院刊 (Palace Museum Journal), no. 4 (2019), pp. 4–19.
34. Wu Dongyu 吳東宇, "*Han Xizai yeyan tu* suojian jiaju zai taolun—yi Ganzhou Ciyusi ta chutu huihua wei tuzheng 《韓熙載夜宴圖》所見家具再討論—以贛州慈雲寺塔出土繪畫為圖證 (A Re-examination of the Furniture Depicted in *The Night Banquet of Han Xizai*: With Comparative Evidence from the Paintings Unearthed at Ciyun Temple Pagoda in Ganzhou)," *Jilin yishu xueyuan xuebao* 吉林藝術學院學報 (Journal of Jilin University of Arts), no. 2 (2024), pp. 21–30.

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also depicted in carved stone panels in the tomb of Wang Chuzhi (924) and in pictorial brick reliefs in the tomb of Feng Hui (958), both in the north.[35]

Tableware. In the banquet scene (see Fig. 5), there is a clear difference of color between, on the one hand, the yellowish wine ewers in warming bowls and their associated bowls and covers, and on the other, the bluish-white plates and dishes for food. A number of the latter show a flared foot, a feature inherited from the Tang that survived into Northern Song Ding white wares of many different shapes produced in Hebei **(Fig. 31)**.[36] The forms of the wine ewers and warming bowls, on the other hand, correspond well to Five Dynasties and early Northern Song wares from the Fanchang kilns in Anhui, which had a wide range of color including a yellowish or greenish tone **(Fig. 32)**.[37] One may question whether all the objects depicted could have existed in real life, however. In a later scene, a wine ewer and its warming bowl is shown being carried, together with two bowls and covers, on a large round tray depicted in the same yellowish color and thus ostensibly signifying the same material. A little further on, a similarly large basin of almost exactly the same form as the tray is depicted in the same color. It is hard to imagine such a large ceramic tray or basin actually being manufactured or used.

Simulated Paintings. The painting includes thirteen simulated paintings of different sizes, most of which required a landscapist's pictorial craft and as such may be from the hand of a different artist from the painter responsible for the figures and the furniture elements. Several not only allude to the style of the preeminent northern landscapist in mid-tenth century Kaifeng, Li Cheng, but were executed by a painter fluent in that idiom. The large screen behind the pipa player **(Fig. 33)** may be compared with early Northern Song handscrolls in the

35. Wu Dongyu, "*Han Xizai yeyan tu* suojian jiaju zai taolun—yi Ganzhou Ciyusi ta chutu huihua wei tuzheng."

36. See Quan Kuishan 權奎山, "Tang Wudai shiqi Ding yao chutan 唐五代時期定窯初探 (A Preliminary Study of the Ding Kiln in the Tang-Five Dynasties Period)," *Gugong bowuyuan yuankan* 故宮博物院院刊 (Palace Museum Journal), no. 4 (2008), pp. 40–55.

37. Liu Dong 劉東, "Zhuzi zhuwan yuanliu kao 注子注碗源流考 (Textual Research on the Origin and Development of Wine Ewers and Warming Bowls)," *Wenbo xuekan* 文博學刊 (Journal of Archaeology and Museology), no. 3 (2018), pp. 88–94; Liu Dong 劉東 and Gao Ao 高奧, "Shilun Wudai Nan Tang guo de Fanchang yao qingbai ci 試論五代南唐國的繁昌窯青白瓷 (A Preliminary Study of the Bluish White Porcelain from the Fanchang Kiln of the Southern Tang during the Five Dynasties)," *Hunan sheng bowuguan guankan* 湖南省博物館館刊 (Hunan Provincial Museum), no. 13 (2017), pp. 409–415; Cui Mingfang 崔名芳 and Zhu Jianhua 朱建華, "Anhui Fanchang yao qingbai ci zhici gongyi yu jishu qiyuan tantao 安徽繁昌窯青白瓷製瓷工藝與技術起源探討 (The Bluish White Porcelain-Producing Technology at the Fanchang Kiln in Anhui and its Origin)," *Zhongguo taoci gongye* 中國陶瓷工業 (China Ceramic Industry), vol. 27, no. 1 (2020), pp. 35–40.

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Li Cheng tradition such as *Small Wintry Grove* 小寒林圖 **(**National Palace Museum, **Fig. 34)** and *Temple amid Autumn Mountains* (秋山蕭寺圖, Fuji Yurinkan, Kyoto), attributed to Xu Daoning and often thought to be an early work by Xu **(Fig. 35)**. Among the features shared with these two extant paintings is the tiny scale of the figure relative to the pines. The large fan **(Fig. 36)**, whose design corresponds to the left half of *Small Wintry Grove*, also brings to mind the literary mention of an authentic large Li Cheng fan by a famously stringent Northern Song judge of Li Cheng attributions, Mi Fu.[38] The visible parts of a tripartite landscape screen **(Fig. 37**, bottom**)** are comparable in their structure, though not their composition, to *Luxuriant Forest among Distant Peaks* 茂林遠岫圖 (Liaoning Provincial Museum), a later Northern Song work that is generally agreed to preserve Li Cheng's approach to the theme **(Fig. 37**, top**)**.

The small couch panel landscapes are notable for for their sketchiness and sole use of ink. Although they do not provide enough visual information to support a clear art historical identification, the misty scenes of rivers and mountains in four of the panels **(Fig. 38)** bring to mind *Buddhist Retreat by Streams and Mountains* 溪山蘭若圖 (Cleveland Museum of Art), a work generally thought to have been painted by Juran after his move north to Kaifeng ca. 976 **(Fig. 39)**. A second simulated fixed-frame screen painting has a unique riverbank composition, not seen elsewhere in Song painting **(Fig. 40)**. We look across a stepped promontory, on which stands a mixed group of pines and other trees, toward the clearly demarcated far bank of the river, beyond which the landscape is obscured by mist. The downplaying of contour lines in favor of inkwash in the foreground rocks, the device of a stepped promontory, and the intermixing of tree types are all reminiscent of *Riverbank* **(Fig. 41)**.[39]

Lastly, the *shuimo* simulated paintings of flowers and plants **(Fig. 42)** bring to mind textual records of early Northern Song painters of flowers and plants in ink alone whose works are no longer extant, such as an artist from the Jiangnan Kingdom, Liu Mengsong 劉夢松, or the Henanese doctor, Yan Shi'an 閻士安.[40]

Dress. The female figures in *Night Banquet* have a distinctive style of self-presentation (see Figs. 8–10, 26, 33). Dressing their hair in various types of bun, they wear a short jacket or

38. "余家所收李成至李冠卿大扇，愛之不已，為天下之冠。既購得之，背於真州。" Mi Fu 米芾, *Hua shi* 畫史 (completed around 1103), in Lu Fusheng 盧輔聖, *Zhongguo shuhua quanshu* 中國書畫全書 (Compendium on Chinese Painting and Calligraphy) (revised edition, Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe 上海書畫出版社, 2009), vol. 2, p. 259.
39. Richard M. Barnhart ("The Five Dynasties and the Song Period [907–1279]," p. 110), accurately notes that the simulated landscape paintings present a cross-section of styles current in the late Northern Song period. However, those late Northern Song styles often preserve earlier ones.
40. Liu Daochun, *Shengchao minghua ping*, p. 458; Guo Ruoxu, *Tuhua jianwen zhi*, p. 484.

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waistcoat with sleeves tight at the wrists that is tucked into a high belted skirt with two sashes hanging down; they also drape a long scarf either over or around their shoulders that falls in a loop over their knees or, in the case of a lute-player, is allowed to drop down on either side. As Erin Shea has shown, elite women in the southern part of Liao territory generally wore Song dress,[41] so it is significant that variations on this style of female self-presentation can be seen in the murals in two tombs at the Liao western capital in the area of modern Datong **(**Zhoujiadian Zhixiangchang 周家店紙箱廠 tomb; tomb of Xu Congyun 許從贇, dated 982, **Fig. 43)**, painted in a local style.[42] What may not be immediately evident to the modern viewer, however, is the absence in *Night Banquet* of another piece of clothing: the long *beizi* 褙子 overgarment like a light coat or robe opening in the front that women wore in more public situations. That overgarment had become a fashionable item by the end of the Tang dynasty and the Five Dynasties, sometimes with loose sleeves **(**as seen in a Luoyang tomb mural depiction of a woman standing in the inner courtyard of a *guanzhai* mansion, **Fig. 44)**, and sometimes with the tight sleeves that would become standard under the Song dynasty (as seen in tomb figures of female musicians from the Later Shu tomb of Zhao Tingyin 趙廷隱, ca. 950).[43] *Night Banquet* thus depicts a mode of casual female dress that women wore at home in the inner part of a residence (or a brothel). The self-presentation of the women pushes casualness to an extreme, with some women even leaving their *moxiong* 摸胸 undergarment visible.

Decorative Designs. Most of the designs depicted in the painting are difficult to date but would be worth further research. Several curtains and women's skirts feature repeat patterns. A roundel design on the large drum shows two phoenixes chasing each other among

41. Shea, Eiren L., "Intentional Identities: Liao Women's Dress and Cultural and Political Power," *Acta Via Serica*, 6, no. 2 (2021), pp. 37–60.

42. See also the discussions of female dress in: Li Chengfu 李成富, "Ye tan *Han Xizai yeyan tu* de duandai wenti—jian yu Yu Hui xiansheng shangque 也談《韓熙載夜宴圖》的斷代問題———兼與余輝先生商榷 (On the Dating of *Han Xizai's Night Banquet*—Including a Discussion with Mr Yu Hui)," *Tangshan xueyuan xuebao* 唐山學院學報 (Journal of Tangshan University), vol. 25, no. 4 (2012), p. 64; Xu Xiaobing 徐小兵 and Wen Jianjiao 溫建嬌, "*Han Xizai yeyan tu* zhong yiguan fushi kao 《韓熙載夜宴圖》中衣冠服飾考 (A Study of Dress in *The Night Banquet of Han Xizai*)," *Meiyuan* 美苑 (Art Work), no. 1 (2009), pp. 80–82.

43. Sun Jie 孫杰, Xiao Lin 肖嶙, Gong Yangmin 龔楊民, Jiang Yuqiu 蔣玉球, Xu Min 徐敏, "Chengdu shiling Hou Shu Zhao Tingyin mu chutu nüyueyong fuzhuang xingzhi kaobian—yi M1:70, M1:72 hao yong wei li 成都十陵後蜀趙廷隱墓出土女樂俑服裝形制考辨—以 M1:70, M1:72號俑為例 (Costume Analysis of Female Musical Figurines Unearthed from the Later Shu Shiling Tomb of Zhao Tingyin in Chengdu: Taking M1:70 and M1:72 Figurines as Examples)," *Yishu sheiji yanjiu* 藝術設計研究 (Art & Design Research), no. 3 (2021), pp. 40–44.

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blossoms, and is itself separated out against a ground of blossoms. The floral plectrum guard designs on the pipas in one case depict loquats, in the other a flowering bush. One design deserves particular attention. The servant girl carrying a landscape fan wears a long grey coat with a design of roundels composed of confronted swans **(Fig. 45)**. This kind of confronted-bird roundel design was a Tang invention that survived into Five Dynasties and Liao art: in this case it is recognizably Liao in style.

B. Original or Copy?

Scholars generally consider *Night Banquet* to be a close Southern Song copy of a Southern Tang composition, with the depiction of the material culture elements updated to suit contemporary taste. Most often, the handscroll is said to be a copy by an unidentified Southern Song academy painter or painters, drawn from the ranks of artists who maintained in the south the traditions of academy painting that had earlier had currency in Northern Song Kaifeng.[44] However, not all scholars consider this compelling painting to be a copy. Ding Xiyuan has argued at length that *Night Banquet* is Southern Tang in both style and date;[45] Richard Barnhart, in a survey of Five Dynasties and Song painting, has suggested that it is an original work produced at the capital during the late Northern Song.[46] My own view concurs with Barnhart's except regarding the date.

Some of the arguments advanced in support of a later dating have already been debunked above: notably, the depicted artifacts, including the simulated paintings, are not as obviously in late eleventh or twelfth-century style as is usually assumed. However, one commonly cited piece of evidence requires more detailed discussion. It has often been noted that both the style of dress and the style of execution of the female figures in *Night Banquet* closely resemble the female figures in a well-attested twelfth-century court painting, *Ladies' Classic of Filial Piety* **(Fig. 46)**. The simulated paintings in the latter handscroll, which are original to it, are unambiguously twelfth-century in date. Julia K. Murray, in

44. This view of the painting's date is most thoroughly argued by De-nin D. Lee, *The Night Banquet: A Chinese Scroll through Time*; and Yu Hui (余輝, "*Han Xizai yeyan tu* juan niandai kao—jian tan zaoqi renwu hua jianding fangfa 《韓熙載夜宴圖》卷年代考—兼探早期人物畫的鑒定方法 (On the Date of the Handscroll *The Night Banquet of Han Xizai*, Together with a Consideration of the Method of Attribution for Early Figure Paintings)," *Gugong bowuyuan yuankan* 故宮博物院院刊 (Palace Museum Journal), no. 4 [1993], pp. 37–56).

45. Ding Xiyuan 丁羲元, "Gu Hongzhong *Han Zizai yeyan tu* zai kao 顧閎中《韓熙載夜宴圖》再考 (A Reconsideration of *The Night Banquet of Han Xizai* by Gu Hongzhong)," *Zhonghua shuhuajia* 中華書畫家 (Chinese Artists in Painting & Calligraphy), no. 93 (2017), pp. 94–103.

46. Richard M. Barnhart, "The Five Dynasties and the Song Period (907–1279)," p. 110.

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the most thorough study of *Ladies' Classic of Filial Piety*, has noted the likelihood of an earlier model for the handscroll.[47] Indeed, this is the most convincing explanation of the female figures' style of dress, since fashions had changed greatly by the twelfth century. I would suggest, therefore, that *Ladies' Classic of Filial Piety* is an updating of an earlier lost composition, in which the impressive style of the narrative elements of the original recension is faithfully preserved if rather weakly executed, while the setting has been brought up to date in order to give the theme contemporary relevance. On this hypothesis, *Ladies' Classic of Filial Piety* preserves the figure-painting elements (both self-presentation and pictorial style) from a work painted by the same artist responsible for the figures in *Night Banquet*.

One other aspect of the composition in addition to the simulated paintings seems to have been changed in *Ladies' Classic of Filial Piety*. In *Night Banquet*, the standing figures are relatively large in relation to the height of the composition, as we have seen also to be true of mural paintings in tenth-century Luoyang tombs. By contrast, in *Ladies' Classic of Filial Piety* the figures are proportionally much smaller, a feature that may be taken as further evidence for that handscroll's status as an updating of an earlier composition. The reason for this compositional change may be that, by the twelfth century, a fully achieved and expansive perceptual continuum had existed in painting for over a century. In *Ladies' Classic of Filial Piety*, as in other twelfth-century paintings, forms are placed within that *preexisting* spacetime continuum. By contrast, in *Night Banquet* forms and implied viewpoints are combined and juxtaposed in various montaged ways in order to *build up* a spacetime continuity that requires the beholder's active participation to actualize. No twelfth-century artist would have been able to see the world the way the painters of *Night Banquet* saw it.

C. The Textual Record of the Theme

A pictorial version of the theme was in circulation by 1012 at latest. In a text in *Wudai shi bu* 五代史補 (1012), Tao Yue 陶岳 (d. 1022) notes the existence of a painting illustrating Han's licentious lifestyle and makes the assumption that the painting's Southern Tang subject means that it was conceived by a Southern Tang artist.[48] Tao had clearly got wind of Li

47. See Julia K. Murray, in the most thorough study of *Ladies' Classic of Female Piety* ("Didactic Art for Women: The *Ladies' Classic of Filial Piety*," in Marsha Weidner (Haufler) ed., *Flowering in the Shadows: Women in the History of Chinese and Japanese Painting* [Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1990], pp. 27–53.) For further discussion, see De-nin D. Lee, *The Night Banquet: A Chinese Scroll through Time*, pp. 31–32.

48. Tao Yue, *Wudai shibu, Chanhua An congshu* edition, 5/12a-b. See below, note 67 for the text.

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Yu's displeasure at Han Zizai's lifestyle (whether from Han's tomb epitaph or from other sources.) and the very temporary fall from favor to which it led (which the epitaph also confirms).[49] However, Tao's assertion that at some point during his reign (961–976) Li Yu had commissioned a painting on the theme from a Southern Tang court painter in order to shame Han Xizai into behaving better, leading to Han's return to favor, is not supported by any other source. Rather, it seems invented to explain the existence of a painting with this subject.

There are no more recorded mentions of the pictorial theme until the late eleventh century, when several writers refer to versions of such a Han Xizai composition. Zu Wuze 祖無擇 (1011–1084) transcribes a 1079 colophon by his brother Zu Wupo 祖無頗 (1029–1093) to a *Night Banquet* scroll, where the brother identifies the court artist supposedly commissioned by Li Yu as Gu Hongzhong 顧閎中, the earliest association of a Han Xizai composition with the name of that artist.[50] In 1088, Shen Kuo 沈括 (1031–1095) in his *Mengxi bitan* 夢溪筆談 notes that there still existed at that time a standard portrait of Han Xizai that identified its subject, but he does not record an artist's name.[51] Around the same time, Li Peng 李彭 (d. 1094 or later), describes a painting under the name *Han Xizai yanke tu* 韓熙載宴客圖 that seems to be a version of the theme with a different composition from *Night Banquet*.[52] A few decades later, the *Xuanhe huapu* 宣和畫譜 catalogue lists a painting with the *Night Banquet* title under Gu Hongzhong's name alone. It is not clear whether the compilers of the *Xuanhe huapu* were looking at the same version seen by Zu Wupo.[53] Moreover, an artist with a very similar name, Gu Dazhong 顧大中, was also represented in Huizong's collection by a closely related painting, if not another version of the same composition, entitled *The Indulgent Pleasures of Han Xizai* 韓熙載縱樂圖.[54] Whether the extant painting can be identified with either of the ones recorded in the *Xuanhe huapu* is a matter of continuing debate.

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49. Xu Xuan, "Tang gu Zongshu shilang Guangzheng dian xueshi chengyi Changli Han gong muzhi ming," in *Quan Tang wen* 全唐文, 0886/5b-9a..
50. Zu Wuze 祖無擇, *Longxue we*nji 龍學文集, *Yiqiu Guan ke Songren ji* 宜秋館刻宋人集 edition, 16/13a-b, *Zhongguo jiben guji ku* 中國基本古籍庫 (Airusheng shuzihua jishu yanjiu zhongxin 愛如生數字化技術研究中心, 2008).
51. Shen Kuo 沈括, *Mengxi bitan* 夢溪筆談, *Xuejin taoyuan* 學津討原 edition, 4/4b, *Zhongguo jiben guji ku* 中國基本古籍庫 (Airusheng shuzihua jishu yanjiu zhongxin 愛如生數字化技術研究中心, 2008).
52. Li Peng 李彭, *Rishe yuan ji* 日涉園集, *Yuzhang congshu* 豫章叢書 edition, 6/1a-b, *Zhongguo jiben guji ku* 中國基本古籍庫 (Airusheng shuzihua jishu yanjiu zhongxin 愛如生數字化技術研究中心, 2008).
53. Anonymous, *Xuanhe huapu* 宣和畫譜, in Lu Fusheng 盧輔聖, *Zhongguo shuhua quanshu* 中國書畫全書 (Compendium on Chinese Painting and Calligraphy) , revised edition (20 vols.) (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe 上海書畫出版社, 2009), vol. 2, p. 354.
54. Anonymous, *Xuanhe huapu*, in Lu Fusheng, *Zhongguo shuhua quanshu*, vol. 2, p. 354.

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Other depictions of the theme that circulated after 1126 were thought to be Southern Tang in origin as well. In the mid-twelfth century, Hu Zi 胡仔 (1110–1170) owned a version with the title *Han Xizai jiayan tu* 韓熙載家讌圖 but did not record an attribution.[55] Various versions with the *Night Banquet* title were recorded in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, one owned by Liu Kezhuang 劉克莊 (1187–1269).[56] At the beginning of the Yuan dynasty, Zhou Mi 周密 (1232–1298) recorded another on paper that was attributed to Zhou Wenju alone.[57] And when Tang Hou 湯垕 wrote his early fourteenth-century history of painting, *Hua jian* 畫鑒, he noted that he had seen two versions attributed to Zhou Wenju and one to Gu Hongzhong that was slightly different from the Zhou versions.[58]

In Song dynasty practice, attribution of authorship of an antique painting generally referred to the conception of the pictorial image rather than the execution of the artifact; the rare commentator who wished to convey the view that a particular painting was an autograph work, executed by the artist to whom it was attributed, made that view explicit, as Mi Fu does on a number of occasions in his *Painting Chronicles* (*Hua shi* 畫史). It is significant, therefore, that of the thirteen references to the composition between the eleventh and the fourteenth century, only the one by Zhou Mi, dating from three centuries after the conception of the composition, explicitly presents the version that was seen as an autograph work.

Several points seem clear. First, Han Xizai's lifestyle became a pictorial theme by 1012 at latest. Second, more than one composition on the theme was created, by different artists, under a variety of names. Third, the versions of the theme that circulated were always attributed a Southern Tang provenance, but the earliest secure association of Gu Hongzhong's name with the theme is in 1079. Fourth, since one would expect connoisseurs such as Guo

55. Hu Zi 胡仔, *Zhaoxi yuyin conghua* 苕溪漁隱叢話, Haishan *Xianguan congshu* 海山仙館叢書 edition, 後集18/3b, *Zhongguo jiben guji ku* 中國基本古籍庫 (Airusheng shuzihua jishu yanjiu zhongxin 愛如生數字化技術研究中心, 2008).

56. Liu Kezhuang 劉克莊, *Houcun jushi ji* 後村居士集, Song dynasty printed edition, 29/5a, *Zhongguo jiben guji ku* 中國基本古籍庫 (Airusheng shuzihua jishu yanjiu zhongxin 愛如生數字化技術研究中心, 2008).

57. Zhou Mi 周密, *Yunyan guo yan lu* 雲煙過眼錄, *Shiwan Juan Lou congshu* 十萬卷樓叢書 edition, 1/37b, *Zhongguo jiben guji ku* 中國基本古籍庫 (Airusheng shuzihua jishu yanjiu zhongxin 愛如生數字化技術研究中心, 2008).

58. Tang Hou 湯垕, *Gujin hua jian bu fen juan* 古今畫鑒不分卷, *Xuehai leibian* 學海類編 edition, 1/10a, entry on Zhou Wenju, *Zhongguo jiben guji ku* 中國基本古籍庫 (Airusheng shuzihua jishu yanjiu zhongxin 愛如生數字化技術研究中心, 2008). The information is basically repeated in Xia Wenyan 夏文彥, *Tuhui baojian* 圖繪寶鑑, *Jindai mishu* 津逮秘書 edition, 3/4b, entry on Gu Hongzhong, *Zhongguo jiben guji ku* 中國基本古籍庫 (Airusheng shuzihua jishu yanjiu zhongxin 愛如生數字化技術研究中心, 2008).

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Ruoxu and Zhou Mi to be able to recognize Zhou Wenju's style, it seems likely that at least one recension was painted in Southern Tang style, though this does not necessarily mean that a painting on this theme was ever created under the Southern Tang dynasty.

D. *Night Banquet* as Pictorial Anecdote

De-nin D. Lee, who like the majority of scholars dates the painting to the Southern Song period, has written: "The disparity between earlier and later sources suggests the possibility that as a subject for painting, the image of the nightly banquets of Han Xizai did not originate in the Southern Tang court, but may be instead a retrospective fabrication of the Northern Song period."[59] In the words of a proponent of a late Northern Song date for *Night Banquet*, Richard Barnhart: "the present painting was done in order to impugn the integrity of not only Li Yu and Han Xizai but the entire Southern Tang state—which had the courage to withstand the Song until fifteen years after they announced their new dynasty."[60] Though not the only conceivable scenario, this interpretation has much to recommend it, since it would explain why the theme does not enters the textual record until half a century after the founding of the Song dynasty. It would also hold good if, as I have been arguing, the painting dates from the early Northern Song period.

Although *Night Banquet* does not illustrate any specific text, a wide range of textual materials was available to serve as a basis for paintings on the theme, often including anecdotes that had started out as stories circulating orally, which no doubt continued to circulate that way as well. The earliest such text dates from Han Xizai's lifetime and is found in *Qingyi lu* 清異錄 by the Kaifeng-based Tao Gu 陶穀 (903–970). There, we read about the special hat that Han had had manufactured for himself, and later about the female entertainers in his residence:

> Han Xizai's residence is full of flirtatious female entertainers. On the side of his compound he has had a horizontal window constructed, which he had covered with a criss-crossing net of silk cords as a place to peek in. At first, the [women] would only let people see what

59. De-nin D. Lee, *The Night Banquet: A Chinese Scroll through Time*, p. 24.

60. Richard M. Barnhart, "The Five Dynasties and the Song Period (907–1279)," p. 110. The painting has also been argued to be a Northern Song work by Gao Musen 高木森 (*Wudai Bei Song de huihua* 五代北宋的繪畫 [Paintings from the Five Dynasties and Northern Song Dynasty] [Taipei: Wenshizhe chubanshe 文史哲出版社 (The Liberal Arts Press), 1982]). In an earlier essay, I also affirmed a late Northern Song date ("Tenth-Century Painting before Song Taizong's Reign: A Macrohistorical View," note 56).

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> was for sale, but later they would banter with them, flirting away. People call it the "At-Her-Ease Window" [a play on the Buddhist of Guanyin-at-ease icon]. [61]

Xu Xuan's 970 epitaph for Han Xizai, based on his first-hand knowledge of the man, undoubtedly circulated in Kaifeng, if not immediately, then after Xu moved to the Song capital in 976. Xu confirms the presence of female entertainers in Han residence but offers an explanation. He presents Han as a high-minded and straightforward person who had little time for protocol, even more so in his late years. "He maintained a group of forty female entertainers, staining his own reputation in order to avoid being forced to become prime minister."[62]

Subsequently, in the wake of the dissolution of the Jiangnan Kingdom (958–976, formerly Southern Tang) and the absorption of some of its government personnel into the Song administration, several formerly Southern Tang writers who were by then based in Kaifeng, penned works collating anecdotes about Southern Tang, in Xu Xuan's case on Taizong's orders.[63] The earliest private compilation of this kind is *Nan Tang jinshi* 南唐近事 by Zheng Wenbao 鄭文寶 (953–1013), with a preface dated 977; at that time Li Yu was still alive and also in Kaifeng. *Nan Tang jinshi* includes the following anecdote:

> He did not concern himself with what his maids and concubines got up to, somewhat in the style of Xu Zhicai of the Northern Qi. His maids frequently had relations with his guests. A couplet by one such guest reads: "Around the fifth double hour no longer able to hold themselves back;/ To share a man's pillow, they rise and get dressed." Zicai did not mind. [64]

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61. Tao Gu, *Qingyi lu, Baoyan Tang miji* edition, 3/16b, "Zizai chuang 自在窗," *Zhongguo jiben guji ku* 中國基本古籍庫 (Airusheng shuzihua jishu yanjiu zhongxin 愛如生數字化技術研究中心, 2008). "載熙載家，過縱姬侍，第側建橫窗，絡以絲繩，為觀覘之地。初惟市物，後或調戲贈與，所欲如意。時人目為「自在窗」。"
62. Xu Xuan, "Tang gu Zongshu shilang Guangzheng dian xueshi chengyi Changli Han gong muzhi ming."
63. *Jiangnan lu* 江南錄, now lost, was commissioned by Taizong from Tang Yue 湯悅 (912–984) and Xu Xuan (917–992) and completed before 992.
64. "不防閑婢妾，有北齊徐之才風。侍兒往往私客。客賦詩有云最是五更留不住向人枕畔著衣裳之句。熙載亦不介意。" Zheng, Wenbao 鄭文寶, *Nan Tang jinshi* 南唐近事, *Baoyan Tang miji* 寶顏堂秘笈 edition, 28a, Zhongguo jiben guji ku 中國基本古籍庫 (Airusheng shuzihua jishu yanjiu zhongxin 愛如生數字化技術研究中心, 2008). Translated and discussed by Johannes L. Kurz, "Han Xizai (902–970): An Eccentric Life in Exciting Times," in Peter Lorge ed., *Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2011), pp. 87-88. Subsequently, Chen Pengnian (961–1017) wrote *Jiangnan bielu* explicitly in response to *Jiangnan lu*.

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A similar anecdote later appears in another private text, *Diaoji litan* 釣磯立談, dating to the beginning of the eleventh century, by an unidentified author who was not a former Southern Tang official, though he was a descendant of one:

> In the rear of his mansion he maintained courtesan musicians, all of them as beautiful as they come, who played stringed instruments and flutes, sang beautifully and danced gracefully, so when he had guests to entertain, they all exerted themselves to the utmost.[65]

Around 1010, Zheng Wenbao compiled a new set of materials about the Southern Tang: *Jiangbiao zhi* 江表志. There, we read about Li Yu's reaction to Han Xizai's transgressive behavior:

> When Liu Xuan was serving as an Investigating Censor, he lived in Han Xizai's mansion. Han did not rectify the behavior of the women in his household, so [Liu] reported him to the Mentor of the Right [in the Supervisorate of the Household] of the Heir Apparent and recommended that [Han] be reassigned to the Southern Capital [at present-day Nanchang]. Those who discussed the matter were skeptical of what Liu Xuan said, so Xuan in order to clear his reputation then submitted a memorial absolving Xizai. [Li] Houzhu rebuked him, saying: "You are no Wei Zheng, ready to be completely frank." Xuan replied: "I may be no Wei Zheng, but your majesty is no Taizong either." [66]

The affair was sufficiently serious that Han had to plead his case with Li Yu, and in the end he avoided reassignment.

In a text completed a couple of years later, *Wudai shibu* (1012), Tao Yue writes at greater length about Han Xizai's behavior:

> In his late years he was unrestrained. He had a hundred women in his service, and every time he invited guests for a banquet, he would have his female retainers go out to meet

65. "後房蓄聲妓，皆天下妙絕，彈絲吹竹，清歌豔舞之觀，所以娛侑賓客者，皆曲臻其極。" Shi Xubai 史虛白 (attributed), *Diaoji litan* 釣磯立談, *Lianting cang shu* 棟亭藏書 edition, 29b-30a, *Zhongguo jiben guji ku* 中國基本古籍庫 (Airusheng shuzihua jishu yanjiu zhongxin 愛如生數字化技術研究中心, 2008).

66. "柳宣為監察御史居韓熙載門下。韓以帷薄不修，責授太子右庶子分司南都。議者疑柳宣上言宜為自明，乃上章雪熙載事。後主叱曰：爾不是魏徵，頗好直言。宣曰：臣非魏徵，陛下亦非太宗。" Zheng Wenbao 鄭文寶, *Jiangbiao zhi* 江表志 (1010), *Xuehai leibian* 學海類編 edition, 3/3a, *Zhongguo jiben guji ku* 中國基本古籍庫 (Airusheng shuzihua jishu yanjiu zhongxin 愛如生數字化技術研究中心, 2008).

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> the guests first to banter, or [pretend to fight with them], or steal their officials' boots and ivory insignia, leaving no-one alone, and only after that would Xizai stroll out as if this was normal behavior. There were also several doctors, Daoists, and Buddhist monks, all of whom made themselves at home and took the female servants off to any old place [in the mansion]. The illegitimate ruler [Li Houzhu] knew of this, but despite his anger did not want to admonish such a high official for his excesses, so he ordered a painter-in-attendance to make a picture to bestow on [Han] and make him ashamed; when Xizai saw it, he fell quiet.[67]

For the present writer, the fact that the first mention of a painting on the theme of the goings-on in Han Xizai's residence dates from 1012, more than four decades after Han's death, suggests: first, that the pictorial theme emerged at the Song capital as part of the same process as the anecdotes;[68] second, that the painters of the various versions expected their audiences to bring their knowledge of the anecdotes to viewing the painting; and third, that the attribution of the commission to Li Yu was an attempt by Tao Yue or others before him to account for the pictorial theme's existence that had no basis in fact. By the same token, the attribution of every version of the pictorial theme to a Southern Tang artist may be suspected to be a further extension of this fictionalizing process.

One unexpected iconographic detail is worth highlighting for its contribution to the pictorial fiction. Given the political implications of the painting, the choice to include the depiction of a girl dressed in Liao costume cannot have been innocent and must be considered part of the painting's ostensible indictment of Han Xizai. Here, historical realities may be less important than later perceptions. Writing in 1084 about the frustrated imperial ambitions of the Southern Tang ruler, Li Jing, which Han Xizai had encouraged in 947, Sima Guang states in reference to the year 955:

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67. "晚年不羈，女僕百人，每延請賓客，而先令女僕與之相見，或調戲，或毆擊，或加以爭奪靴笏，無不曲盡，然後熙載始緩步而出，習以為常。復有醫人及燒煉僧數輩，每來無不升堂入室，與女僕等雜處。偽主知之，雖怒，以其大臣，不欲直指其過，因命待詔畫為圖以賜之，使其自愧，而熙載視之安然。" Tao Yue, *Wudai shibu, Chanhua An congshu* edition, 5/12b.

68. In addition, an annalistic work with biographies, *Jiangnan yeshi* 江南野史, was written by Long Gun 龍袞 between 1010 and 1022. The anonymous anecdotal *Jiangnan yu zai* 江南餘載, is said in a 1075 preface to be Zheng Wenbao's intended sequel to *Jiangbiao zhi*, but may be a later work by a different author.

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> [Li Jing] dispatched envoys across the sea to communicate with the Qidan and the Northern Han and conspire with them to conquer the Middle Kingdom. Only because, at the time, so many things happened in the Middle Kingdom, was there no chance for him to ally himself with them.[69]

I take the Liao costume in the painting to be a reference to these abortive contacts with the Liao, whatever the real significance of the contacts may have been.

On balance, the evidence presented here points to *Night Banquet* having been painted during the early Northern Song period, at the capital, during Taizong's or Zhenzong's reign, or at latest the beginning of Renzong's reign, with an archived portrait of Han Xizai being incorporated into the painting, by as yet unidentified northern artist working in the same metropolitan tradition as Wang Ai. As argued above, the painting interprets a pictorial theme that emerged at the Song capital as part of the same process as the anecdotes describing the transgressive goings-on at Han Xizai's residence. A succession of events—the fall of Southern Tang, Li Yu's arrival in Kaifeng in 976, and his subsequent sojourn in Kaifeng until his death by poisoning in 978, together with the emergence of former Southern Tang officials as prominent officials under Taizong and Zhenzong—further fuelled a preexisting northern fascination with the details of Southern Tang court life. Inevitably, apocryphal stories circulated alongside the relatively reliable information provided by insiders. It is hardly surprising that they inspired the production of paintings at the capital depicting Han's lifestyle, or that the commission was retrospectively attributed to Li Yu. Whether painted for the court or for a high government official, *Night Banquet* as one of these paintings ostensibly conveyed the ideological message that Taizong's conquest of Southern Tang was part of a restoration of moral order, by providing a counterexample to the contemporary integration of meritorious Southern Tang officials like Xu Xuan into the Song state apparatus.

IV. A Site of Encounter and Collaboration

Much about *Night Banquet*, therefore, can be specified: where and approximately when it was painted, the anecdotal (and partly factual) basis for the depicted activities, the architectural relationships between the scenes, and the references to material culture. Yet, none of these determinations makes the painting any less enigmatic, because—as I shall try to show

69. "又遣使自海道通契丹及北漢，約共圖中國。值中國多事，未暇與之校。" Sima Guang 司馬光 et al., *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑 (1084) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 1992), 292/9531-9532. Cited and translated by Johannes L. Kurz, "On the Unification Plans of the Southern Tang Dynasty," *Journal of Asian History*, 50, no. 1 (2016), p. 37.

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in this final section—the painting is full of narrative, attentional, and rhetorical ambiguities that characterize the painting as a site of encounter and collaboration with the beholder. So dense is this pattern of ambiguities that one can only conclude that the artists went out of their way to create it, and thus to relativize the importance of the painting's ostensible denunciation of Han Xizai.

A. Narrative Ambiguity

No single narrative reading of the painting accounts for it completely. Although it lends itself to interpretation as the events of a single evening, the painting gives us just as many reasons to see in it the activities of several evenings. Both possibilities are set up by the opening banquet scene, in which Han Xizai entertains four guests.

The Single-evening Narrative. Two of the four guests at the banquet gradually disappear from the narrative. The first to disappear are two of the grey-robed guest officials: the moustachioed official figure facing us holding his hands in a respectful *chashouli* gesture, seemingly detached from the activities (recalling Liu Xuan's decision to denounce Han Xizai), and the heavy-set man with a moustache and goatee seated next to the pipa-player, who on the contrary is fascinated either by the female musician's playing or by the musician herself. Her musical performance has either been preceded, or will be followed, by a separate musical performance by a musician standing at the back holding a flute; the small drum on a stand next to Han Xizai has a similar implication. Han and the red-robed man reappear in the second, courtyard scene. There, they are joined by another guest with a moustache and goatee, a relatively slim grey-robed official who could easily be the same man who in the banquet scene sits at a table next to Han Xizai and with his right hand uses a clapper to accompany the music. The courtyard scene, in which Han Xizai beats a drum with the red-robed man seated beside the drum, restates the hierarchical superiority of the host to his two remaining guests, and of the red-robed man to the grey-robed official, who now looks on, standing, in a subordinate position. Two of the male retainers from the previous scene reappear here as musicians accompanying a standing and clapping female singer and the girl dancer, herself previously seen in the banquet scene standing beside the seated heavy-set guest. The courtyard scene is the last appearance of the red-robed man. The subsequent scene places Han Xizai alone in his private apartment in the intimate company of several young women. His gaze, however, seems to be directed at the arriving lute-player. In the next scene, we return to the courtyard where a man who could be taken to be the remaining grey-robed guest reappears opposite the host, now accompanying a group of female musicians with clappers. The host is addressing a blue-jacketed woman in front of him; she in turn is not looking at him, but

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appears to be addressing a woman wearing a white jacket behind the host while at the same time pointing behind herself in the direction of the principal guest official; the white-jacketed woman bows her head in response. Finally, in the last scene a man who, once again, could be taken to be the remaining guest is shown seated, attended possibly by the two women from the previous scene; he holds the arm of the blue-jacketed woman, who has her hand on his shoulder. The spatiotemporal transition from the prior scene is cleverly indicated by a woman in the courtyard who addresses one of Han Xizai's male retainers, identified as such by his full beard. To the left of the seated guest, however, the host holds up his left hand as if to tell the blue-jacketed woman not to go further. In what is potentially an explanation of the gesture, behind Han Xizai another retainer cajoles a third woman into approaching the guest, an action that brings the narrative to an end.

The Multi-evening Narrative. Contradicting the seemingly obvious narrative of a single evening, however, are the host's changes of clothing. When we first encounter him in the central space of the Inner Hall, he is wearing a grey robe. This robe is then exchanged for a pale brown one in the next courtyard scene. We next see the host in his private apartment in the rear of the Inner Hall, now once more wearing a grey robe. The following courtyard scene sees him stripped to a white jacket and trousers, while in the final scene, again in the courtyard, he wears the same pale brown robe as in the earlier courtyard scene. Assuming that these choices were not arbitrary, to reconcile the changes of dress with the hypothesis of a single evening's activities would require us to postulate four changes of costume during the evening, including two changes back to robes that had been worn earlier. Although not completely implausible, this explanation is a complicated one: if the painting was meant to unambiguously denote a single evening's activities, a straightforward sequence of grey robes to pale brown robes to white jacket and trousers would have made the point more clearly. Why introduce elements that could equally well signify scenes from related activities on different occasions? One can, for example, interpret the scene of the grey-robed Han Xizai in his private quarters as a post-banquet moment from another evening. Equally, one can view the final scene of Han holding drumsticks as a post-drumming moment on a different evening from the scene depicting a drumming performance. One can also interpret the scene of the white-clothed Han Xizai as a post-banqueting, post-drumming moment from a separate evening.

B. Ambiguities of Attentional Cues

A second set of ambiguities is visible in a number of the painting's attentional cues. In several cases, the combination of facial expression, posture, and gesture of a particular

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protagonist seems calculated to be enigmatic. While it is true, for example, that the moustachioed official figure seated facing us in the banquet scene can be interpreted as embodying a moral critique of the events around him, on the other hand his posture, *chashouli* gesture, and gently impassive face are so respectful that they contradict that straightforward interpretation **(Fig. 47)**. Similarly, the monk who in the courtyard scene looks fixedly at the red-robed young man certainly lends himself to interpretation in moral terms as the embodiment of a rebuke, as noted above **(Fig. 48)**; yet, the viewer aware of stories about the presence in the mansion of licentious monks might well interpret the monk's gaze rather differently, as one of same-sex desire. And what sense can one definitively make of Han Xizai's almost hieratic posture and gesture in the final scene (see Fig. 10)—is he signaling that the women attending his guest should now give way to another who is arriving behind him, less willing and younger, indeed just a girl—or that the evening's activities are now to come to an end?

The appearances of figures also introduce doubts over identification. Above, I have traced the passage of one grey-robed guest through several scenes. The painting, in my view encourages a viewer to do this. Yet, it is not possible to do with absolute confidence, which I would argue is equally deliberate. The use of the same grey robe for guests and retainers is also confusing, especially since both guests and retainers participate in the music-making. Above, I have also identified two women, one with a blue jacket, the other with a white jacket, as appearing in both the penultimate and the final scene, creating a narrative relationship between the scenes. Yet, their dress, though very similar, is not in fact identical, so one has the option of identifying them as a different pair of women. Similar slight differences in the depiction of inanimate objects also introduce ambiguity. One might at first think that the chair in the final scene is the same textile-covered chair, seen from a different angle, as the one in the drumming scene, and possibly even the same chair on which the guest playing the clappers sits in the banquet scene. Making the connections, one integrates the reappearing chair into a narrative. Yet, each of the three chairs is of slightly different construction, though one has to examine them very closely to notice the differences.

C. Rhetorical Ambiguities

The artists' knowing invocation of compositional tropes introduce a further level of ambiguity, which only the viewers most familiar with painting would have noticed. The first instance is in the banquet scene, where the painted motif of twin pines on the fixed-frame screen is placed between the heads of the *pipa*-player and the principal guest official **(Fig. 49)**. The motif signified moral friendship between two men, particularly men of the

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shi class—in other words, sociability at the opposite moral pole from the staging of sensory pleasure and desire with which it is juxtaposed. Interpreted ideologically, the juxtaposition makes explicit the Confucian values that the principal guest official is losing sight of, and can be taken as part of the painting's critique. But a less moralistic beholder could also interpret the juxtaposition along the same lines as the sardonic invocation of Guanyin in the name of the reported "At-Her-Ease Window." A second instance is the depiction of Han Xizai cross-legged on a throne-like chair, which brings to mind images of monks seated on thrones **(Fig. 50)**. By conflating a visual trope of sagehood with a scene of licentiousness, the painting turns the trope rhetorically against its subject. But again: is this to the end of moral critique, or of sardonic play? A third instance is in the final scene, which brings to mind the many Tang and earlier frieze-like presentations in handscrolls of encounters between a host and a guest. In *Night Banquet*, however, the guest occupies the chair while the host stands, and moreover has his back turned to the host. The narrative ambiguity of this scene noted earlier is doubled by a rhetorical ambiguity: are we meant to take it at face value, or to take pleasure in the way the artist has cocked a snoot at the authority of tradition? One only has to bring to mind a slightly earlier composition known through a Song copy, *Six Untrammelled Men* (*Liu yi tu* 六逸圖, Palace Museum, Beijing), to realize that identification of such sardonic compositional play is not necessarily anachronistic in this historical context.[70]

D. Pictorial Attitude: Beyond the Rhetorical Program

Rather than try to identify any one narrative and rhetorical choreography in *Night Banquet*, or any one interpretation, we may do better to draw the obvious conclusion from these multiple productive ambiguities—that they are the result of a deliberate strategy of sense-making. The elimination of physical architectural elements furthers the strategy by encouraging the beholder to view the events as successive and continuous despite narrative contradictions and contradictions of dress. The near interchangeability of so many of the figures has much the same effect. In short, the painting makes most sense when we understand it to have been constructed in order to generate irresolvable questions, trapping the beholder in an enchanting web of temporal associations and possibilities. One device encapsulates the strategy: the use of a figure to connect spatially two moments widely separated in time. Between the penultimate and final scenes, a conversation is shown between the subordinate official standing next to the grey-robed guest with moustache and beard as he accompanies the female musicians using clappers and a female retainer in the next scene who stands near

70. The composition is known today through a Song copy in the Palace Museum, Beijing.

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what appears to be the same grey-robed guest, now seated on a chair **(Fig. 51)**. The tension between a beholder's perceptually actualized experience of continuous residential spacetime and the beholder's imaginatively actualized experience of spacetime discontinuity is a large part of what makes the scroll so compelling.

Ostensibly, the painting articulates a clear rhetorical program of disapproval of licentiousness, yet how could this program ever have been taken at face value given that the artists simultaneously did everything they could to implicate the beholder pleasurably in the painting's world? Right to left, the painting presents four scenes of musical entertainment, followed by a final scene with an explicitly erotic theme. An erotic atmosphere is present throughout, imposing itself from the very first image we see: a bedroom with the head of a lute visible on the bed. In this atmosphere of eroticism, an enigmatic sequence of social situations stages the unfolding of different narrative possibilities. It would appear, then, that the painting is by no means simply a potential site of moral reflection fulfilling a simple didactic purpose, for the ostensible rhetorical program also provides a moral alibi for voyeuristic enjoyment of the very licentiousness that is being condemned. While the ostensible rhetorical program is unambiguous, the pictorial attitude of the painting is on the contrary highly ambiguous and all the more compelling for it. This ambiguity of pictorial attitude, balancing condemnation and complicity, makes the painting a site of open-ended contemplation and reflection.

As an early Northern Song painting treating a Southern Tang theme, *Night Banquet* has a plausible, if unexpected, context. It belongs to a moment when the simple cultural confrontation of Taizu's reign had given way to the agonistic sense of cultural competition with the Southern Tang legacy characteristic of the Taizong and Zhenzong reigns, when the competitiveness was mediated by the presence of former Southern Tang officials in the Song administration, especially on the cultural side.[71] Many features of the painting betray northern admiration for Southern Tang cultural refinement, which by the Zhenzong reign had become influential in Kaifeng: the elaborate banquet evoking Southern Tang cuisine; the lovingly portrayed delicacy of the furniture; the green coverings of the chairs referencing a *tianshuibi* 天水碧 hue that was famously favored in Zhongling; the women's fashionable attire and beauty; and the vividly depicted musical performances that would have been assumed to be in southern style.[72] Moreover, the Southern Tang had accumulated collections of books,

71. Ng Pak-sheung, "Cultural Interactions and Competitions: The Case of the Song Dynasty (960–1279) and the Southern Tang (937–965)," *Rao Zongyi guoxueyuan yuankan* 饒宗頤國學院院刊 (Bulletin of the Jao Tsung-I Academy of Sinology), no. 7 (2020), pp. 255–319.

72. See Ding Tongjun, "*Han Xizai yeyan tu* yueqi kaoshi."

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calligraphies, and paintings that put those of tenth-century dynasties in the north to shame; along with the Shu royal collections, these acquisitions through conquest were foundational for the Northern Song imperial collection. *Night Banquet*'s evocation of a Southern Tang official mansion filled with paintings should be viewed in this context: it visualizes a cultural debt, though in such a way that the debt is minimized, since most of the depicted paintings are in northern, not southern style. Furthermore, it was well known that the Zhongling-based regime had preserved a Tang tradition of ritual protocol, decorum, and etiquette that had largely disappeared in the Five Dynasties north; as Ng Pak-sheung has noted, Han Xizai was one of the principal cultural arbiters in that domain.[73] By taking aim at Han, *Night Banquet* makes its own Northern Song patrons the arbiters of decorum instead; yet, the painting does not trivialize Han, who somehow emerges from the painting still an impressive figure. It is the great achievement of the painting that it enables such contradictions to make visual sense, thereby taking us deep into the cultural and political complexity of the Taizong-Zhenzong period.

（責任編輯：陳卉秀）

73. Ng Pak-sheung, "Cultural Interactions and Competitions: The Case of the Song Dynasty (960–1279) and the Southern Tang (937–965)," pp. 274–275.

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Fig. 48 *The Night Banquet of Han Xizai*, section 2, detail. After Zhejiang daxue Zhongguo gudai shuhua yanjiu zhongxin ed., *Song hua quanji, diyi juan, diyi ce*, no. 6.

Fig. 49 *The Night Banquet of Han Xizai*, section 1, detail. After Zhejiang daxue Zhongguo gudai shuhua yanjiu zhongxin ed., *Song hua quanji, diyi juan, diyi ce*, no. 6.

Fig. 50 (Left) Unidentified artist (Traditional attribution to Yan Liben), *Xiao Yi Obtaining the Lanting Manuscript by Deception*, detail, Song dynasty. Handscroll, ink on silk, 26.5 × 75.9 cm. Liaoning Provincial Museum. https://www.lnmuseum.com.cn/#/collect/detail?id=21010302862116A000631&pageType=3 (Right) *The Night Banquet of Han Xizai*, section 4, detail. After Zhejiang daxue Zhongguo gudai shuhua yanjiu zhongxin ed., *Song hua quanji, diyi juan, diyi ce*, no. 6.

Fig. 51 *The Night Banquet of Han Xizai*, sections 4 and 5. After Gugong bowuyuan, *Gugong bowuyuan cangpin daxi. Huihua bian 1*, no. 35.

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Fig. 1 Unidentified artist or artists, *The Night Banquet of Han Xizai* (韓熙載夜宴圖), Northern Song dynasty. Handscroll, ink and colors on silk, 28.7 × 335.5 cm. Palace Museum, Beijing.

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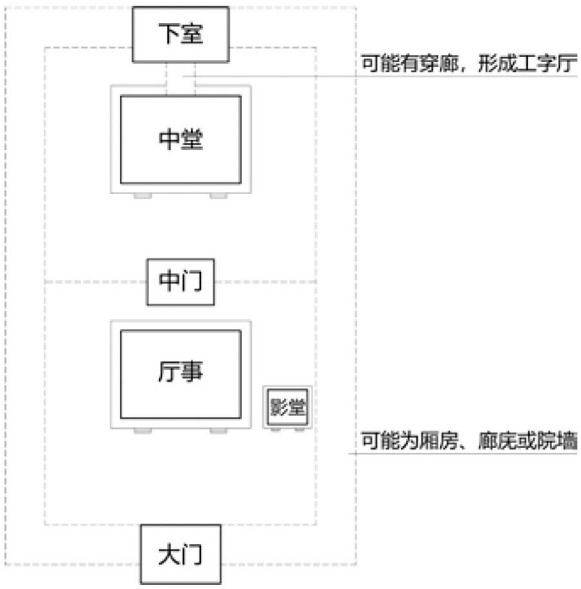


Fig. 2 Plan of a Northern Song *guanzhai* residence template.

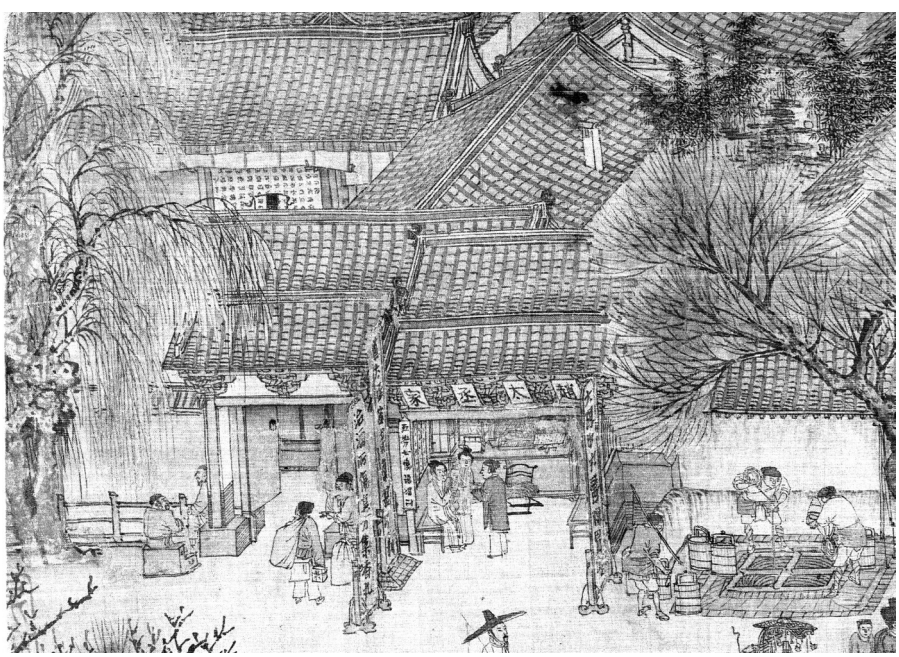


Fig. 3 Unidentified artists, *Along the River at the Time of the Qingming Festival* (清明上河圖), detail, Northern Song dynasty. Handscroll, ink and light color on silk, 24.8 × 528.7 cm. Palace Museum, Beijing.

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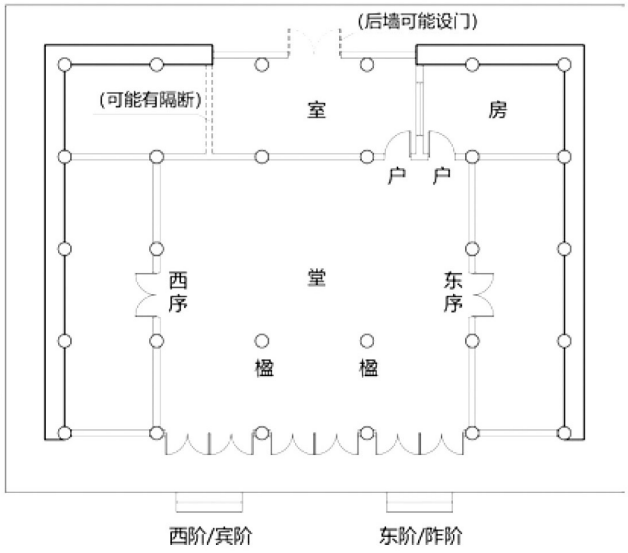


Fig. 4 Plan of a *guanzhai* residence Inner Hall template.



Fig. 5 (a) Detail of a stone relief performance scene from the Hebei tomb of Wang Chuzi, 924. (b) Detail of pictorial brick relief performance scene from the Shaanxi tomb of Feng Hui, 958. (c) Detail of the opening section of *Night Banquet*.

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Fig. 6 *The Night Banquet of Han Xizai*, opening section.



Fig. 7 *The Night Banquet of Han Xizai*, section 2.

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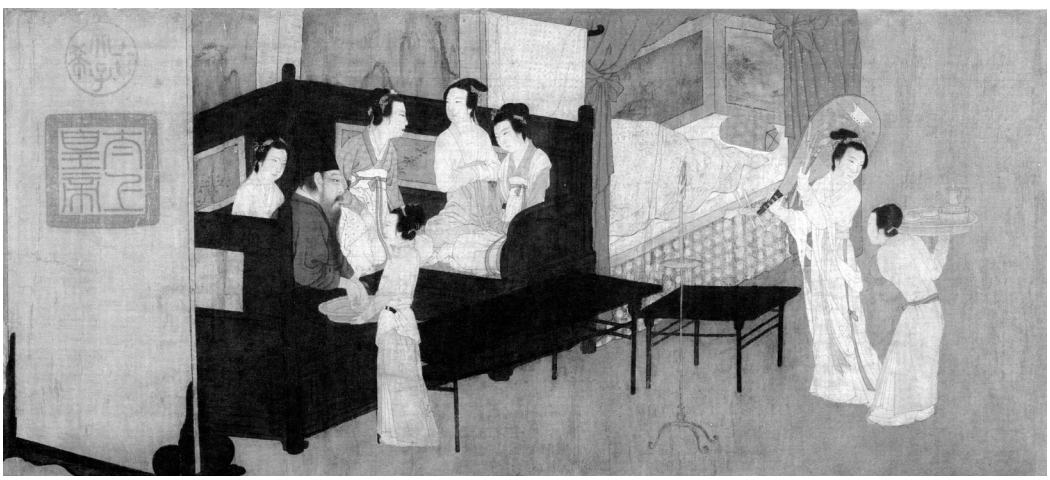


Fig. 8 *The Night Banquet of Han Xizai*, section 3.



Fig. 9 *The Night Banquet of Han Xizai*, section 4.

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Fig. 10 *The Night Banquet of Han Xizai*, section 5.

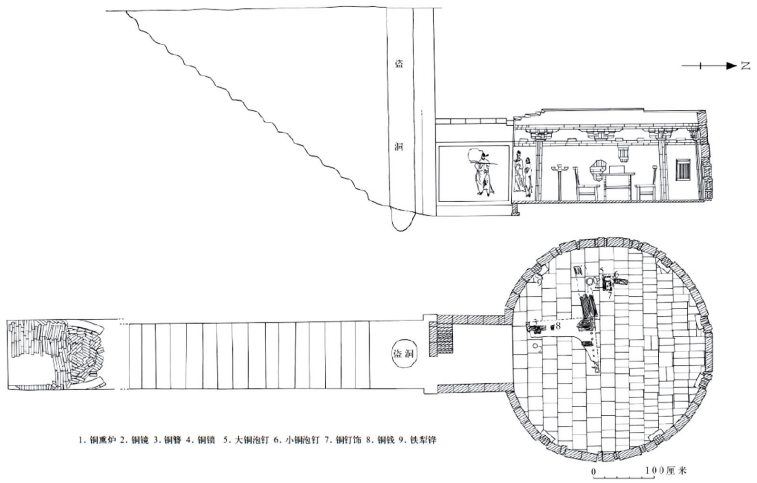


Fig. 11 Plan and section of a tomb excavated in the south of Luoyang, late Tang or Five Dynasties.

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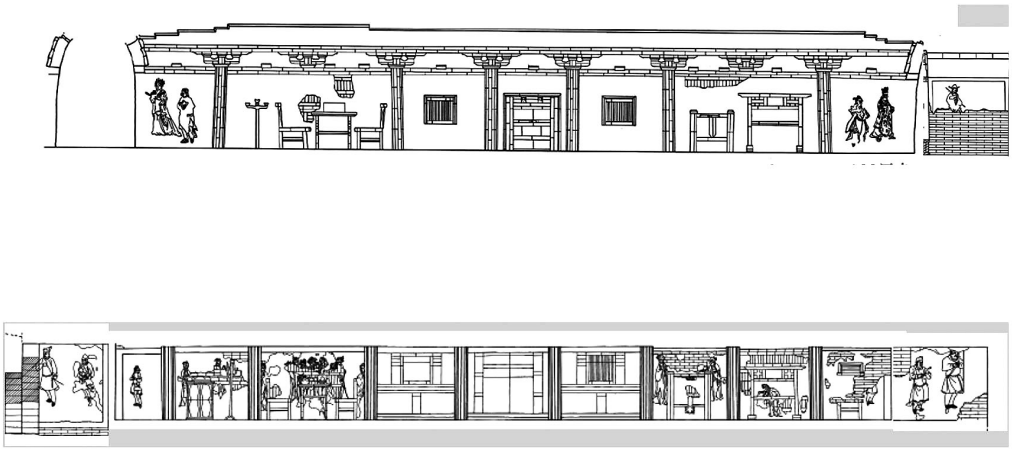


Fig. 12 (Top) Sectional drawing of the pictorial program in a tomb excavated in the south of Luoyang, late Tang or Five Dynasties. (Bottom) Sectional drawing of the pictorial program in Tomb at Yingguancun in Mangshan zhen, Luoyang, Five Dynasties.



Fig. 13 Tomb at Yingguancun in Mangshan zhen, Five Dynasties.

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Fig. 14 *Tangwu* scene from a tomb at Yingguancun in Mangshan zhen, Five Dynasties.

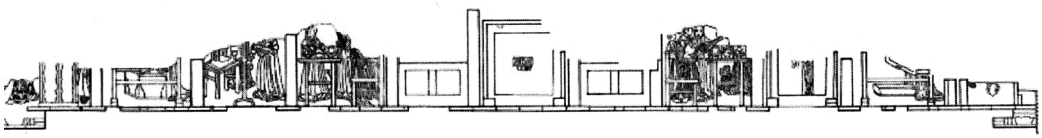


Fig. 15 Sectional drawing of the pictorial program in a tomb at Miaobeicun in Luoyang, Five Dynasties.

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Fig. 16 Mural depiction of a woman opening a case of clothes, from a tomb at Miaobeicun in Luoyang, Five Dynasties.



Fig. 17 East and west corridor murals from a tomb at Xinzhuang in Mengjin County, Luoyang, late Tang or Five Dynasties.

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Fig. 18 (Left) *The Night Banquet of Han Xizai*, section 4, detail. no. 6. (Right) West corridor mural from a tomb at Xinzhuang in Mengjin County, Luoyang, late Tang or Five Dynasties. Luoyang Ancient Tombs Museum.

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Fig. 19 Memorial portrait. Detail from a hanging scroll depiction of the Bodhisattva Yinlu ("who shows the way"). Hanging scroll, ink and colors on silk, 94.5 × 54 cm. Pelliot Dunhuang Collection MG 17657, Musée Guimet.



Fig. 20 *The Night Banquet of Han Xizai*, section 2, detail: portrait of Han Xizai.

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Fig. 21 Traditional attribution to Li Zanhua (Yelü Bei), *Nomads with a Tribute Horse*, detail, Northern Song. Handscroll, ink, color, and gold on silk, 27.8 × 125.1 cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

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Fig. 22 (Left) T*he Night Banquet of Han Xizai*, section 4, detail. (Center and right) Traditional attribution to Zhao Yan (d. 923), *Eight Princes on a Spring Excursion*, detail, Five Dynasties or Northern Song. Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, 161.9 × 102 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.

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Fig. 23 *The Night Banquet of Han Xizai*, section 1, detail.



Fig. 24 Mural depiction of a male retainer. Shunling mausoleum of the Later Zhou emperor Gongdi, 973.



Fig. 25 Mural depiction of male retainers. Tomb of Wang Chuzhi, 924.

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Fig. 26 (Left and right) *The Night Banquet of Han Xizai*, details of section 5 and 4, respectively. (Center) Painted sculptures of female attendants in the Sage Mother Hall at Jinci in Taiyuan, ca. 1023–1032.

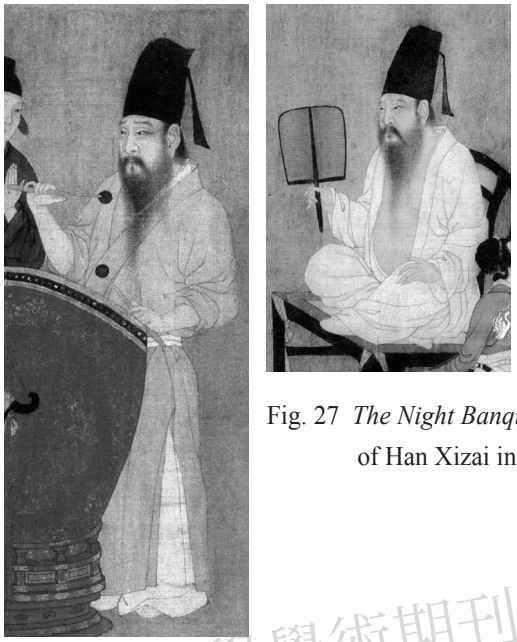


Fig. 27 *The Night Banquet of Han Xizai*, details of portraits of Han Xizai in section 2 (Left) and 4 (Right).

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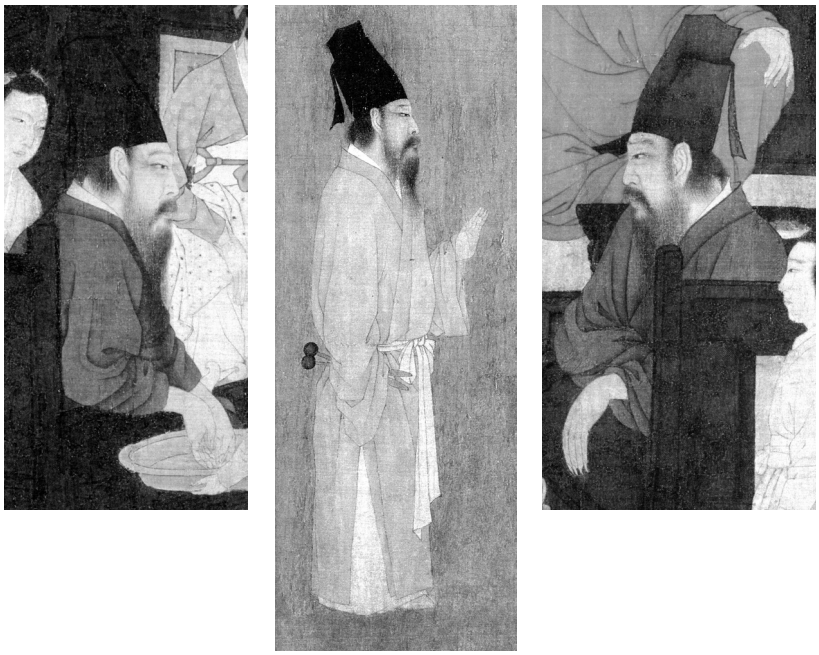


Fig. 28 *The Night Banquet of Han Xizai*, details of portraits of Han Xizai in section 3 (Left) and 1 (Right); and in section 5 (Center).

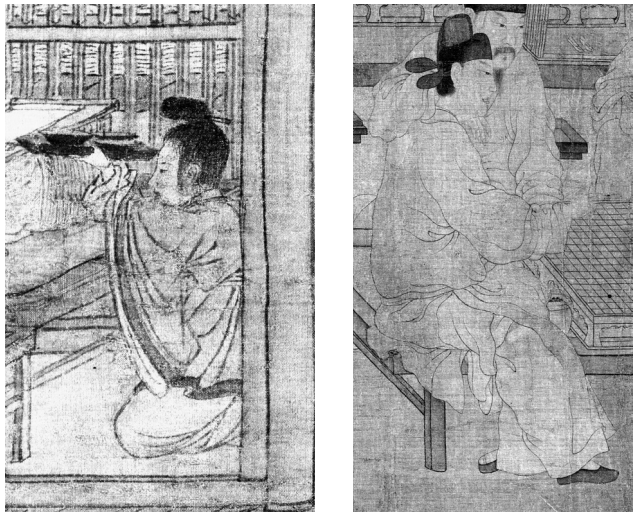


Fig. 29 (Left) Historical portrait of Meng Guang; detail from Wei Yan, *Lofty Scholar*, Southern Tang dynasty. Hanging scroll, ink and colors on silk, 134.5 × 52.5 cm. Palace Museum, Beijing. (Right) Contemporary portrait of Li Hongji; detail from Zhou Wenju (traditional attribution), *Playing Weiqi in Front of a Double Screen*, Northern Song. Handscroll, ink and colors on silk, 40.3 × 70.5 cm. Palace Museum, Beijing.

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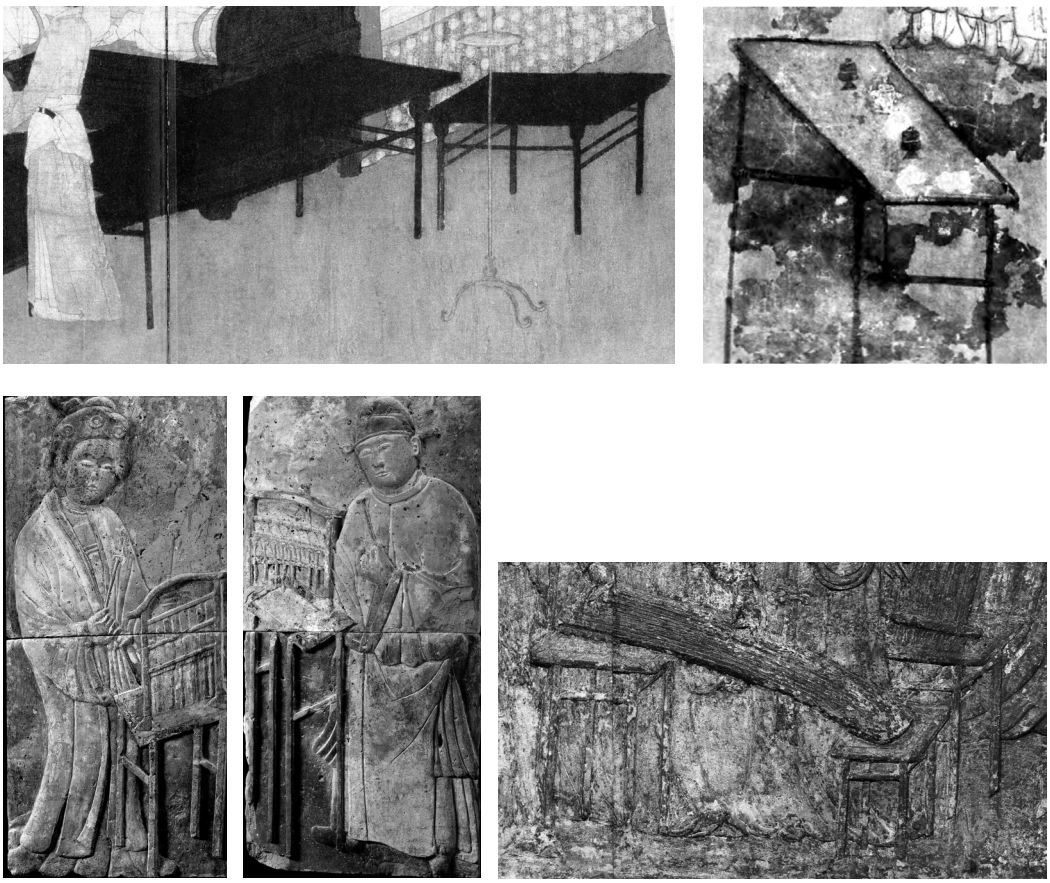


Fig. 30 (Top left) *The Night Banquet of Han Xizai*, section 3, detail. (Top right) Detail from a vernacular painting excavated from the pagoda of Ciyusi in Ganzhou, Jiangxi, Five Dynasties-early Northern Song. (Bottom left) Two details of pictorial brick reliefs depicting musical performances in the Shaanxi tomb of Feng Hui, 958. (Bottom right) details of pictorial stone relief depicting a musical performance in the Hebei tomb of Wang Chuzhi, 924.

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Fig. 31 (Left) Lamp holder, Ding ware, Northern Song dynasty. Dingzhou Municipal Museum. (Right) Begonia-shaped cup, Ding ware, Five Dynasties. Hangzhou Historical Museum.



Fig. 32 (Left) Fanchang ware wine ewer and warming bowl excavated from Five Dynasties tomb M1 at Laopeichong in Fanchang County. Anhui Museum. (Right) Fanchang ware wine ewer and warming bowl, Northern Song dynasty. Anhui Museum.

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Fig. 33 *The Night Banquet of Han Xizai*, section 1, detail.

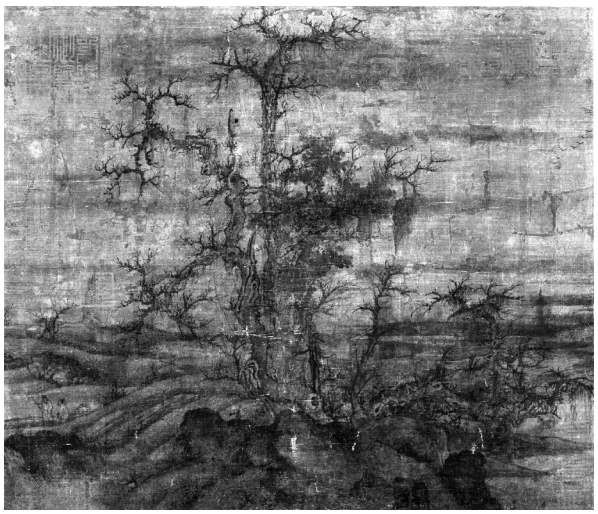


Fig. 34 Unidentified artist (traditional attribution to Li Cheng), *Small Wintry Grove*, Northern Song dynasty. Hanging scroll, ink and light color on silk, 42.2 × 49.2 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.

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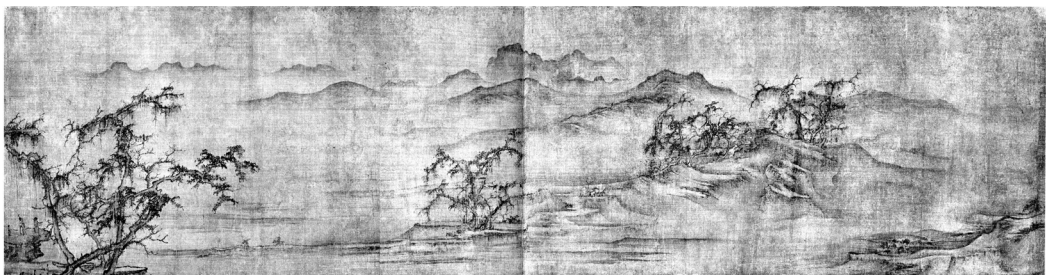


Fig. 35 Attributed to Xu Daoning, *Temple amid Autumn Mountains.* Handscroll, ink and light color on silk, 58.3 × 147.5 cm. Fuji Yurinkan, Kyoto.

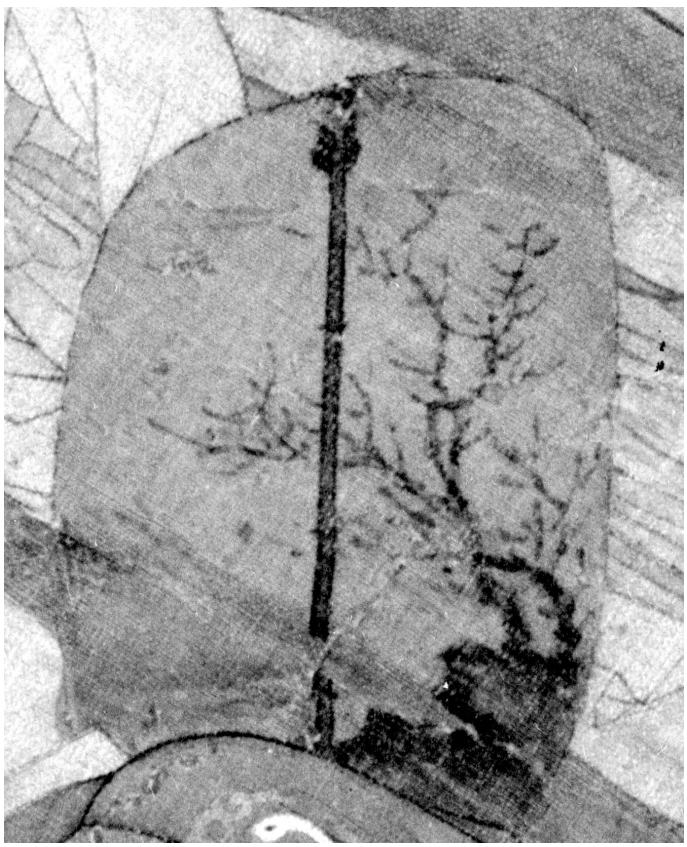


Fig. 36 *The Night Banquet of Han Xizai*, section 4, detail.

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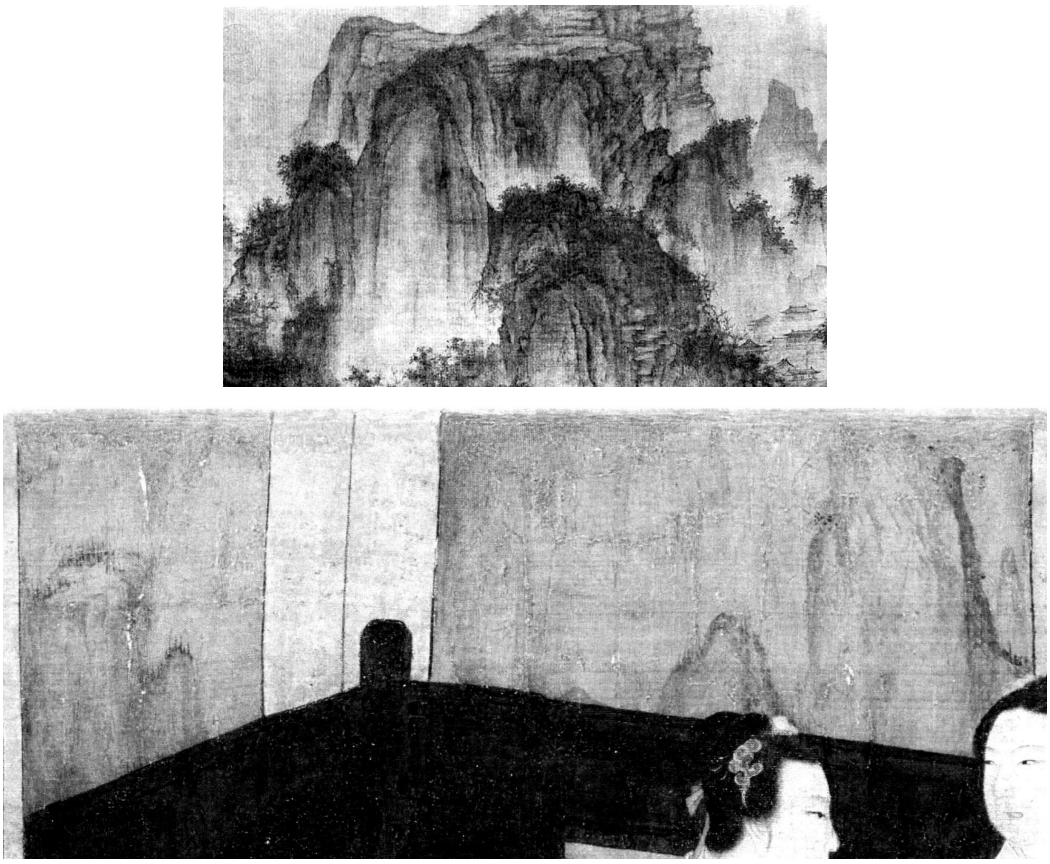


Fig. 37 (Top) After Li Cheng, *Luxuriant Forest among Distant Peaks*, detail, Northern Song dynasty. Handscroll, ink and light color on silk, 45.2 × 143.2 cm. Liaoning Provincial Museum. (Bottom) *The Night Banquet of Han Xizai*, section 3, detail.

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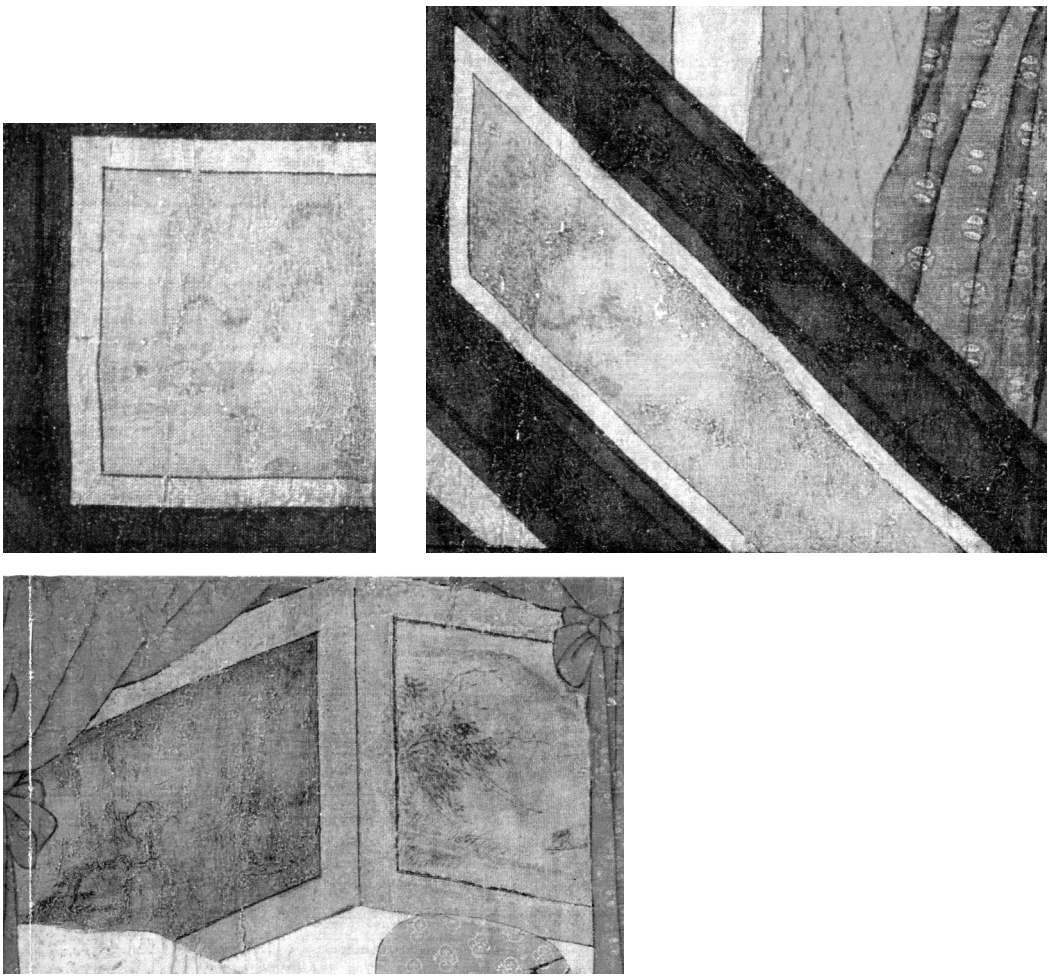


Fig. 38 (Top) *The Night Banquet of Han Xizai*, section 1, two details of a set of simulated couch paintings. (Bottom) *The Night Banquet of Han Xizai*, section 3, detail of a set of simulated couch paintings.

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Fig. 39 Juran, *Buddhist Retreat by Streams and Mountains*, Northern Song dynasty. Hanging scroll, ink and light color on silk, 184.5 × 56.1 cm. Cleveland Museum of Art.

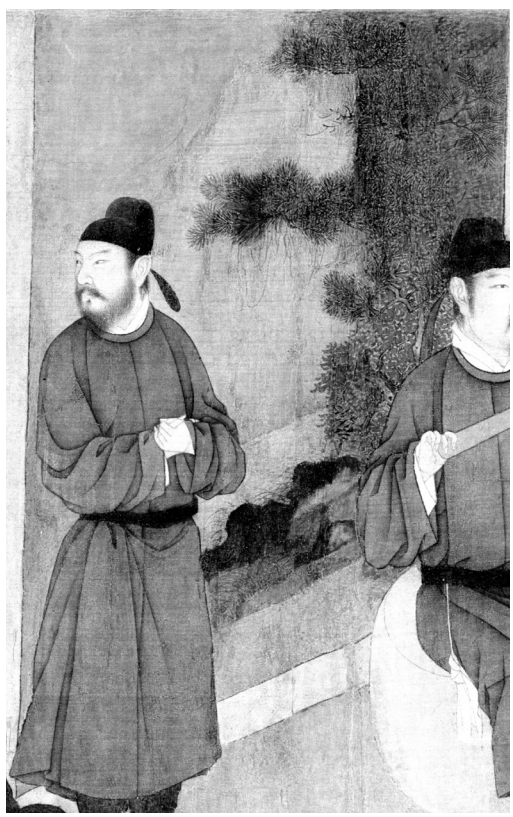


Fig. 40 *The Night Banquet of Han Xizai*, section 4, detail.

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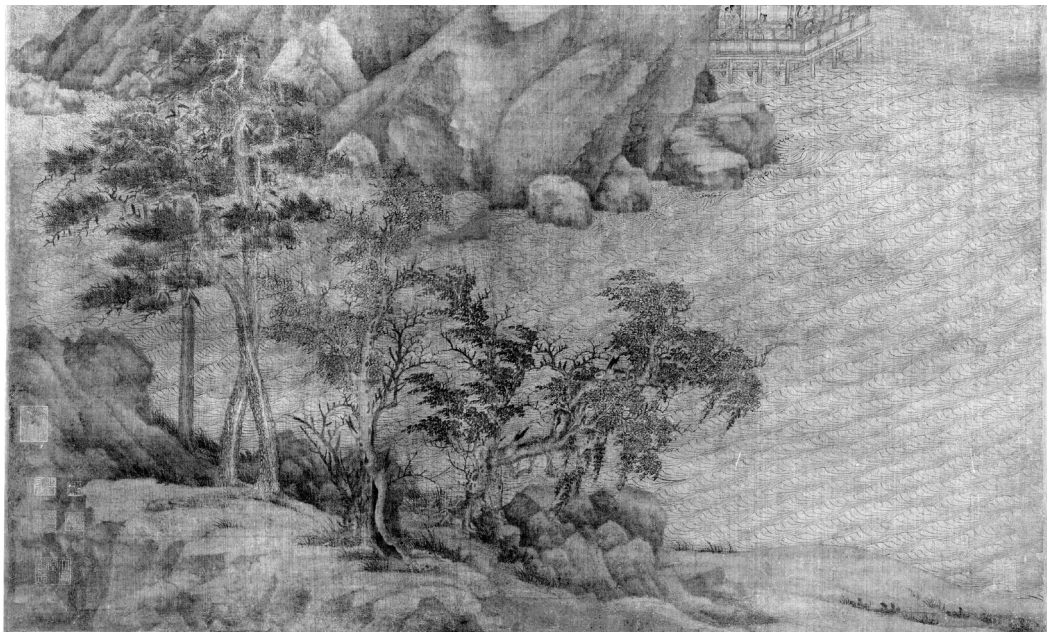


Fig. 41 Attributed to Dong Yuan, *Riverbank*, detail, Southern Tang dynasty. Hanging scroll, ink and light color on silk, 220.3 × 109.2 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Fig. 42 *The Night Banquet of Han Xizai*, section 3, detail of a set of simulated couch paintings.

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Fig. 43 Mural depiction of female attendants, coffin chamber, tomb of Xu Congyun, 982, Liao dynasty.

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Fig. 44 Mural depiction of a female figure wearing a *beizi*, from a tomb excavated in the south of Luoyang, late Tang or Five Dynasties.



Fig. 45 *The Night Banquet of Han Xizai*, section 4, detail.

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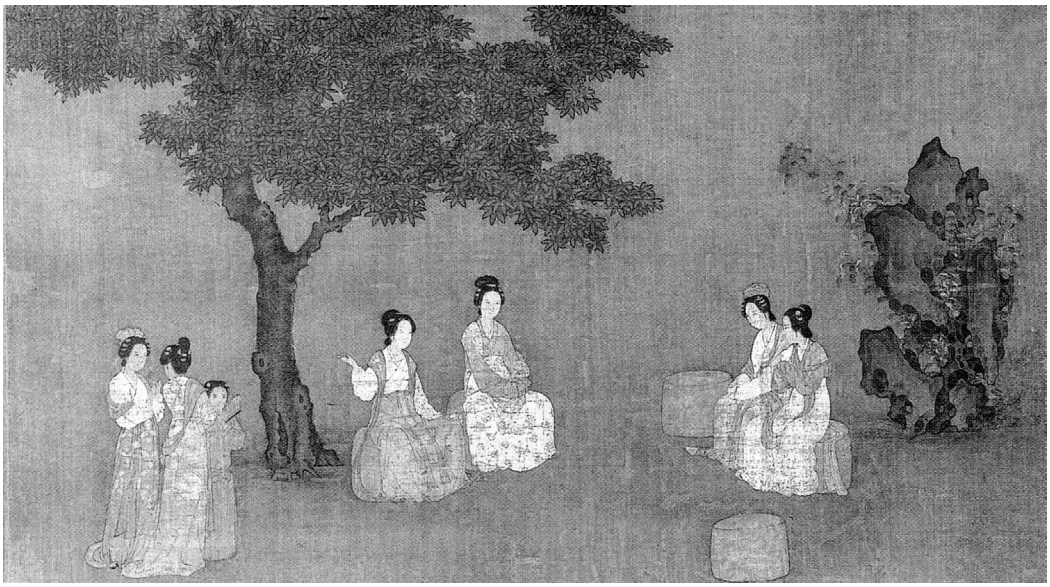


Fig. 46 Unidentified artist or artists, *Ladies' Classic of Filial Piety*, section 5, Southern Song dynasty. Handscroll, ink and colors on silk, 43.8 × 823.7 cm. Palace Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 47 *The Night Banquet of Han Xizai*, section 1, detail.

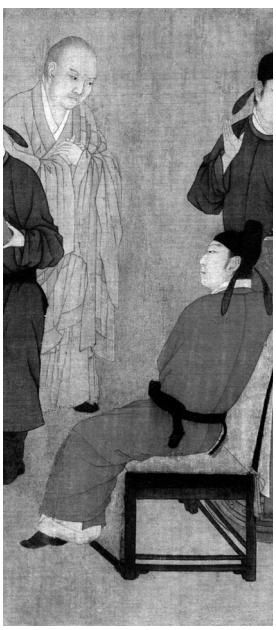


Fig. 48 *The Night Banquet of Han Xizai*, section 2, detail.

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Fig. 49 *The Night Banquet of Han Xizai*, section 1, detail.

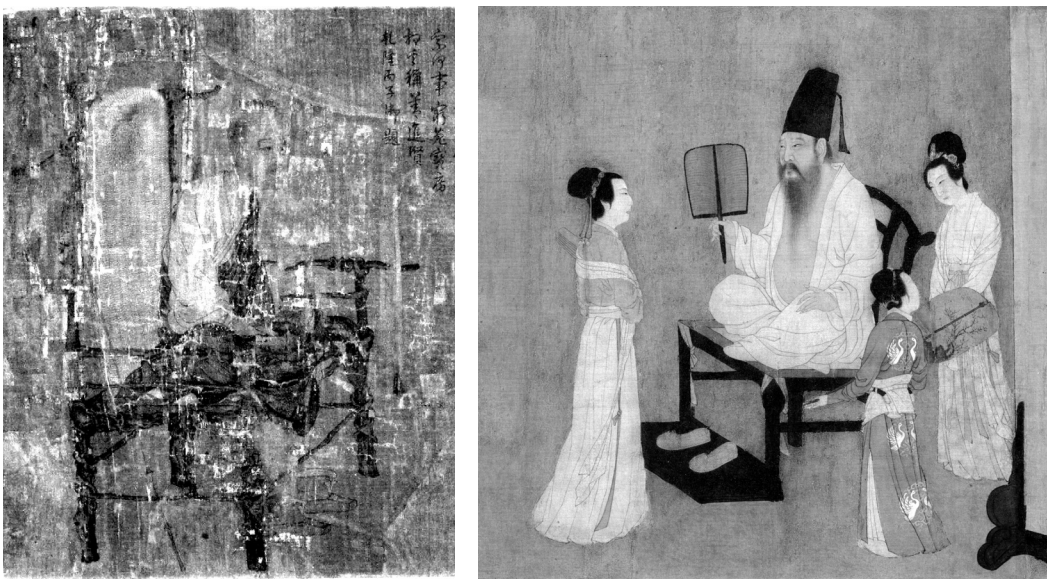


Fig. 50 (Left) Unidentified artist (Traditional attribution to Yan Liben), *Xiao Yi Obtaining the Lanting Manuscript by Deception*, detail, Song dynasty. Handscroll, ink on silk, 26.5 × 75.9 cm. Liaoning Provincial Museum. (Right) *The Night Banquet of Han Xizai*, section 4, detail.

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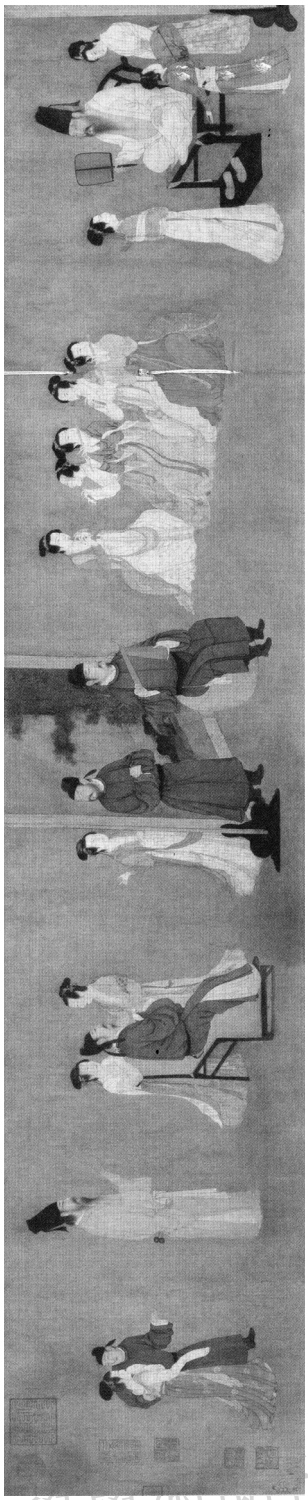


Fig. 51 *The Night Banquet of Han Xizai*, sections 4 and 5.

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《韓熙載夜宴圖》再探：多域的場/SITE

喬迅

紐約大學美術研究所

本研究重思《韓熙載夜宴圖》的製作地點，它的時間與作者身份；分析畫中居住空間與墓葬中對來世居所的描繪之間的關係，討論這一主題的文本記錄，以及該畫與北宋早期軼事文學之間的聯繫，並對這幅畫的視覺策略及其目的提出新的解釋。

關鍵詞：韓熙載、《韓熙載夜宴圖》、北宋繪畫

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