

Emperor Wudi of the Northern Zhou Dynasty



Wendi and Feidi of the Chen dynasty

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Grandmother, mother, and wife of King Wenwang of the Zhou dynasty (11th century BCE). Detail from the Sima Jinlong lacquer painting.



Interaction between Emperor Wendi of Chen's female followers and Emperor Xuandi's male attendants

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DOI: 10.6541/TJAH.2016.03.40.01

Decoding the Silent Comments: A New Study of *Thirteen Emperors*

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Abstract: *Thirteen Emperors*, attributed to Yan Liben, is a rare early Chinese painting that includes "portraits" of thirteen pre-Tang rulers. Important as it is, many questions remain unanswered. The one that puzzles modern scholars the most is the logic by which the artist selected and then grouped the included rulers. Scholars have not been able to understand why the artist painted wise and capable rulers side by side, and whether there were specific reasons for the various portrayals of them.

Based on a careful examination of *Thirteen Emperors* and extensive study of related textual records, this article offers a new perspective to understand this famous painting. It is suggested that although the kings were all portrayed with certain physical idealizations, the artist provided clues to his comments and judgment of them as rulers through various visual details, such as the kings and their followers' attire and posture, the interaction among the figures, and their facial expressions and activities. A careful study of these details and the accompanying inscriptions suggests a close correlation between the way these kings were portrayed, their attitude toward religions, and their political performance. It is argued that *Thirteen Emperors* is encoded with specific political comments and criticism, especially regarding a ruler's addiction to religious.

Keywords: Thirteen Emperors, Tang dynasty, Painting, Religion

Figure paintings, including portraits, were a major painting genre in pre-Song China. Unfortunately, few early Chinese portraits have survived. *Thirteen Emperors* (**Fig. 1**), a rare portrait painting attributed to the Tang dynasty artist Yan Liben (閻立本; ca. 601-673), therefore, is especially important and has been recorded and studied since the Song dynasty (960-1279).

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Important as this painting is, many questions remain. Two theories have been proposed by modern art historians. Some scholars, represented by Tomita and Chen Pao-chen, believe that the painting was completed in two parts: the second half of *Thirteen Emperors*, which contains seven rulers, was painted in the seventh century; the first half was finished, after a damaged original, before the mid-eleventh century.[1] Other scholars, including Jin Weinuo and Ning Qiang, hold that the entire painting was an eleventh-century copy of a seventh-century painting. [2] Textual records of this painting are meager and sometimes contradictory. Until further evidence comes to light, it is not possible to assign a definite dating to *Thirteen Emperors*. However, even scholars who date this painting to the eleventh century still consider it a close copy a Tang original; indeed, these same scholars use it to study the politics of the early Tang dynasty. It is a general consent that the artistic style and figural portrayal in *Thirteen Emperors* reflects practices of the early Tang dynasty.

Many scholars believe that this painting is an admonition painting that was used to exhort particular rulers to follow the example of previous wise emperors and to avoid the tyrannical practices of ill-reputed rulers from the past.[3] This understanding is valid, yet, because of the short and seemingly neutral inscriptions that accompany the depicted rulers and the insufficient analysis of the portrayal of the figures, few scholars have managed to determine which kings were meant to be exemplars and which stand as negative examples. Moreover, by treating *Thirteen Emperors* as a generic admonition painting, scholars have overlooked the particular selection and grouping of the thirteen rulers as well as the nuanced depiction of the kings, the officials, and attendants. Due to this lack of attention, the specific political message(s) conveyed by this painting has been neglected.

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1. Tomita Kojiro, "Portraits of the Emperors: A Chinese Scroll-Painting, Attributed to Yan Liben," *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts*, 30 (1932), pp. 6, 8; and Chen Pao-chen 陳葆真, "Painting as History: A Study of the *Thirteen Emperors* Scroll Attributed to Yan Liben 圖畫如歷史：傳閻立本《十三帝王圖》研究," *Taida Journal of Art History* 國立臺灣大學美術史研究集刊, 16 (2004), pp. 25-26.
2. Jin Wei-nuo 金維諾, "*Gu diwangtu* de shidai yu zuozhe 《古帝王圖》的時代與作者 (The Era and Painter of the Thirteen Emperors Scroll)", in *Zhongguo meishushi lunji* 中國美術史論集 (Essays on Chinese Art History) (Beijing: Renmin meishu chubanshe 人民美術出版社, 1981), pp. 141-148 and Ning Qiang, "Imperial Portraiture as Symbol of Political Legitimacy: A New Study of the *Portraits of Successive Emperors,*" *Ars Orientalis*, 35 (2008), pp. 105-106.
3. For example, Jin Wei-nuo, "*Gu diwang tu* kao 古帝王圖考 (Research on the Thirteen Emperors Scroll)," in *Zhongguo meishushi lunji* 中國美術史論集 (Essays on Chinese Art History) (Harbin: Heilongjiang meishu chubanshe 黑龍江美術出版社, 2003) , pp. 173-174; and Shih Shou-chien 石守謙, "Nansong de liangzhong guijianhua 南宋的兩種規鑒畫 (Two Types of Advisory Paintings in the Southern Song Dynasty)," in *Fengge yu shibian: Zhongguo huiHuashi lunji* 風格與世變—中國繪畫史論集 (Style in Transformation: Studies on the History of Chinese Painting) (Taipei: Yunchen Culture Ltd. 允晨文化, 1996), pp. 97-99.

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This paper examines many visual aspects of this famous painting that previous scholars have not addressed. In particular, it analyses the clothing of the kings and their attendants, personal accessories, and interaction among the figures. In addition to a detailed study of the images, it also draws on texts that were not in the purview of previous art historians. By looking at these textual documents about imperial dress, Daoist scriptures, and Buddhist documents, my analysis provides a more nuanced understanding of the portrayal of the figures in *Thirteen Emperors*. I suggest that the artist supplied many visual clues to convey his commentary on multiple political issues, especially the individual rulers' particular involvement in religious activities.

I. Scholarship on the Meaning(s) of *Thirteen Emperors*

In addition to dating *Thirteen Emperors* and identifying of the artist who made it, another question that baffles contemporary scholars is what standard—if any—was used to select particular kings for inclusion in the painting. The current painting contains thirteen rulers from pre-Tang China. As scholars have long noticed, the selection of the rulers is far from comprehensive. Some of the selected kings were well-known, wise rulers, while some, like Feidi (廢帝; 554-570; r. 560-568) and Houzhu (後主; 553-604; r. 583-589) of the Chen dynasty (557-589), were only on the throne for a couple of years and were remembered as weak or debauched, and therefore are insignificant in the history of China. When Mi Fu wrote about this painting in *Huashi*, he did not comment on this topic. The first person who raised this question is the Southern Song scholar Zhou Bida (周必大; 1126-1204). Zhou had the chance to view *Thirteen Emperors* and wrote in his colophon (**Fig. 2**):

> There were numerous emperors and kings from early history; [originally] there must have been more rulers than these depicted [on Thirteen Emperors]. Is it because [after its initial completion] people wanted to submit the painting to the imperial collection so they removed the section with the insignificant or disreputable rulers, and that these are the images of those discarded rulers just like mourning-the-dead and greeting-the-sick calligraphic pieces from the Jin dynasty?[4] However, Emperor

4. The surviving calligraphic works from the Jin and Liu-Song dynasties were usually works mourning the dead and inquiring after the sick. The Song dynasty scholar Shen Kuo (沈括; 1031-1095) believed that these works survived because, during the Zhenguan era (627-649), the Tang government collected the majority of calligraphic pieces from earlier dynasties, leaving only those about mourning the dead and inquiring after the sick. Since the Tang Imperial Collection was destroyed, the surviving pieces were mostly those that had not been collected by the court. See *Mengxi bitan quanyi* 夢溪筆談全譯 (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe 古籍出版社, 2013), 17. 161.

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> Wendi and Guangwu of the Han dynasty appear eye-catchingly at the beginning; why is this?... There must be someone who understands this.
> 古帝王多矣，繪事必不止此。無乃後人欲獻宮禁，而削其偏方不令之主，故間得流傳于世，如晉人弔喪問疾帖耶？然漢文、光武儼然卷首，何也？.. 必有能辨之者。

Apparently Zhou could not figure out why many infamous or historically insignificant rulers were included together in the same scroll with wise rulers like Emperor Wendi and Guangwu of the Han dynasty. Later scholars and connoisseurs did not leave much comment on this topic; contemporary scholars have attempted to understand the unusual array of rulers depicted on *Thirteen Emperors*, but no one has yet to provide a satisfying explanation.

Ning Qiang suggests that the artist painted the kings as six groups, arguing that each group contains one or two sons of the dynastic founders. The presumed patron, Emperor Taizong (598-649; r. 626-649) of the Tang dynasty, was a son of the founder of the Tang dynasty. Ning argues that by including these kings, Taizong meant to justify his occupation of the throne.[5] Ning's theory is problematic. First, the word "dynastic founder" is defined too broadly. In some cases, such as that of Emperor Wendi of the Sui dynasty (隋文帝; 541-604; r. 581-604) and Emperor Gaozu of the Tang dynasty (唐高祖; 566-635; r. 618-626), this term refers to the first ruler of a dynasty. However, this term is also used in cases such as that of Sima Zhao (司馬昭; 211-265), who laid the foundation of the Jin dynasty (266-420) but died before he was able to claim the throne.[6] Second, Ning does not explain the various compositions within different groups. For example, dynasty founder Emperor Wendi is shown in the Sui dynasty group; in the group of Chen dynasty portraits, the third generation of the founder's family, Feidi and Houzhu, are also included. In fact, the Chen dynasty group does not have a single son of a dynastic founder. The two emperors, Wendi (文帝; 522-566; r. 560-566) and Xuandi (宣帝; 530-582; r. 569-582), are nephews, not sons, of the dynastic founder and the first ruler Chen Baxian (陳霸先; 503-559; r. 557-559); moreover, Feidi and Houzhu were the third generation of the imperial clan.[7] Third, if Emperor Taizong of the Tang dynasty had wanted to use this painting to justify his heirship

5. Ning Qiang, "Imperial Portraiture as Symbol of Political Legitimacy: A New Study of the *Portraits of Successive Emperors*," pp. 114-115.
6. Ning Qiang considered Emperor Wudi to be the first emperor of the Jin dynasty as a son of "the dynastic founder." See Ning Qiang, "Imperial Portraiture as Symbol of Political Legitimacy: A New Study of the *Portraits of Successive Emperors*," p. 114.
7. Ning Qiang mistakenly identifies the two as Chen Ba-xian's sons. See Ning Qiang, "Imperial Portraiture as Symbol of Political Legitimacy: A New Study of the *Portraits of Successive Emperors*," p. 114.

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to the throne on the ground that he was a son of the founder of the Tang dynasty, it would have been more reasonable for him to have included previous meritorious models. Such examples are not hard to find. For example, Wendi of the Liu-Song dynasty (宋文帝; 407-453; r. 424-453) and Wudi of the Qi dynasty (齊武帝; 440-493; r. 482-493) were both sons of dynastic founders from recent history and were both undoubtedly wise and capable.[8] Instead of depicting such figures, Emperor Yangdi of the Sui dynasty (隋煬帝; 569-618; r. 604-618), a notorious ruler who put an end to the dynasty his father founded, was included. Finally, according to imperial tradition since the Qin dynasty (225-206 BCE), the heir apparent was the king's son regardless of whether the king was a founder. Since the founder usually had more than one son, being a son of a dynastic founder was not enough to legitimize a person's access to the throne. In most cases, the heir apparent was the firstborn son. Taizong was the second son of Emperor Gaozu. At the Coup of Xuanwu Gate, Taizong seized the throne after killing his older brother and heir apparent, Li Jiancheng (李建成; 589-626), and a younger brother, Li Yuanji (李元吉; 603-626). Soon after the event, he forced his father to appoint him as the heir apparent and then to abdicate to vacate the throne for him. If Emperor Taizong needed to justify his legitimacy, a more convincing strategy might have been to showcase his political merits rather than to point to his being a son of the previous ruler.

Shih Shou-chien and Chen Pao-chen, who believe the first half of *Thirteen Emperors* was a Northern Song copy, focus on the second half of the scroll. In agreement with Ning Qiang, both Shih and Chen also suggest that the painting was commissioned by Emperor Taizong of the Tang dynasty; unlike Ning Qiang, both of these scholars suggest that *Thirteen Emperors* is an admonition painting that contains a general message of learning lessons from rulers of the past, especially from the rulers of more recent dynasties.[9] Neither of these two scholars proposes a specific lesson conveyed by the painting, nor do either of them analyze whether there is a connection between the imperial lesson and the way the individual rulers are portrayed. Both scholars mainly focus on the relationship between textual records of the kings found in official history books and the particulars of their portrayals. Chen suggests that the artist based the appearance of the kings on texts pertaining to them; she argues that the second half of the scroll reflects Emperor Taizong's effort to comment on this part of history. Chen's correlation of

8. Wendi's reign during the Liu-Song dynasty was called Prosperity of Yuanjia (元嘉之治), and Wudi's of the Qi dynasty was called Prosperity of Yongming (永明之治). See Shen Yue (沈約; 441-513), *Songshu* 宋書 (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company 中華書局, 1974), 5. 103; and Xiao Zi-xian (蕭子顯; 487-537), *Nan-Qi shu* 南齊書 (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company 中華書局, 1972), 3. 63.
9. Shih Shou-chien, "Nansong de liangzhong guijianhua," pp. 97-99; and Chen Pao-chen, "Painting as History: A Study of the *Thirteen Emperors* Scroll Attributed to Yan Liben," pp. 1-48.

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text with image, however, is not consistent. For example, she asserts that that the identification of Emperor Wendi and Emperor Feidi of the Chen dynasty are erroneous; in her view, their depictions are not in accordance with the written description in the *Chenshu (History of the Chen Dynasty)*. Rather, she assigns new identities to the figures of Wendi and Feidi, that of Emperor Jianwendi (梁簡文帝; 503-553; r. 549-551) and Emperor Yuandi (梁元帝; 508-555; r. 552-555) of the Liang dynasty.[10] She also re-identifies Zhaodi (漢昭帝; 94-74 BCE; 87-74 BCE) of the Han dynasty as Wang Mang (王莽; 45 BCE-23; r. 8-23). When arguing for the new identities of Feidi and Zhaodi, her assumption is that the artist of *Thirteen Emperors* depicted the kings according to their lifespans: if a king lived to an advanced age, the artist would show him as an elderly person; if he only had a short life, the artist would depict him as a younger person. Using this reasoning, she questions the identification of Feidi because the portrayed king appears to be middle-aged, but Feidi died when he was only seventeen. In her view, since Yuandi of the Liang dynasty died at the age of forty-seven, he would be a better fit for the middle-aged looking figure identified as Feidi; thus, Chen believes that what is inscribed as Feidi should be Yuandi.[11] Using the same logic, she re-identifies Zhaodi of the Han dynasty as Wang Mang. However, Chen does not question the young appearance of the king of the kingdom of Wu (吳主孫權; 182-252; r. 222-252), in spite of the fact that Sun (**Fig. 3**) lived to an advanced age (seventy). Furthermore, she suggests "over-interpretation" by the artist as a way to explain the discrepancy between textual descriptions and the portrayals of Emperor Wudi of the Northern Zhou (周武帝; 543-578; r. 560-578), Emperor Houzhu of the Chen, and Emperor Wendi and Emperor Yangdi of the Sui dynasty.[12] By prioritizing textual description over the image, Chen understates the image's potential for commentary and treats the portraits as simply illustrations to historical books. Moreover, re-identifying the portrayed kings solely because they are not in keeping with particular textual records is risky; doing so may blur or completely change the meaning that the painting was meant to convey.

Like Shih and Chen, Shen Wei also considers *Thirteen Emperors* to be an admonition painting teaching a general lesson. However, unlike Chen, he does not believe the patron or the artist had a particular motive for having this painting commissioned/painted, nor does Shen Wei believe this painting has a specific message to convey, other than a general lesson to the rulers.

10. Chen Pao-chen, "Painting as History: A Study of the *Thirteen Emperors* Scroll Attributed to Yan Liben," pp. 11-13.
11. Chen Pao-chen, "Painting as History: A Study of the *Thirteen Emperors* Scroll Attributed to Yan Liben," pp. 12-13.
12. Chen Pao-chen, "Painting as History: A Study of the *Thirteen Emperors* Scroll Attributed to Yan Liben," pp. 8-10.

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Trying to explain the seemingly random arrangement of the kings, he argues that the current painting was not meant to be viewed as a typical handscroll that has a structured composition; instead, it was a court painters' collection of images of individual kings that were meant to be painted on screens, walls, or other surfaces of a building. The images were scaled down and painted onto silk and were used as *fenben* 粉本 for depicting these kings on architecture. Shen believes that the current handscroll was a small selection of kings from a much larger project that contained a much more comprehensive array of early rulers in China. Since *Thirteen Emperors* is not a complete painting, there should be no coherent theme or specific message of any kind. The major evidence Shen uses to support his argument that the painting is not complete is that the current scroll has five ruptures; according to Shen, these rupture suggest that the image part of this scroll was remounted and the individual images were rearranged.[13] Although Shen's insight is novel, he needs more official and scientific data to support his argument. Moreover, treating this painting as an incomplete piece risks overlooking its organic composition, which conveys the intended message of the painting.

As discussed above, although scholars from China, Taiwan, and the West have been studying *Thirteen Emperors* and have offered multiple theories that attempt to understand the meaning of this famous paintings, a satisfying answer has yet to be found.

II. *Gunmian* 兖冕: Regalia for Wise Rulers

As some scholars have already noticed, seven kings in this painting wear formal imperial attire, while the remaining six are dressed less formally. However, few art historians have gone beyond the formal/casual level to study the dress codes in this painting.[14] In traditional China,

13. Shen Wei 沈偉, *The* Thirteen Emperors *Attributed to Yan Liben: A Study of* Lidai diwang tu *in MFA* 波士頓藏 (傳) 閻立本《歷代帝王圖》研究 (Xian: Xian Academy of Fine Art 西安美術學院, 2012), pp. 57-58.
14. Chen Wen-hsi is the first and only scholar who analyzes the *mianfu* of the portrayed rulers. See Chen Wen-hsi 陳文曦, "The Initiative Study of Yan Li Ben's *Shi-San-Di-Wang-Tu*: Using *mian-fu* shi-er-zhang of the Emblazonry as a Basis 閻立本的《十三帝王圖》初探-以冕服十二章紋飾為基準," *Theses of the Department of Painting and Calligraphy* 書畫藝術學刊, 4 (2008), pp. 523-548. Chen's methodology, however, is similar to that of Chen Pao-chen's. Like Chen Pao-chen, who attempts to find a connection between the appearance of the rulers with their personalities and political achievements, Chen Wen-hsi tries to establish a relationship between the specific *zhang* patterns on a ruler's *mianfu* and his political merits. Two problems arise when using such a methodology. First, Chen Wen-hsi assumes an emperor's *yanmian* can have a random number of patterns rather than the required complete set of twelve. This assumption contradicts historical records. The number of *zhang* patterns was an indication of different types of *mianfu*

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strict regulations were upheld regarding an emperor's clothing, which was believed to be an indicator of dynastic legitimacy, as well as a factor that could affect the fate of a dynasty.

Seven emperors in the painting—Emperor Guangwu of the Han, Emperor Wendi of Wei (魏文帝曹丕; 187-226; r. 220-226), the King of Wu, King of Shu-Han (蜀主劉備; 161-223; r. 221-223), Emperor Wudi of Jin (晉武帝; 236-290; r. 265-290), Emperor Wudi of Northern Zhou, and Emperor Wendi of Sui—are dressed in the high-ranking regalia for an emperor called *gunmian*. Each piece of the outfit, from the headpiece to the shoes, was stipulated in detail in historical records of many dynasties. Theoretically, *gunmian* is the second highest-ranking regalia for emperors. The highest-ranking imperial regalia, *daqiumian* (大裘冕), was barely worn by emperors because of its impracticality, instead, emperors wore *gunmian* in most important ceremonies. There are two essential parts of this regalia: the headpiece, *gunmian*, the namesake of this outfit, and the matching clothes, *mianfu* (冕服). It was believed that the sage king Shun (舜) initiated the tradition of wearing *mianfu*.[15] *Mianfu* had special patterns that were called *zhang* (章), and an emperor's *mianfu* for *gunmian* regalia had twelve *zhang* patterns: the sun (日), the moon (月), constellations (星), mountains (山), dragon (龍), the pheasant (華蟲), ceremonial wine cups (宗彝), water weeds (藻), fire (火), rice powder (粉米), ax (黼), and *fu* (黻) pattern.[16] The appearance of the twelve *zhang* patterns varied from dynasty to dynasty, but their basic form remained identifiable (Table 1). *Zhang* patterns symbolized the virtues and capabilities a ruler was expected to have. For example, the sun, moon, and stars were chosen because they give light to the world, just as a king was expected to provide prosperity to his people; and the dragon, a mysterious animal that can take various forms, symbolized the ruler's ability to deal with ever-changing situations.[17]

It is not clear how this dress code was implemented in the pre-Qin (before 225 BCE) period; in the Qin dynasty, however, the use of the twelve patterns for imperial clothing was abolished. The *Hou-Han shu (History of the Latter Han)* records that the Qin abandoned *mianfu*

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for the emperor, and an emperor's *gunmian* always had twelve. Second, *Thirteen Emperors* has been restored in several areas; furthermore, the faded colors and lines, make some of the *zhang* patterns unrecognizable. Moreover, *zhang* patterns are supposed to be embroidered or printed on a specific location. For example, the constellation should be on the upper back of the king's upper clothes. Since the kings are shown from a single perspective, it is impossible to make all the *zhang* patterns visible. Therefore, to view the number and types of *zhang* patterns as an artistic strategy to comment on the depicted kings is problematic.

15. Mu Ping 慕平, annotated, *Shangshu* 尚書 (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company 中華書局, 2009), 42.
16. *Shangshu zhengyi* 尚書正義 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe 北京大學出版社, 2000), 3. 139.
17. *Shangshu zhengyi*, 3. 139-144.

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and that emperors wore black clothing for all important ceremonial sacrifices.[18] The Western Han (202 BCE-8 CE) followed the Qin dynasty's practice; *mianfu* dress was not resumed until the reign of Emperor Mingdi of the Eastern Han (明帝; 28-75; r. 57-75), who instituted a complete dress code for both emperors and officials.[19] The basic design of *gunmian* remained unchanged until the Qing dynasty (1644-1912). Although details varied, the major regulations for all imperial dress in the dynasties between Eastern Han and the Qing dynasty remained the same: the set of *gunmian* was the highest grade of clothing for rulers; the *gunmian* headpiece had twelve strings of beads in front and back, and the matching *mianfu* had a black upper dress and a red skirt (xuanyi xunshang 玄衣纁裳) that was decorated with the twelve *zhang* patterns; the matching shoes for *mianfu* are red (赤舃; **Fig. 4**).[20] While there were other regalia sets for the emperor to wear depending on the occasion, *gunmian* was reserved for the most important ceremonies, such as sacrifices to the heaven, earth, and imperial ancestors; enthronements; and imperial weddings.[21] In traditional China, imperial clothing had significance beyond observing traditions or about appearance and comfort; whether a dynasty observed the official dress code often was taken as a key factor that could affect the fate of the entire dynasty. For instance, the *Jiu Tangshu* suggests that the fall of the Sui dynasty could be at least partly attributed to the ruler's failure to follow the long-established *mianfu* tradition.

> At that time [when the dress codes for the ruler and officials was reestablished and implemented], officials both within and outside of the court all had appropriate *zhang* patterns on their clothes. Grooms would clear the way for [government] carriages, and officials were rewarded with a carriage and clothes according to their merit.[22] Therefore, the difference between noblemen and the unworthy, officials and commoners could be easily recognized. When he ascended to the throne at the east capital, the King of Yue, [Yang] Tong, ordered the abandonment of the dress codes. Thereafter, *zhang* patterns were gradually abolished, which eventually led to the fall

18. Fan Ye (范曄; 398-445), *Hou-Han shu* 後漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company 中華書局, 2009), 30. 3663.
19. *Hou-Han shu*, 30. 3663.
20. The only exception is the Ming dynasty, when the skirt for the *gunmian* was yellow. See Zhang Ting-yu (張廷玉; 1672-1655), *Mingshi* 明史 (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company 中華書局, 1974), 66. 1618.
21. Wei Zheng (魏徵; 580-643), et al., *Suishu* 隋書 (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company 中華書局, 1973), 7. 270; and Liu Xu (劉昫; 888-947), *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company 中華書局, 1975), 45. 1939-1940.
22. Carriage and clothes here refers to official titles.

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[of the Sui dynasty]. [23]
是時，內外群官，文物有序，僕禦清道，車服以庸。於是貴賤士庶，較然殊異。越王侗於東都嗣位，下詔停廢。自茲以後，浸以不章，以至於亡。

Seven of the thirteen rulers depicted in this scroll wear *gunmian*; six do not (**Fig. 1**). That Emperor Zhaodi of the Western Han[24] was not depicted in *gunmian* should be because the artist was aware that Western Han rulers did not conform to *gunmian* traditions. Although Emperor Yangdi of the Sui dynasty is not dressed in *gunmian*, his dress can be considered semiofficial: he wears black upper clothes, a red skirt, and a red knee-cover (*bixi*; 蔽膝) and red shoes that are the same color as components of *gunmian* (**Fig. 5**). However, his clothes are not decorated with the *zhang* patterns. As discussed above, the twelve *zhang* patterns symbolized various virtues and capabilities of a wise ruler. By stripping the *zhang* patterns from his clothes, the artist visually indicated Yangdi's lack of imperial virtues.[25]

The remaining four rulers who are not shown in *gunmian* clothing are all from the Chen dynasty, the last of the four Southern Dynasties (**Fig. 6**). Wendi and Feidi, facing each other at the center, wear white caps, while Xuandi and Houzhu wear black caps. Although the *Chenshu* and *Nanshi* do not contain chapters on imperial clothing, the sporadic records from these two history books

23. Liu Xu, *Jiu Tangshu*, 45. 1931.

24. Chen Pao-chen identifies Zhaodi as Wang Mang (王莽; 45 BCE-23; r.8-23). See Chen Pao-chen, "Painting as History: A Study of the *Thirteen Emperors* Scroll Attributed to Yan Liben," pp. 25-26. Her evidence is that calligraphic style of Zhaodi's inscription was in different style and was on a different piece of silk from the rest of the part of the painting. Another piece of evidence she uses is the seemingly age difference between Zhaodi and the portrayed figure: Zhaodi died at the age of twenty-one while the person in the painting appears to be "a middle aged man, which does not correspond to historical fact." Furthermore, because the person is not dressed in *gunmian*, Chen suggests he should be the illegitimate ruler Wang Mang. Chen's re-identification is not convincing. First, a later added inscription does not necessarily differ in content from the original damaged/lost one; second, her assumption of the artist basing his portrayal of kings strictly on textual record is not a confirmed fact; instead, it is her argument in her article. She does not always follow this assumption, either. For example, she explains the age difference between Wudi of the Zhou dynasty in *Thirteen Emperors* and historical record as the artist's over-interpretation. Third, Chen's theory cannot explain why an illegitimate ruler like Wang Mang was included in the first half of the painting, where the artist meant to show a continuous lineage of legitimate dynasties in the first half of the painting.

25. There were six types of *mianfu* theoretically, but during the Sui dynasty, emperors wore *gunmian* for all important rituals and ceremonies. See *Suishu*, 7. 270. It cannot be *xuanmian* (玄冕 the last of the six *mianfu*), which had only one *zhang* pattern, the *fu* pattern, on the skirt, since all the six types of *mianfu* match the same headpiece as *gunmian* (*daqiumian's* headpiece had no drooping beads).

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indicate that a certain white cap called *baishamao* (white gauze cap; 白紗帽) was a headpiece reserved for emperors.[26] The *Suishu (History of the Sui Dynasty)* also records that:

> During the Song and Qi dynasties, emperors wore *baigaomao* for private feasts, while the caps of officials and commoners were black. The design [of the two caps] was not fixed. Some had up-tilted flounces, some were skirted; some had gauzed high wu,[27] and some had long ears made of black gauze.[28]
> 案宋、齊之間，天子宴私，著白高帽，士庶以烏。其制不定。或有卷荷，或有下裙，或有紗高屋，或有烏紗長耳。

Suishu records that emperors of the Liang (502-557 CE) and Chen (557-589 CE) dynasties also wore *baishamao* at private feasts;[29] Mi Fu and the Song scholar Shao Bo (邵博;? -1158) both saw a portrait of Emperor Wudi of the Liang dynasty (梁武帝; 464-549; r. 502-549), in which the emperor wore a white cap.[30] Therefore, Wendi and Feidi, both in *baishamao*, are portrayed at a private meeting and not at an important public event or ceremony. Presenting the two sitting on a day bed, not on a throne, also reinforces the casual nature of this meeting. Xuandi and Houzhu's caps should be the black-gauze cap worn by officials. Xuandi attained the throne after forcing his nephew Feidi to abdicate, and the Chen dynasty ended with Xuandi's son, Houzhu's incapable reign. Since *baishamao* were exclusively worn by emperors in all four Southern Dynasties, by depicting Xuandi and Houzhu with black-gauze caps and placing them off to the side of Wendi and Feidi, the artist implies that the two were illegitimate rulers.[31]

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26. For example, when he exhorted some generals to stay with him and fight against their enemy, Shen You-zhi (沈攸之;?-478) promised that after they won the battle, he would share *baishaomao* with them. See Xiao Zi-xian, *Nan-Qi shu*, 24. 450. Other examples include the two portraits of Emperor Wudi of the Liang, one painted during the Southern dynasty and the other during the Tang dynasty. In both paintings, Wudi wore a white headpiece. See Mi Fu (米芾; 1051-1107), *Huashi* 畫史, in Yu Anlan, ed., *Huanpin congshu* 畫品叢書 (Shanghai: Renmin meishu chubanshe 人民美術出版社, 1982), pp. 205, 209.
27. It is unclear what wu 屋 means here.
28. Wei Zheng, et al., *Suishu*, 12. 266.
29. Wei Zheng, et al., *Suishu*, 11. 217.
30. Mi Fu, *Huashi*, p. 205; and Shao Bo 邵博, *Shaoshi wenjian houlu* 邵氏聞見後錄, in *Song Yuan biji xiaoshuo daguan* 宋元筆記小說大觀 (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe 古籍出版社, 2001), 8. 1889-1890.
31. Wu Tung assumes that the four rulers of the Chen dynasty should be positioned chronologically, so he suggests the current order of the four was rearranged after the painting was made, and the original order should be Wendi, Feidi, Xuandi, and Houzhu. See Wu, *Tales from the Land of Dragons: One Thousand Years of Chinese Painting* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 2003), p. 129. However, a chronological arrangement of the Chen rulers is Wu Tung's assumption; in addition

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Wendi and Feidi are also not portrayed as wise rulers (**Fig. 7**). The two are not dressed in *gunmian*, as were the other two emperors. By depicting these two wearing headpieces of lesser rank and clothes without *zhang* patterns, the artist suggests that they both lacked the virtue and wisdom of capable emperors. Another possible reason for not having them in *mianfu* is to show them as not observing the long-established imperial dress code. In the image of the *Thirteen Emperors*, presentation in different clothing makes these four appear out of place. This could be a visual strategy to show that the Northern Dynasties, not the Southern Dynasties, are the legitimate successor of the continuous political line in China.

The affirmative attitude the artist held toward the Northern Zhou dynasty is reflected in the inclusion of Emperor Wudi of the Northern Zhou dynasty, wearing the complete *gunmian*, as the only ruler from the Northern Dynasties. *Jiu Tangshu* states that imperial clothing during the Latter Wei dynasty (後魏)[32] and Northern Qi dynasty (550-577 CE) were strange and unorthodox; the Sui dynasty reinstalled the *mianfu* dressing system.[33] According to contemporary historian Yan Buke's study, the Sui dynasty largely continued the *mianfu* system of the Northern Zhou dynasty, which, accordingly, was the outcome of the ambitious Emperor Wudi's efforts to reinstall the orthodox ritual system by observing the canonical book of rites, *Zhouli* (周禮). [34]

Emperor Gaozu of the Tang dynasty and many other powerful clans of the Tang dynasty emerged from the northwest, the base of the Northern Zhou and Sui dynasties. Many traditions of the Sui dynasty, including the *mianfu* system, continued into the Tang. *Thirteen Emperors* does not include a single Tang-dynasty ruler. Significantly, it includes Emperor Wudi of the Northern Zhou and two emperors from the Sui dynasty— all three of these emperors are presented in *mianfu*. The inclusion and careful presentation of these three implies that the succeeding Tang dynasty was a legitimate heir of China's political, cultural, and territorial heritage.

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to the fact that the four are not painted on a single piece of silk, he has no other evidence to support his proposal. Chen Pao-chen assigns two new identities, Jianwedi and Yuandi of the Liang dynasty, to Wendi and Feidi of the Chen dynasty, and follows Wu Tung's chronological order. Her re-identification of the two kings, however, is problematic.

32. The three Wei dynasties, Northern Wei (386-534), Eastern Wei (534-550), and Western Wei (535-557) dynasties, are called the Latter Wei by historians to differentiate them from the Wei dynasty founded by Cao Cao (曹操; 155-220).
33. Liu Xu, *Jiu Tangshu*, 45. 1929.
34. Yan Bu-ke 閻步克, *Fu Zhou zhi mian: Zhouli liumian lizhi de xingshuai bianyi* 服周之冕—《周禮》六冕禮制的興衰變異 (Historical Transformation of the "Six Sets of Crown and Robe" System in the Rites of *Zhou*) (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company 中華書局, 2009), pp. 314-317.

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Scholars have debated whether Yan Liben or Lang Yuling painted the current *Thirteen Emperor*.[35] Chen Pao-chen has argued that Lang Yuling should be identified as the artist on the ground that because Yan Liben was the grandson of Emperor Wudi of the Zhou dynasty, he should have been sufficiently familiar with Wudi's biography not have painted him as an old and rough man. This argument lacks substantial evidence, though. First, as Chen herself admits, the artist of *Thirteen Emperors* did not always strictly follow the biography of the portrayed kings; second, the seemingly rough or "crude look" of Wudi was not necessarily viewed in a negative light by its contemporary viewers. For example, several textual records refer to Wudi's unusually heavy facial hair;[36] it is likely the artist painted him with this feature simply to follow the well-known image of this influential ruler as perceived by his Tang dynasty contemporaries. Therefore, the possibility of Yan Liben being the artist cannot be ruled out simply by the appearance of Wudi.

The depiction of *gunmian* in *Thirteen Emperors* suggests that the artist not only knew *gunmian* extremely well but also was knowledgeable about the history of imperial clothing. This sheds new light on the possible artist of this painting. Soon after his ascendance to the throne, Emperor Gaozu of the Tang dynasty ordered the designing of a set of more orthodox *mianfu*; the person he appointed to oversee the making of this set of *mianfu* was Yan Lide (閻立

35. Although there is no direct evidence indicating that Yan Li-ben painted *Thirteen Emperors*, many contemporary scholars followed Song dynasty connoisseurs and consider Yan Li-ben to have been the most likely artist of *Thirteen Emperors*. See Wu Tung, *Tales from the Land of Dragons: One Thousand Years of Chinese Painting*, p. 130; Yang Ren-kai (楊仁愷; 1915-2008), *Guobao chenfulu: Gugong sanyi shuhua jianwen kaolue* 國寶浮沉錄—故宮散佚書畫見聞考略 (Record of the Disappearance and Emergence of National Treasures: A Summary of Things Seen and Heard on the Previously Lost Calligraphy and Paintings of the Imperial Palace) (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe 古籍出版社, 2008), p. 38; and Shen Wei, *The* Thirteen Emperors *Attributed to Yan Liben: A Study of* Lidai diwang tu *in MFA*, pp. 44-45. Ning Qiang suggests it was a copy of Yan Liben's work; see Ning Qiang, "Imperial Portraiture as Symbol of Political Legitimacy: A New Study of the *Portraits of Successive Emperors*," pp. 105-106. Jin Wei-nuo challenged Ning's attribution and proposed Lang Yu-ling as the actual artist. Recently, Chen Pao-chen also attributed *Thirteen Emperors* to Lang. See Jin Wei-nuo, "*Gu diwangtu* de shidai yu zuozhe," p. 182 and Chen Pao-chen, "Painting as History: A Study of the *Thirteen Emperors* Scroll Attributed to Yan Liben," p. 27.

36. Wudi's beard was mentioned on several occasions in *Bei-Qi shu* 北齊書 and *Beishi* 北史. The most impressive one is after a battle against Northern Qi dynasty (550-577) at Pingyang. Wudi's army was defeated and many believed Wudi was killed in that battle. When the leader of Northern Qi army ordered a search for Wudi's body among the dead, investigators were to look for the feature of a heavy beard. See Li Bai-yao (李百藥; 566-648), *Bei-Qi shu* 北齊書 (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company 中華書局, 1972), 12. 150 and Li Yan-shou (李延壽; act. seventh c.), *Beishi* 北史 (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company 中華書局, 1974), 52. 1882.

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德;? -565), Yan Liben's brother.[37] Compared to Lang Yuling, who had never held a high official position and probably never had the chance to see an emperor in his *gunmian*,[38] Yan Liben, the prime minister and the younger brother of Yan Lide, would have had much better knowledge about imperial clothing than Lang. Thus, he is more likely to have been the artist of *Thirteen Emperors*.

III. The Four Emperors of the Chen Dynasty

There are many differences between the depictions of the four emperors of the Chen dynasty (Xuandi, Wendi, Feidi, and Houzhu) and those of the other rulers in *Thirteen Emperors*. None of the variously attired Chen-dynasty emperors is shown wearing a *gunmian*. The four Chen-dynasty emperors do not appear chronologically according to their reign years. While the remaining nine emperors are all assisted by two courtiers or officials, by contrast, two of the four Chen-dynasty emperors are tended by women (Wendi and Feidi), one by a group of attendants (Xuandi), and another by a single official (Houzhu). While the other emperors all stand upright and face the right, the Chen rulers either sit on a daybed (Wendi and Feidi), or are being carried on a litter (Xuandi), or face the left (Houzhu). Scholars have proposed several theories to understand this unusual composition. Wu Tung, for example, believed that this part of the scroll was rearranged by later collectors; he argues that the original order of the four emperors should be Wendi, Feidi, Xuandi, and Houzhu— that is, arranged chronologically according to their reign.[39] Shen Wei suggests that the entire handscroll is an incomplete collection of images of early rulers, which were used as *fenben* 粉本, models for court artists to refer to when decorating imperial architecture with portraits of pervious rulers. He uses this theory to explain the "random" orientation and apparent lack of logic in this painting, especially the group of Chen dynasty emperors.[40] These studies, novel as they are, lack supportive evidence; moreover, none offers a detailed observation and analysis of the portrayal of the individual kings and the interaction among them.

37. Zhang Yan-yuan (張彥遠; ninth c.), *Lidai minghua ji* 歷代名畫記, in *Huapin congshu* 畫品叢書 (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Fine Arts Publishing House 上海人民美術出版社), 9. 103.
38. Among the three official posts that Lang Yu-ling held, two were low minor local positions. The last post *zhuzuo zuolang* 著作佐郎 was in the capital, but was still a medium position, not a high-ranking one. See *Xin Tangshu*, 189. 4961-4962; and Ouyang Xiu (歐陽修; 1007-1072), et al., *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書 (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company 中華書局, 1975), 199. 5659-5660.
39. Wu Tung, *Tales from the Land of Dragons: One Thousand Years of Chinese Painting*, p. 129.
40. Shen Wei, *The* Thirteen Emperors *Attributed to Yan Liben: A Study of* Lidai diwang tu *in MFA*, p. 71.

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Looking at the rulers after the Western Han dynasty, the four emperors of the Chen dynasty are the only rulers who are not dressed in *gunmian*; this sartorial distinction visually indicates their lack of imperial virtues, and calls into question the political and cultural legitimacy of the Chen, or, indeed, all of the four Southern Dynasties. In addition, the artist used many other visual clues to criticize the four Chen rulers.

Wendi and Feidi are the only two emperors in the painting who are accompanied by women. It can be argued that the female attendants are included here to suggest a casual or informal setting, which is true in some sense. However, the classical way of representing a wise ruler is to show him with male officials in attendance; inept rulers who brought about a dynasty's downfall are the ones who are surrounded by women. Support for this view is found in an incident about Emperor Chendi of the Han dynasty (漢成帝; 51-7 BCE). When the Emperor Chendi invited his then favored wife Ban Jieyu (班婕妤; 48 BCE-2) to sit in the same sedan with him, the virtuous lady responded:

> "In ancient paintings, wise rulers all have renowned officials by their sides; only the last rulers of the Three Dynasties are accompanied by their favored women. Now [your Majesty] wants to sit with me in the same sedan; won't you look just like those [incapable rulers from the Three Dynasties]?" [41]
> "觀古圖畫，聖賢之君皆有名臣在側，三代末主廼有嬖女。今欲同輦，得無近似之乎？"

Ban Jieyu was later considered a model for court ladies, and her refusal to share the imperial sedan was believed to encapsulate her virtues. In the Han dynasty, sharing an emperor's sedan was considered to be a gesture of deep trust and favor; usually such an honor was reserved for respected and trusted officials. Ban Jieyu declined Emperor Chengdi's invitation not because she did not want to enjoy an intimate moment with her emperor husband; rather, she was helping the emperor cultivate imperial virtue and construct a positive public image. This is why the emperor dowager highly praised Ban's behavior and compared her to Fanji (樊姬; act. second half of sixth BCE), the queen of King Zhuang of the Chu Kingdom (楚莊王;?-591 BCE), who stopped eating the meat of hunted birds and animals to dissuade the king from his addiction to hunting. Similarly, Ban Jieyu refused to sit in Emperor Chengdi's sedan because she did not want the emperor to be known as a ruler who favored women excessively like those

41. Ban Gu (班固; 32-92), *Hanshu* 漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company 中華書局, 1965), 97. 3983.

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notorious rulers from early history. This is relevant for understanding the portrayal of Wendi and Feidi on *Thirteen Emperors*. While it does not show direct interaction between the emperors and women, the mere fact that these two emperors are assisted by women—and not male officials—is enough to suggest their faulty behaviors as rulers.

The negative reading of these two kings is further confirmed by the object held by Wendi and Feidi's female attendant. In the Southern Dynasties, this object was called *ruyi*; a *ruyi* was a popular ceremonial utensil among Daoists and Buddhists. This *ruyi* is different from the back scratching tool called *zhuazhang* (爪杖), which appeared in China no later than the Warring States period (476-221 BCE).[42] The scratching end of a *zhuazhang* is in the shape of a hand with curved fingers, a design that reflects its function as a backscratcher. The one found inside a fourth-century BCE tomb at Qufu, Shangdong Province (**Fig. 8**), and the one depicted in the famous image of the *Seven Sages in the Bamboo Grove* (**Fig. 9**) are such examples. Both backscratchers have a long and narrow handle and a hand shaped end that has five curved fingers. The one from Qufu is so lifelike that the maker even added fingernails. Zhua*zhang* is an object people used in very informal occasions, which befits the bohemian scholar official Wang Rong (王戎; 234-305), one of the Seven Sages. Zhua*zhang* have been continuously used in China, although its name has changed over time: a silver one called *saoshou* (搔手) was found in the tomb of Wang Jian (王建; 847-918; r. 909-918), the ruler of Qian-Shu Kingdom (907-925);[43] in contemporary China, they are known by the modern name *yangyangnao* (癢癢撓). They are popular household items and are still given the shape of a hand with curved fingers.

Since their ends are not in the shape of a hand, the *ruyi* held by Wendi, Xuandi, and Feidi's attendant look different from a typical *zhuazhang*. Buddhists understood this design to be based on the shape of a heart, which symbolized that a Buddhist master's preaching can directly touch a listener's heart.[44] Daoist and Buddhist priests often held a *ruyi* when they gave lectures.[45] A stone relief in modern Shangdong province from the Eastern Wei dynasty (534-550) shows a bodhisattva holding a *ruyi* (**Fig. 10**), and the Wenshu bodhisattva from the mid-Tang cave no.

42. Shangdong Provincial Institute of Archaeology 山東省文物考古研究所, *Qufu luguo gucheng* 曲阜魯國故城 (The Ancient Qufu City of the Kingdom of Lu) (Jinan: Qilu shushe 齊魯書社, 1982), pp. 179-180.
43. Feng Han-ji 馮漢驥, *The Royal Tomb of Wang Jian of the Former Shu* 前蜀王建墓發掘報告 (Beijing: Cultural Relics Press 文物出版社, 2002), pp. 56, 58.
44. Daocheng (釋道誠; act. early eleventh c.), *Shishi yaolan* 釋氏要覽, in *Dazheng xinsiu dazhangjing* 大正新修大藏經 (hereafter *Dazheng zang*) (Tokyo: Daizo chuppan, 1927), 54. 2127. 279.
45. Daocheng, *Shishi yaolan* 釋氏要覽. Many other Buddhist texts also contain records of Buddhist priests preaching while holding a *ruyi*. See Daoxuan (釋道宣; 596-667), *Xu gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳, in *Dazheng zang*, 50. 2060. 582, 537.

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25 at Yulin also holds a *ruyi* (**Fig. 11**). *Ruyi* was popular among Daoists, as well. In addition to functioning as a lecturing aid, *ruyi*, together with *fuchen* (拂塵; whisk), was considered to be an essential personal accessory for every Daoist.[46] In later Daoist art, Lingbao Tianzun (靈寶天尊), one of the Three Pure Ones, is often presented as holding a *ruyi*.[47] A *ruyi* that is almost identical to the ones held by Xuandi and Feidi's attendant was found in the underground chamber of Famen Buddhist temple (**Fig. 12**). Since the chamber was sealed in 874 CE, it is almost certain that *ruyi* of such design was used among Buddhists during the Tang dynasty, the same dynasty when *Thirteen Emperors* was made.

The inscription of Wendi says that the emperor "deeply admired Daoism." Although Feidi's inscription does not comment on his religious belief, the artist included many details to indicate Feidi, like his father, was also into Daoism.[48] Wendi and Feidi both sit in a cross-legged position (**Fig. 7**) called *fuzuo* (趺坐). Buddhists introduced this sitting position to China, but Daoists soon adopted it. The traditional Chinese way of sitting on formal occasions was called *gui* 跪or *guizuo*跪坐, which is to kneel and rest the buttocks on the feet. We see both men and women portrayed in this sitting position in paintings of the Wei-Jin and Nanbeichao period (420-589). Cao Zhi (曹植; 192-232), the hero in Gu Kaizhi's (顧愷之ca. 344-405) masterpiece

46. See Jinming qizhen (金明七真), *Dongxuan lingbao sanding fengdao kejie yingshi* 洞玄靈寶三洞奉道科戒營始 (hereafter *Kejie yingshi*), in *Daozang* 道藏 (Beijing: Cultural Relics Press 文物出版社, 1987), 24. 3. 754.

47. The images of early Daoist deities barely show them holding any accessories in their hands. This may be because early Daoists followed the restrictions stated in *Kejie yingshi*, which specifically prohibited putting anything, including a whisk and a *ruyi* in a Daoist deity's hands when sculpting a Daoist icon. See Jinming qizhen, *Kejie yingshi*, 24. 2. 752.

48. Both *Nanshi* and *Chenshu* are silent concerning Wendi's beliefs in Daoism. Based on this absence of information, Chen Pao-chen believes that the depicted figure cannot be Wendi of the Chen dynasty; rather she identifies him as Emperor Jianwen of the Liang dynasty (梁簡文帝; 503-551; r. 549-551), who was recorded as often holding a *ruyi*. Since Chen assumes rather than proves that the artist based the portrayal of the kings on the two historical texts, more evidence is needed to prove that the inscription was added after the original completion of the painting. Chen, moreover, suggests that the inscription identifying Feidi was also added after the original became unrecognizable, and like that of Wendi, this one also identifies the emperor incorrectly. According to Chen, the depicted ruler should be Yuandi of the Liang dynasty (梁元帝; 508-555; r. 552-555), instead of Feidi. Again, she continues to assume that the artist based his figures on *Nanshi* and *Chenshu*. She asserts that because Feidi died at the age of seventeen and the portrayed figure looks like a "middle-aged" man, it cannot be Feidi. However, Chen overlooks the fact that Emperor Wudi of Zhou, who died at thirty-six, was also depicted by the artist as a much older man. Clearly, the artist did not solely rely on the description of previous rulers' appearance in official history books. Accordingly, the discrepancy between the artistic portrayal and textual descriptions that are often sporadic and fragmented cannot be considered as solid evidence to discredit the inscriptions.

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Nymph of the Luo River, was depicted in this *guizuo* position in all the scenes in which he sits (**Fig. 13**); and sitting figures in the painted screens from Sima Jinlong's (司馬金龍; died 484) tombs are also depicted sitting on their feet (**Figs. 14 and 15**). These two figures, a noble prince and an exemplary figure who represents the highest degree of morality, should represent how their contemporaries expected a virtuous or noble person to behave. During the subsequent Sui dynasty, *guizuo* was still considered to be the proper way to sit on formal occasions. When Emperor Wendi of the Sui dynasty heard that the king of the Wo kingdom, modern Japan, met officials in the imperial hall seated cross-legged, he felt it was completely against official decorum (大無義理) and ordered the king to change his position.[49] A ruler was not to sit cross-legged in public.

The pattern of lotus on Wendi's daybed (**Fig. 7a**) is noteworthy. Lotus was not a traditional decorative motif in China until Nanbeichao period, when Buddhism gained popularity in China. As modern archaeologists have discovered, eave-tiles that bear the lotus pattern (**Fig. 16**) are often unearthed at Buddhist sites in the Southern Dynasties.[50] Daoist documents from this period prove that Daoist communities widely adopted the lotus motif on their architecture.[51] The lotus flower patterns, the *ruyi* held by Wendi and Feidi's female attendant, together with Wendi's and Feidi's sitting in *fuzuo*, all suggest that the two rulers are engaged in religious activity. The clothing worn by the two emperors and their attendants further proves that they are in the middle of a Daoist lecture or are reciting a Daoist scripture. Wendi wears a yellowish cape that appears made with fur. This type of clothing was called *pei* (帔) and was an important part of Daoist liturgical clothing called *fafu* (法服), which Daoists wore on important ceremonial occasions, such as worshipping deities and attending lectures. A typical *pei* for a Daoist figure in the Southern Dynasties is a sleeveless cape that reaches to the ankle and is open in the front. The color of the *pei* varies according to the rank held by a particular Daoist figure, but the basic design remains the same. *Dongxuan lingbao sandong fengdao kejie yingshi* (洞玄靈寶三洞奉道科戒營始; hereafter *Kejie yingshi*), a Daoist book composed during the late Nanbeichao period or the Sui dynasty, contains a chapter on Daoist *fafu*. According to this book, all Daoists

49. Wei Zheng, et al., *Suishu*, 81. 1826.

50. Zhou Yi-fang 周藝芳, "The Research of Lotus Pattern Eaves Tiles in Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties 魏晉南北朝蓮花紋瓦當研究" at China Universities Network of Humanities and Social Science 中國高校人文社會科學信息網. http://www.sinoss.net/uploadfile/2015/0519/20150519010757444.pdf (Accessed January 18, 2016).

51. The association of the lotus with Buddhism is well established; its popularity in Daoist practice and art has yet to be studied. Many early Daoist statues show Daoist deities sitting on a lotus pedestal; lotus headpieces (蓮花冠) were worn by high priests; the lotuses, along with dragons, phoenixes, and clouds, were prescribed decorative patterns on Daoist temple. See Jinming qizhen, *Kejie yingshi*, 24. 1. 745.

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should wear *fafu* in formal occasions; *fafu* for Daoists masters of different ranks and common Daoist disciples should follow a series of strict regulations regarding designs and colors. The book also includes black-and-white illustrations to show the actual appearance of these clothes. For example, a Shanju Priest (山居法師) wears an *eryi* headpiece (二儀冠), yellow upper clothes, yellow long skirt, and a *pei* cape made with thirty-six pieces of cloth. For common Daoists, their liturgical clothes features a *ping headpiece* (平冠), yellow upper clothes, yellow long skirt, and a *pei* cape made with twenty-four pieces of cloth (**Fig. 17**). *Kejie yingshi* does not stipulate the material with which to make the *pei* cape, and the black-and-white illustration leaves the color of the *pei* cape on this page questionable, but the design of the capes in the book appears to be the same as the one worn by Wendi: a plain long sleeveless cape with an open front and a wide black rim.

Emperor Feidi wears similar clothes to Wendi, but he has a piece of brown garment wrapped around his waist. Because of the way he wears it, it is difficult to determine the type of clothing. It may be a *pei* cape, but it is more likely a *he coat* (褐). Lu Xiujing (陸修靜; 406-477), a key figure in the institutionalization of Daoism in the Naibeichao period, wrote in his book, *Lu xiansheng daomen kelüe* (陸先生道門科略), "Kerchief, *he* coat, and *pei* cape are from the high teaching. When worshipping, [Daoists] should wear a *he* coat; when reciting scriptures, [Daoists] should wear a *pei* cape" (巾褐及帔，出自上道。禮拜着褐，誦經着帔).[52] *Kejie yingshi* also stipulates that a complete set of liturgical clothes include a headpiece, *he* coat, a skirt, and a *pei* cape.[53] A he coat is a short robe that was worn as an outer garment. A typical he coat reached above the knees, and a skirt or a pair of loose pants called *ku* (袴) were worn to complete the outfit. A he coat was made of crudely woven cotton or hemp. Although a he coat could be dyed into different colors, the most often seen color was brown, *he* 褐, the namesake of the clothes. A *he* coat was usually worn by people from a lower class. However, because Daoism promoted simplicity and naturalism, it became a standard dress for Daoists during the Southern Dynasties. The brown-colored upper item of clothing worn by Feidi is very likely a Daoist *he* coat.

The female attendants of Wendi and Feidi are also dressed as Daoists. They all wear plain brown upper clothes and white skirts, which are not the colorful clothes for court women recorded in *Suishu*, *Jiu Tangshu*, and *Xin Tangshu*.[54] Their clothes are apparently different

52. Lu Xiu-jing (陸修靜; 406-477), *Lu xiansheng daomen kelüe* 陸先生道門科略, in *Daozang*, 24.781.

53. According to different ranks, the color of the he coat varies. The he coat for common Daoists should be the brown.

54. Wei Zheng, et al., *Suishu*, 12. 262; Liu Xu, *Jiu Tangshu*, 45. 1956 and Ouyang Xiu, et al., *Xin Tangshu*, 24. 523.

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from those that women wear in paintings from the Nanbeichao period, such as Gu Kaizhi's *Admonitions of the Court Instructress* (**Fig. 18**) and the painted screen from Sima Jinlong's tomb (**Figs. 14, 15, and 19**). While the four female attendants do not wear any clothing with decoration, the ladies in the other two paintings wear sashes and long skirts with wide rims. The skirts and sashes of some women in the lacquer screen painting, like Zhou Taijiang (周太姜; the left one in **Fig. 19**) are even decorated with flower-shaped patterns. Moreover, all the ladies in the *Admonitions* scroll and some in the lacquer painting wear a tall headpiece; the four women in *Thirteen Emperors* either wear nothing in their hair or simple red strings that are used to tie their chignons. The general dressing style of Wendi's and Feidi's female attendants is not that of typical court ladies, instead, it fits well with the Daoist dressing guideline, which is stipulated in *Kejie yingshi*:

> For all male and female Daoists, their shoes should be made with straw, wood, or lacquer. All their clothes, regardless of whether made from cotton or silk, being a coat or a *pei* cape, should be decorated with either eryi [*yin-yang* diagram] or an image of a mountain.[55] Both outerwear and under garment should be simple and plain; no colorful or elaborate decoration is allowed.
> 凡道士、女冠履 ，或用草，或以木，或純漆。布帛拖絹，漫飾衣帔，皆二仪，或山像，內外樸素，不得彩飾華綺麗。[56]

The plain clothes of the four attendants fit well with the above Daoist dressing rule. Moreover, *Kejie yingshi* records that common female Daoists wore the same brown-yellow upper clothes as common male Daoists. The brown-colored upper clothes of the female figures, which is not a typical court lady's dress, should the he coat that Daoists wore in the Southern Dynasties.

The short skirts worn by the four female figures next to Wendi and Feidi is further evidence that they are Daoists. Court ladies in early China wore long skirts that dropped to the ground, leaving their feet completely covered. In the three paintings that remain from the Nanbeichao period, *Admonitions of the Court Instructress, Nymph of the Luo River*, and the lacquer screen from Sima Jinlong's tomb, all the women wear long flaring skirts, and their feet are completely

55. Lu Xiu-jing did not write down the exact location where the eryi or mountain pattern should appear. The illustrations in *Kejie yingshi* do not show any patterns on the illustrated figure's clothes. Considering modern Daoists have *eryi* pattern on the backs of their clothes, it is very likely that the *eryi* and mountain patterns were also applied to the backs of the he-coat or pei-cape during Nanbeichao and Tang period.

56. Jinming qizhen, *Kejie yingshi*, 24. 5. 761.

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covered (**Figs. 13-15, 17, and 18**). The skirts of the four women in *Thirteen Emperors*, however, are not only much shorter but also reveal their shoes. In fact, the four women's skirts and shoes are the same as those worn by the male attendant of Houzhu, who is depicted right after the Feidi group (**Figs. 6 and 22**). In the Southern Dynasties, the headpieces worn by female Daoists were different from those of male Daoists, but their clothes and shoes follow the same pattern and colors.[57] The *he* coat, the plain dressing, lack of adornments, as well as the muscular style of skirt that reveals their feet, all indicate that the four women are Daoists.

Compared to Wendi, Feidi seems to be a passive listener. His *he* coat or *pei* cape falls to his waist, while his father Wendi is neatly dressed in a *pei* cape; unlike his father, he does not have a *ruyi* in hand, which indicates that the father is the leader of the ongoing activity, either delivering a Daoist lecture or reciting a scripture; the top of the son's daybed is pitch black, but the father's is decorated with lotus flower patterns, a favored Daoist motif. These details all suggest that between the two, Wendi is a more devout or a more senior Daoist than Feidi. This corresponds with the inscriptions of the two emperors: Wendi's inscription says that he "deeply admired Daoism"; in contrast, Feidi's inscription does not particularly comment on his religious belief.

Unlike Wendi, his brother Xuandi deeply revered Buddhism.[58] The artist of *Thirteen Emperors* included many details to suggest Xuandi's Buddhist belief (**Fig. 20**). The emperor holds a *ruyi* in hand; the surface of his sedan chair is covered with a lotus-flower pattern (**Fig. 20a**); next to his left knee is an unidentifiable object that has a base also in the shape of a lotus flower (**Fig. 20a**). Although the *ruyi* and lotus flower were also popular among Daoists, Xuandi's clothes is not that of a Daoist. He wears a long black robe, not a Daoist *pei* cape or an earthly yellow he coat. The artist depicted him wearing a black cap, *wushamao*, which visually portrays him as an official and not an emperor. This may be the artist's strategy to discredit Xuandi's controversial siege of the throne—he claimed himself emperor after forcing Wendi's legitimate successor, Feidi, to abdicate.[59] By depicting Wendi and Feidi in *baishamao* and Xuandi wearing a *wushaomao*, the artist reminded the audience that Xuandi once served the other two emperors as an official, and his capture of the throne was heavily questioned. The color and design of his clothes, however, are completely different from the other officials painted in the same scroll. Unlike most of the emperors in this scroll, Xuandi wears a *pao* robe (袍), an outer garment that reaches below the knees. Although emperors wore *pao* robe on some occasions, they usually matched it with a belt. In fact, the belt was an indispensable part of imperial and official dress

57. Jinming qizhen, *Kejie yingshi*.
58. Zhipan (志磐), *Fozu tongji* 佛祖統紀, in *Dazheng zang*, 49. 2035. 181.
59. Li Yan-shou (李延壽; 7th c.), *Nanshi* 南史 (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company 中華書局, 1974), 10. 291.

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codes, and there were different types of belts to match specific clothing for an emperor. For example, when a Tang dynasty emperor was dressed in *gunmian*, he wore two belts, *gedai* (革帶) and *dadai* (大帶); when he was in less formal clothes like a pao robe, he wore only one belt, mostly, *gedai*.[60] The artist of *Thirteen Emperors* knew the imperial dress codes very well, and he matched all the kings' *gunmian* with *gedai* and *daidai* (**Fig. 4**); however, for the rulers not in *gunmian*, such as Emperor Yandi of the Sui dynasty (**Fig. 5**), he gave them one belt or none.

The black color of Xuandi's robe is noteworthy. A plain black pao robe was not a typical garment for emperors and officials during the Nanbeichao period and Tang dynasty. Moreover, emperors and high official's formal clothes always have a rim called *biao* (褾) in a different color, sometimes decorated with patterns. Different colors were assigned to officials to mark their ranks.[61] According to Luo Huizhen's research, although Buddhist monks during the Nanbeichao period still wore red *jiasha* (袈裟; *kesaya*), the traditional clothes for Buddhists imported from India, the color black became popular among Buddhists.[62] The Buddhist priest Huilin (慧琳; act. early fifth c.), whom Emperor Wendi of the Liu-Song dynasty often consulted on important political issues, was nicknamed "the black-clothed Prime Minister 黑衣宰相." [63] Xuanchang (玄暢; 416-484) and Faxian (法獻; 423-497), Emperor Wudi (440-493; r. 482-493) of the Qi dynasty's trusted Buddhist priests, were called "two masters in black clothes 黑衣二傑." [64] These examples imply that black clothes were almost synonymous with Buddhists during the Nanbeichao period. For a seventh-century audience, it would have been apparent to them that the black-robed Xuandi was presented as a Buddhist.

The inscription of Xuandi reads, "Emperor Xuandi of the Chen, personal name Xu, was

60. Liu Xu, *Jiu Tangshu*, 45. 1936-1937.

61. For example, during the Liu-Song and Qi dynasties, when the emperor was in a procession, the marshal officials wore a set of clothes called *kuzhe* 袴褶. The *biao* rim (褾) of the higher officials' sleeves should be purple, and those of lower officials should be red; however, soldiers' clothes had no *biao* rim. See Shen Yue, *Songshu*, 18. 505; and Xiao Zi-xian, *Nan-Qi shu*, 17. 342.

62. The black color that Buddhists wore was different from common blackness. Since Buddhists followed Shakyamuni's teaching of wearing "worn-out colors" (*huaise* 壞色), the black on Buddhists clothes was not a pure, pitch black; rather, it was bluish, reddish, or purplish black. These colors were called *hei* 黑, *zao* 皂, *zi* 淄, and *mulan* 木蘭. See Guo Hui-zhen 郭慧珍, *Hanzu fojiao sengjia fuzhuang zhi yanjiu* 漢族佛教僧伽服裝之研究 (A Study of Sangha Clothing in Han Buddhism) (Taipei: Dharma Drum Publishing Corp. 法鼓文化, 2001), p. 86 and Zhipan, *Fozu tongji*, in *Dazheng zang*, 49. 2035. 181. This may explain why the black color on Xuandi's robe is brighter than the black on all the other rulers' clothes.

63. Xizhong 熙仲, *Lichao shishi zijian* 歷朝釋氏資鑑, in *Dazheng zang*, 76. 1517. 157; and Zhipan, *Fozu tongji*, 49. 2035. 344.

64. Zhipan, *Fozu tongji*, in *Dazheng zang*, 46. 2035. 347.

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on the throne for fourteen years. He deeply revered Buddhism and daily assembled his officials to attend Buddhist lectures. 陳宣帝諱頊，在位十四年。深崇佛法。日召朝臣講經。” The two Histories that contain Xuandi's biography, *Chenshu* and *Nanshi*, do not refer to Xuandi's Buddhist belief, which makes some scholars doubt the credibility of the inscription.[65] The artist of *Thirteen Emperors* tended to comment on the rulers' attitude toward religions in the inscriptions and pictorial portrayals; similarly, when writing a biography of a specific ruler, historians also focus on certain aspects of a ruler's reign and specific events. Although the authors of *Chenshu* and *Nanshi* did not comment on Xuandi's religious relief, *Fozu tongji* (佛祖統紀), a tenth-century book composed of biographies of respectable Buddhist masters contains a passage about Xuandi canceling a routine imperial meeting and ordering his officials to attend a Buddhist lecture in 569 CE. After that lecture, many officials converted to Buddhism.[66] In *Thirteen Emperors*, Emperor Xuandi is portrayed as traveling on a sedan chair that is followed by two officials (**Fig. 20**). The white slabs in the officials' hands were called *hu* (笏) and were specifically used in routine imperial meetings.[67] However, two clues indicate that Xuandi and his officials are not having a regular imperial meeting but are in a procession. First, the two officials are depicted following Xuandi instead of facing him as they would in an imperial meeting; second, they are portrayed in an outdoor setting, suggested by the emperor's sitting on a sedan chair, rather than in an imperial meeting hall. Given the *ruyi* in Xuandi's hand, the lotus pattern on his sedan chair, and the plain black robe he wears, the artist must have intended to portray Xuandi and his entourage at a specific moment—they are on their way to a Buddhist lecture.

Although the inscription regarding Xuandi does not contain any specific commentary, the artist applied many visual clues to comment on the portrayed event: an emperor canceling an imperial meeting to have his officials attend a Buddhist lecture with him. The two figures dressed in formal attire on the far right should represent officials who were ready for the imperial meeting but were commanded to attend a Buddhist lecture instead. With a furrowed forehead and knitted eyebrows, the one on the left, near the front of the picture plane looks deeply worried (**Fig. 20b**). His careworn look is more noticeable when compared with the officials who attend the wise kings, for example, the neighboring Emperor Wudi of the Jin dynasty (晉武帝; 236-290; r. 266-290; **Fig. 21**). The sedan carriers and accompanying officials face various directions

65. Chen Pao-chen, “Painting as History: A Study of the *Thirteen Emperors* Scroll Attributed to Yan Liben,” p. 6.

66. Zhipan, *Fozu tongji*, in *Dazheng zang*, 49. 2035. 181.

67. Zheng Xuan (鄭玄; 127-200) and Kong Ying-da (孔穎達; 574-648), *Liji zhengyi* 禮記正義 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe 北京大學出版社, 2000), 30. 1052. *Jiu Tangshu* contains specific rules for officials' use of the *hu* tablet during imperial meetings. See Liu Xu, *Jiu Tangshu*, 45. 1931.

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and their attention is caught up by different people and things other than the emperor they are serving: the two fan holders are gazing on the fans; the sedan carriers are looking down at the ground; the two front men in red clothes are staring at one of Wendi's young girls. This young girl similarly ignores the emperor she is supposed to be attending; rather, she looks over her shoulder to meet the gaze of the two men (**Fig. 20c**). Unlike the other three women who have their hands concealed in sleeves, this girl sticks her right hand out of her sleeve. With her fingers pointing downward, she signals something to the men. One of the two gazing men surreptitiously points to Emperor Xuandi with his index figure. It is hard to know the exact connotation of his hand gesture: it may be a response to the young girl's flirtatious gaze and exposed hand, or the artist may have painted it simply to draw the viewer's attention to Emperor Xuandi, who is unaware of the commotion going on around him. The official (**Fig. 20d**) who turns back wears a worried facial expression, highlighted by his knitted eyebrows and the deep wrinkles on his forehead and around his eyes. The fact that he is looking back at the two other officials indicates that they share the same concern, that is, that their emperor devotes too much of himself to Buddhism at the expense of his duty to govern his people. As suggested in the picture, the emperor loses imperial authority as a result, and his officials engage in inappropriate activities, which, according to the narrative offered by the artist, lead to the downfall of the Chen dynasty in the hands of the similarly devout Buddhist emperor, Houzhu (Xuandi's son).

The interaction between Emperor Wendi's female attendant and Xuandi's male attendant is noteworthy. The two figures belong to different times and scenes—the girl is attending Wendi during a Daoist lecture while the man is accompanying Xuandi on his way to a Buddhist temple. Yet, the artist of *Thirteen Emperors* arranged the three figures in the same composition and depicted the trio engaging in improper and secretive behavior in the presence of their rulers. This pictorial arrangement is ahistorical and cannot be based on historical records. However, artists in early China did not always follow historical records when they created figure paintings. For example, Emperor Chengdi of the Han dynasty once had a screen painting that depicted King Zhouwang of the Shang dynasty (商紂王; eleventh century BCE) and his concubine Daji (妲己). In the middle of a feast with his trusted officials, Emperor Chengdi had a discussion of this painting with an official named Ban Bo (班伯; 47-10 BCE):

> Behind the Emperor's seat was a painted screen, which depicted King Zhouwang, drunk and clinging to Daji, reveling late into the night. Because Bo was new among the guests, the Emperor looked at him several times, and then pointed at the painting asking: "Was Zhouwang as depraved as this?" Bo answered, "*Shangshu* records that '[Zhouwang] listened to his woman,' yet never mentions that he

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> behaved so impudently in the imperial hall. What is depicted here is worse than all his wrongdoings." The emperor said, "If [Zhouwang] never did this, then what is the lesson the painting conveys?" Bo responded, " '[Zhouwang] being addicted to alcohol' is the reason why Weizi abdicated and left; 'screaming nonsensically after getting drunk,' is what the "Major Courtly Hymns" warned about. The warnings to depravity in *Shangshu* and *Shijing* can all be attributed to alcohol." [68]
> 時乘輿幄坐張畫屏風，畫紂醉踞妲己作長夜之樂。上以伯新起，數目禮之，因顧指畫而問伯："紂為無道，至於是虖？"伯對曰："《書》云'乃用婦人之言'，何有踞肆於朝？所謂眾惡歸之，不如是之甚者也。"上曰："苟不若此，此圖何戒？"伯曰："'沈湎于酒'，微子所以告去也；'式號式謼'，大雅所以流連也。詩書淫亂之戒，其原皆在於酒。"

After hearing Ban Bo's words, Chengdi praised him for his integrity and dismissed the banquet. As recorded in the above text, the screen painting was not based on historical facts. The emperor and his officials, did not criticize the artist for not basing the painting on history nor did they discredit the painting for this lapse; rather, they were more interested in the message the artist conveyed by depicting the notorious Zhouwang in this particular way. This record, together with the illogical encounter of Wendi's female attendant and Xuandi's male followers in *Thirteen Emperors*, suggests that early Chinese figure paintings were not always historically accurate. Rather, in order to convey a specific message, artists freed themselves from the bondage of textual records and adopted various pictorial means, including depicting an event that had no historical evidence to support it or a composition that was logically impossible.

The inclusion of Wudi of the Northern Zhou dynasty in this scroll is not difficult to understand when we follow the narrative about the Chen dynasty emperors. Wudi is unique among the Nanbeichao period rulers in terms of his attitude toward religion. Unlike other emperors in his period who were followers of either Buddhism or Daoism, or sometimes, both religions, Wudi was against religion in general and was especially harsh toward Buddhism. Under his reign, Buddhism experienced unprecedented suppression. The inscription accompanying Wudi reads, "Emperor Wudi of the Latter Zhou dynasty, Yuwen Yong, was on the throne for eighteen years. Altogether there were five emperors and twenty-five years. [Wudi] destroyed Buddhism. 後周武帝宇文邕，在位十八年。五帝共二十五年。毀

68. Ban Gu, *Hanshu*, 100. 4201.

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滅佛法。”[69] Wudi issued two imperial decrees to abolish Buddhism during his reign. As a result of the second decree, more than forty thousand Buddhist temples were destroyed and three million monks and nuns were forced to become lay people.[70] His religious policies gained the country an extra ten percent of registered taxpayers and a significantly larger population from which to recruit soldiers. Although condemned by Buddhists, Wudi was considered a capable and aspiring emperor in official histories.[71] His reign strengthened the Northern Zhou dynasty and unified northern China, which laid the foundation for the following emperor, Wendi of the Sui dynasty, to defeat the Chen dynasty and then reunify China.

In *Thirteen Emperors*, Wudi is portrayed as a bulky, middle-aged man clad in complete *gunmian* regalia and assisted by two calm and confident officials, which as discussed before, visually indicate his political merits. He confidently faces the last emperor of the Chen dynasty, Houzhu, who, probably out of shame, is about to cover his face (**Fig. 22**). Unlike other standing emperors, Houzhu only has one courtier, who is not dressed as an official of high rank.[72] Moreover, Wudi's superiority as a political ruler over Houzhu is visually shown by his taller and larger stature, and the cowardly facial expression and, particularly, the demeaning dress of Houzhu. He wears the similar clothes as Emperor Feidi: a white under garment and a long pinkish robe with a wide black rim on the collar and at the edge of the sleeves. However, unlike Feidi, he is not capped with a *baishamao*, the favored headpiece of Southern Dynasties emperors, but a *wushamao*, the headpiece for officials. Only the red shoes remind the viewer that he was actually an emperor.[73] The artist depicted him unkempt: his upper clothes are not tucked in under his skirt like the neighboring Feidi and he does not wear a belt. Apparently, he is not

69. The two characters "*wudao* (無道)" after the inscription is generally believed to be added and erased by later collectors. For example, Tomita Kojiro, Chen Pao-chen, and Ning Qiang all hold this opinion. See Tomita Kojiro, "Portraits of the Emperors: A Chinese Scroll-Painting, Attributed to Yan Liben," p. 2; Chen Pao-chen, "Painting as History: A Study of the *Thirteen Emperors* Scroll Attributed to Yan Liben," p. 16; and Ning Qiang, "Imperial Portraiture as Symbol of Political Legitimacy: A New Study of the *Portraits of Successive Emperors*," p. 110.

70. Fei Chang-fang (費長房; act. early seventh c.), *Lidai sanbaoji* 歷代三寶記, in *Xu xiu Siku quanshu* 續修四庫全書 (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe 古籍出版社, 2002), 1288. 11. 580-581.

71. Li Yan-shou, *Beishi*, 10. 372-373.

72. It is difficult to name the courtier's exact rank, yet his clothing appears almost identical (except for his shoes) to those of the fan bearer and sedan tenders of Xuandi, which visually suggests a low rank.

73. During the Sui and Tang dynasties, emperors wore red shoes and officials wore black shoes in formal occasions, such as imperial meetings and sacrificial events. See Liu Xu, *Jiu Tangshu*, 45. 1930-1931, 1936, 1945.

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dressed as an emperor. According to *Nanshi*, because of Houzhu's political ineptitude, the capital of the Chen dynasty was seized by the army of the Sui dynasty in a blink of eye. After finding out that almost all his officials had surrendered, Houzhu wanted to flee. Yuan Xian (袁憲; 529-598), the only official who chose to stay with the panic-stricken emperor, advised him sit in the grand hall and face the enemy with dignity. Houzhu did not follow Yuan's advice; instead, he hid himself inside a well. He was soon found by the Sui soldiers and was lifted out of the well. His unkempt appearance in *Thirteen Emperors* may be based on his shameful experience of capture, or it is simply the artist's visual strategy to humiliate him. In either case, such a depiction vividly projects the image of an inept, cowardly, and undignified failure of an emperor.

In fact, Houzhu of the Chen and Emperor Wudi of the Northern Zhou dynasty never met each other, nor was the Chen dynasty conquered by the Northern Zhou. By including Wudi in the scroll and placing him directly after the religiously indulgent rulers of the Chen dynasty, the artist was able to contrast the emperors with different attitudes toward religions and, correspondingly, the respective fate of their dynasties.

The inscriptions on *Thirteen Emperors* are generally short and do not make commentary. They usually include only the ruler's imperial title, personal name, and years on the throne. In the three longer inscriptions, that of Xuandi, Wendi of the Chen dynasty, and Wudi of the Northern Zhou dynasty, the emperor's attitude toward religion is included. Although like the shorter ones, these three do not contain any comment on the kings. Nonetheless, the reference to the three kings' religious activities indicates that the artist was specifically concerned with imperial involvement in religious activities—he singled it out from many aspects of an emperor's reign.[74] These inscriptions help to draw the viewer's attention to the nuanced and didactic portrayal of the three kings. Together they made a common argument: wise and capable rulers keep a distance from, or even suppress religion, whereas rulers who indulge in religion bring destruction to their state.

Chen Pao-chen, in the article "Painting as History: A Study of the *Thirteen Emperors* Attributed to Yan Liben," also notices the painting's comment on imperial involvement in religion. She makes two points on this topics: 1. the images of "Jianwendi" and "Yuandi" of the Liang dynasty (Wendi and Feidi of the Chen dynasty) reflect Taizong's criticism on the two's active evolvement in Buddhism.[75] 2. The portrayals of Xuandi and Wudi of the Zhou

74. Chen Pao-chen, "Painting as History: A Study of the *Thirteen Emperors* Scroll Attributed to Yan Liben," pp. 21-24.
75. Chen Pao-chen, "Painting as History: A Study of the *Thirteen Emperors* Scroll Attributed to Yan Liben," p. 23.

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dynasty show again Taizong's opinion that whether a ruler promotes or dispels a religion has no impact upon the rise and fall of a state.[76] In addition to the apparent contradiction between the two arguments, Chen's methodology is also problematic. As mentioned earlier, instead of starting from the painting itself, such as pictorial composition and details, to understand the meanings and comments encoded by the artist, Chen mostly relies on historical accounts of the kings, and attempts to relate them to the portrayed kings. Whenever the image of a king is not in accord with the related textual description of that king, she considers the image questionable, and sometimes, even assigns a new identity to the portrayed ruler. This methodology overlooks details and commentary associated with particular portrayals of the figures, and can lead to subjective speculation. Thus Chen's arguments contradict not only the pictorial depiction but also some of her own ideas.

First, because she identifies Emperor Wendi and Feidi of the Chen as Emperor Jianwendi and Yuandi of the Liang dynasty, and believes the two were portrayed as scholars, her understanding of the images of the two kings was that they were meant to indicate Emperor Taizong of the Tang dynasty's comment on political ruler's literary activities and how such activities detrimentally affect the fate of the state. Because of the same reason, Chen negates the authenticity of the whole inscription of Wendi, and further argues that the statement of Wendi's Daoist devotion in the inscription was irrelevant to the image of the king.[77] However, her treatment of this inscription is self-contradictory: on one side, she proposes that it is added to replace the missed original and its content is wrong and baseless; on the other side, she relies the reference of Wendi's religious devotion in the inscription to make the argument that the images of "Jianwendi" and "Yuandi" of the Liang dynasty correspond to the Taizong's criticism on the two emperors' evolvement in Buddhist practices.[78] This assertion apparently is at odd with the argument she makes in the same article—the inscription of Wendi and Feidi are later additions and do not match the description of the two emperors in the histories, and the two emperors are depicted as literati (not Buddhists or Daoists) engaged in "pure conversation 清談."

76. Chen Pao-chen, "Painting as History: A Study of the *Thirteen Emperors* Scroll Attributed to Yan Liben," pp. 21-24.
77. Chen Pao-chen, "Painting as History: A Study of the *Thirteen Emperors* Scroll Attributed to Yan Liben," pp. 13-14. It is worth noting that although Chen suggests the inscriptions of Wendi and Feidi were added, she admits that the style of the writings are not different from those of Xuandi and Houzhu, which she believes are original inscriptions on the painting.
78. Chen Pao-chen, "Painting as History: A Study of the *Thirteen Emperors* Scroll Attributed to Yan Liben," p. 23.

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In fact, Chen's understanding of the two as negative examples of a ruler's excessive indulging in literature further leads to some paradoxical and poorly supported conclusions. For example, she suggests that the artist of *Thirteen Emperors* imbued Taizong of the Tang dynasty's idea of governing a state with balanced policies on civil arts and military. In her argument, "Jianwendi" and "Yuandi" stand for the downfall of excessive promotion of literature and the following image of Wudi of the Zhou dynasty represents the harm of unduly military exercises.[79] However, nothing *visually* indicates the negative effect of Wudi's military policies. Instead, assisted by two officials, he is fully clad in *gunmian*, the sign of dynastic legitimacy and imperial virtue. Even Chen herself writes that Wudi was portrayed as "austere and authoritative 姿態威武，表情雄強." [80]

Second, her argument that *Thirteen Emperors* shows a king's policy toward Buddhism has no significant effect on his state barely has any support from the painting. The inscriptions of Xuandi of the Chen and Wudi of the Zhou dynasty, the only two that include the emperors' attitude and policy toward Buddhism, are simply descriptive; that is, they are, neither critical nor complementary. Without analyzing the visual representation of the two kings, but simply basing her argument on the fact that Emperor Taizong was neither irreligious nor a devote adherent of Buddhism or Daoism, Chen jumps to the conclusion below:

> The inscriptions [of Xuandi and Wudi] specifically noted that Xuandi "deeply admired Buddhism," which contrasts with the following Wudi's having "destroyed Buddhism." However, no matter [whether a ruler] "deeply admired Buddhism" or "destroyed Buddhism," their states eventually ended. This exactly reflects Taizong's [dispassionate] attitude toward religion.
> 題記中特別標出陳宣帝"深崇佛法"，與後周武帝"毀滅佛法"，兩相對照。但不論"崇佛"與"滅佛"，兩國最後都不免於滅亡的事實，正好顯示了太宗的這種宗教態度。

Chen's conclusion was based on descriptive inscriptions, Emperor Taizong's moderate support to Buddhism and Daoism, and the fact that the Chen and Zhou dynasties were replaced by other states. These three pieces of evidence are insufficient to support to her conclusion. The link between Xuandi and Wudi's religious polices and the extinction of the Chen and Zhou

79. Chen Pao-chen, "Painting as History: A Study of the *Thirteen Emperors* Scroll Attributed to Yan Liben," pp. 21-22.
80. Chen Pao-chen, "Painting as History: A Study of the *Thirteen Emperors* Scroll Attributed to Yan Liben," p. 19.

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dynasties is not apparent. Traditional accounts, including those in *Nanshi* and Beishi, considered both emperors capable rulers; moreover, the two dynasties they ruled did not end while either was reigning. The two inscriptions are factual, not commentary; scholars need to consider the inscriptions together with the portraits of the kings to fully understand the nuanced messages that they express as a whole. Chen Pao-chen draws her conclusion without consulting the portraits of Xuandi and Wudi, and misses important details that the artist applied to comment on the two kings' religious policies. For example, Chen fails to notice the Buddhist and Daoist motifs, such as the lotus patterns and Daoist robes, in the depiction of the three Chen dynasty rulers, including Xuandi; backed by positive historical accounts of Xuandi in *Nanshi*, she dismisses the inscription's reference to the king's summoning of his officials to Buddhist lectures, and believes Xuandi was portrayed positively with an expression suggests "intelligence, a sense of some secret unrevealed."[81] As to the fact that Xuandi sits on a sedan, Chen explains it as an allusion: in spite of being a capable ruler, his political ambition was obstructed ("圖中的宣帝形象威武，但卻曲坐輦上。這種造形似乎正象徵宣帝雖精明能幹，但卻因受挫而難以發展的遭遇。").[82] Chen also notices the unusual black colored robe Xuandi wears. However, instead of relating it to Xuandi's Buddhist belief, which is clearly stated in the accompanying inscription, she links the black color to the black top of the *mianfu* worn by Emperor Wudi of the Zhou and Wendi and Yangdi of the Sui dynasty, and suggests it implies Xuandi's experience of being a hostage in the Zhou dynasty and his "connection to the polities in the North."[83] Such points require more supportive evidence.

For the above reasons, although Chen Pao-chen notices the artist embodies comment on the relationship between a ruler's religious policies and the fate of a state, her argument is not sufficiently supported by the portrayals of the kings and the inscriptions. The artist of *Thirteen Emperors* provides nuanced depictions of the four rulers of the Chen dynasty and Wudi of the Zhou dynasty. He is attentive to details ranging from the kings' clothing, the activities they are engaged in, to the various detailed and nuanced portrayal of their attendants, to represent the detrimental impact of a ruler's excessive involvement in religious practices. This is the opposite of Chen's argument: whether a ruler promotes or suppresses religions significantly affects the rise and fall of a state.

81. Chen Pao-chen, "Painting as History: A Study of the *Thirteen Emperors* Scroll Attributed to Yan Liben," p. 7.
82. Chen Pao-chen, "Painting as History: A Study of the *Thirteen Emperors* Scroll Attributed to Yan Liben," p. 19.
83. Chen Pao-chen, "Painting as History: A Study of the *Thirteen Emperors* Scroll Attributed to Yan Liben," p. 18.

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Conclusion

The nuanced depiction of figures in *Thirteen Emperors* offers many clues for viewers to understand its intended message. The appearance of these kings may not necessarily correspond well with their respective descriptions in history books. Moreover, the interaction among some figures may even seem contradictory to historical reality. But, these discrepancies reflect strategies taken by the artist to make particular points and to allow the evaluation of these rulers to be visually perceivable. The artist did not indiscriminately select these kings and paint them to tell a general history or teach a generic lesson; instead, he embodied his commentary and opinions on the past dynasties and rulers, especially his criticism on imperial involvement in religious activities. Without relying on explanatory inscriptions, the artist was able to convey his ideas to his audience via various visual clues. These clues include interactions among figures, detailed depiction of clothing and accessories, and nuanced facial expressions and body language. The series of depicted rulers are not merely illustrations of either historical texts or inscriptions; rather, the figures portrayed in *Thirteen Emperors* have a major, if not independent, role in expounding the artist's political ideas.

（責任編輯：陳卉秀）

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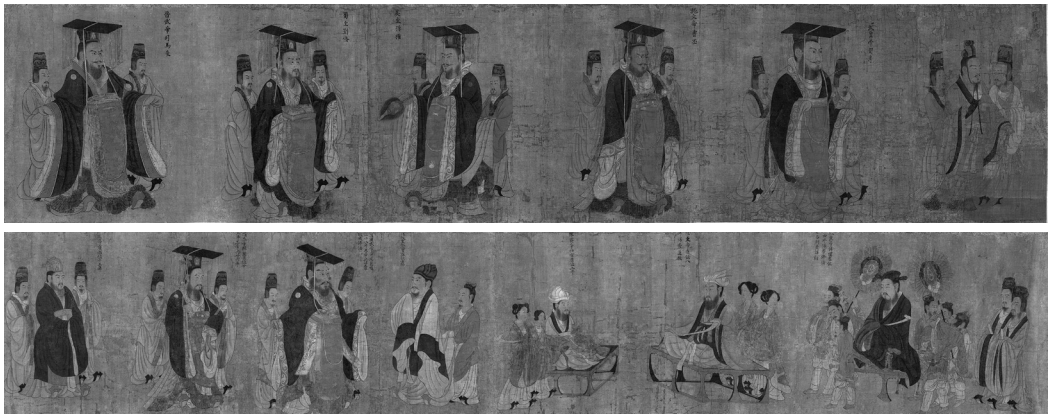


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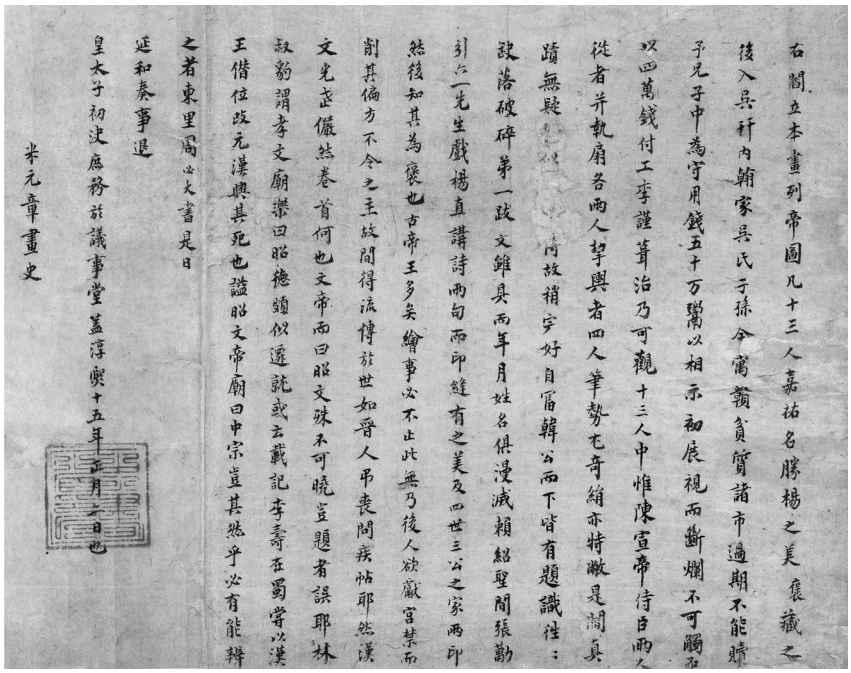


Fig. 2 Zhou Bida's colophon on *Thirteen Emperors*.

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Fig. 3　King of Wu Kingdom



Fig. 4　Emperor Wudi of the Northern Zhou Dynasty

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Fig. 5 Emperor Yangdi of the Sui Dynasty



Fig. 6 The four emperors of the Chen dynasty

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Fig. 7 Wendi and Feidi of the Chen dynasty

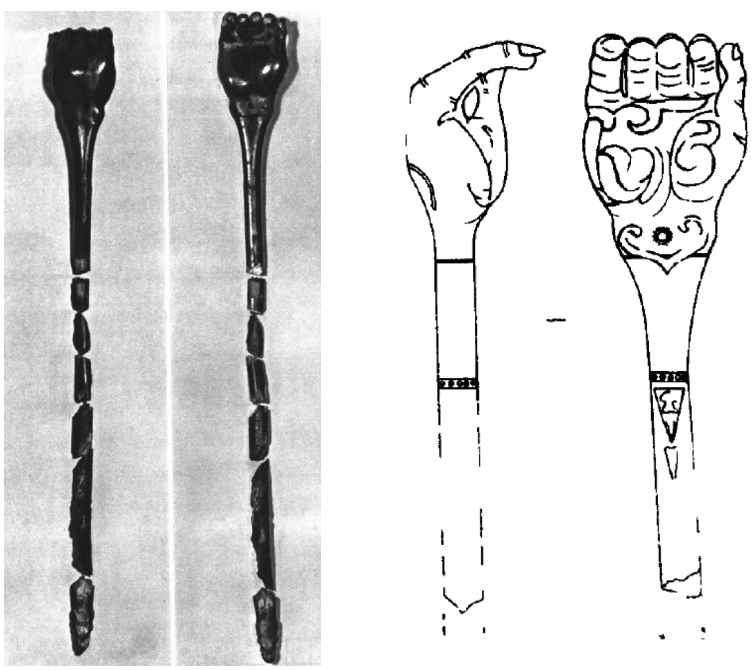


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Fig. 9 Portrait of Wang Rong. 5th century. Nanjing, Jiangsu Province.



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Fig. 11 Wenshu Bodhisattva (Manjusri), 8th century.
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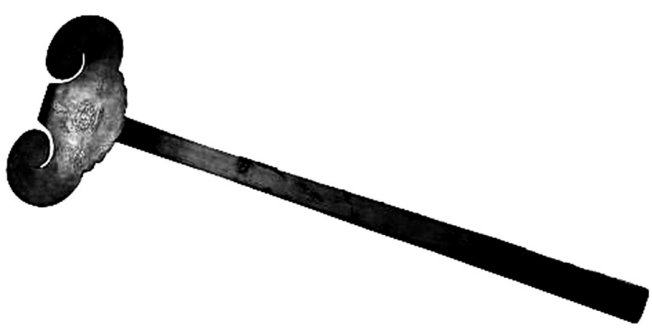


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Fig. 13 Gu Kaizhi, attr. *Nymph of the Luo River*, detail. Handscroll, ink and color on silk. The Song dynasty (960-1279). Beijing, Palace Museum.



Fig. 14 Detail from the lacquer painting excavated from the tomb of Sima Jinlong. 484 CE. Shanxi Province, China.

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Fig. 15 Shi Chunjiang and her daughter. Detail from the Sima Jinlong lacquer painting



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Fig. 18 Gu Kaizhi, attr. *Admonitions of the Court Instructress*. Handscroll, ink and color on silk. 6-7th century. British Museum, London.

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Fig. 19 Grandmother, mother, and wife of King Wenwang of the Zhou dynasty (11th century BCE). Detail from the Sima Jinlong lacquer painting.



Fig. 20 Emperor Xuandi of the Chen dynasty and his entourage.

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Fig. 20a Detail of figure 20



Fig. 20b Detail of figure 20

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Fig. 20c Detail of Figure 20



Fig. 20d Detail of Figure 20

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Fig. 21 Emperor Wudi of the Jin dynasty and his officials



Fig. 22 Emperor Houzhu of the Chen dynasty and Emperor Wudi of the Northern Zhou dynasty

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解讀無聲的評論：《帝王圖》新探

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波士頓美術館藏的《十三帝王圖》（傳閻立本）是一幅繪有唐以前十三位帝王的珍貴早期人物畫。對於這幅重要的繪作，目前學術界還有很多未解的疑團。比如此畫中既繪有聖主明君，但同時也有聲名狼藉的昏庸君主。畫家是以怎樣的標準從早期中國歷史中的數以百計的帝王中選出這十三位入畫，并又因何緣故將他們畫成各種形態這樣重要的課題從十二世紀被提出至今，學界仍未找到合理的答案。本文基於對《十三帝王圖》細緻入微的觀察和對相關文獻的全面考量，以一個新的視角來研究此圖，以試圖找到上述問題的合理解釋。雖然基於為尊者諱的原因，圖中帝王的外貌描繪有一些統一的美化成分，但畫家用了很多圖畫細節，比如君王和侍者的著裝，身體姿態，面部表情，以及人物間的互動，來闡述他這些帝王的看法。圖中的細節之間存在著有機的關聯，它們暗含了畫家對不同帝王政績的褒貶評論，其中著重突出了他對帝王沉溺宗教活動的批判態度。

關鍵詞：帝王圖、唐朝、繪畫、宗教

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