

**THE**  
***ADMONITIONS of the INSTRUCTRESS to the COURT***  
***LADIES SCROLL***  
**By KOHARA HIRONOBU**

PERCIVAL DAVID FOUNDATION OF CHINESE ART  
OCCASIONAL PAPERS 1

TRANSLATED & EDITED

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## EDITOR-TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

Preparations are currently underway at the Percival David Foundation for an international conference about the *Admonitions of the Instructress to the Court Ladies (Nüshi zhen)* scroll attributed to Gu Kaizhi (about 345-406) in the British Museum. To take place on 18-20 June 2001, the event is a joint venture with the British Museum, where a concurrent exhibition of the *Admonitions* scroll and early Chinese figure paintings is being organised in conjunction with the conference. Entitled "The *Admonitions* Scroll—Ideals of Etiquette, Art & Empire from Early China", it is number 21 in the series *Percival David Foundation Colloquies on Art & Archaeology in Asia*.

In the academy as in the museum world, the *Admonitions* scroll is widely acknowledged as a—if not actually *the*—pre-eminent work of art in the field of Chinese art history. But since the middle 1960s, it has been unjustifiably ignored in the critical literature, where it has featured only in surveys. A generation has passed since 1966, when Basil Gray, then Keeper of Oriental Antiquities at the British Museum, collaborated with the Japanese publishing house Benridô to produce a colour collotype replica of the scroll, which was accompanied by a short essay (Gray 1966). The following year, the Japanese scholar Kohara Hironobu presented a major article on the scroll in the *Kokka*, entitled "Joshi shin zukan" (Kohara 1967). Remarkably, this is the most recent study of its kind—hence the need to make it accessible to the English-speaking community that will gather in London for the 2001 conference.

This paper, which is primarily intended to be of use to scholars and students planning to attend the *Admonitions* colloquy, presents an edited translation of the article by Kohara Hironobu, now emeritus professor of Nara University. As preparations for the conference began in earnest the summer of 2000, Professor Kohara offered to revise and update his original article. To make the essay more accessible to a western audience some names and terms were cut. Insights gleaned from some of the archaeological findings of

the last three decades and from scholarship in this period were added. The conclusions, however, remain largely unchanged.

A shortcoming of this paper is that it has no illustrations. But it is hoped that readers will explore it either with a copy of the Japanese original to hand, or in the virtual company of the *Admonitions* scroll. Readers can point a browser to the British Museum's "Compass" portal at [www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/compass](http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/compass), where many scenes are currently viewable; the entire scroll should be viewable online at this portal by the spring of 2001. An illustrated version of this text will appear in the colloquy volume, which is to be co-published after the event by the British Museum Press and the Percival David Foundation.

The Chinese is Romanised in *Hanyu pinyin*. Transliterations in other systems have been modified accordingly, except in names and book titles. English translations of the *Admonitions* text and its colophons are from Basil Gray's 1966 essay, which "follow in the main the (unpublished) text prepared by Mr. (Arthur) Waley" (1880-1966) while he was "in the former Sub-Department of the Oriental Prints and Drawings of the Museum", before his retirement from the Department in 1929 (1966: 1). An appendix containing a preliminary list of seals on the scroll, and a select bibliography have been added for the reader's convenience.

I should like to thank Professor Kohara for his gracious co-operation in this project. Gaynor Sekimori was kind enough to discuss parts of the translation, as was my colleague John Carpenter, who also read the manuscript and provided welcome criticism and encouragement. Although I owe them special thanks for suggesting major improvements to the translation, any mis-interpretations remain my own.

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December 2000

## INTRODUCTION

Students of the history of painting in China will be hard-pressed to imagine any work of art that competes in spiritual richness or power to captivate the mind with the *Admonitions of the Instructress to the Court Ladies (Nüshi zhen)* picture scroll.<sup>1</sup> It is no exaggeration to call it the primary monument of art in the history of painting in China. Our understanding of the birth of painting in the pre-Tang period (i.e., before 618 CE) depends entirely on its existence, being, by great fortune, preserved in its visage. The accumulation of a great body of art historical scholarship on the early master Gu Kaizhi (about 345-406) in Japan, Europe and America before WWII, and in China after it, owes in large measure to the scroll's existence.

It is not easy, however, to attain coherent insight into this object. In what follows, I begin by addressing questions as to whether the painting is a "true relic" (i.e., original work) or a close, early copy, if it is a copy what is its date, and how the attribution to Gu Kaizhi came about. Having introduced such issues in my study, however, I endeavour not to fix or close any avenues of enquiry, but to leave them open to further investigation.

The *Admonitions* scroll entered the British Museum collection in April 1903. In January 1904, after the head of the Museum's Prints and Drawings Department, Laurence Binyon (1869-1943), authenticated the painting as a genuine work of Gu Kaizhi, so began the phase of late-modern research on the scroll (Binyon 1904).<sup>2</sup> In 1915, Taki Seiichi (1873-1945) opined that it was a copy by an unknown Song dynasty (960-1279) painter (Taki 1915). In 1922, while a meticulous copy of the scroll (*moben*) was being made by the Japanese painters Kobayashi Kokei (1883-1957) and Maeda Seison (1885-1971), Fukui Rikichirô (1886-1972) made a detailed record of the patches and repairs, and arrived at a view that the scroll was a copy by a Tang-

<sup>1</sup> This is the English title currently used at the British Museum. The scroll's Chinese title, *Nüshi zhen tujian*, literally, "the admonitions of the female historian picture scroll", is currently being researched by Julia K Murray, a speaker at the 2001 colloquy.—Ed.

<sup>2</sup> Binyon was Deputy Keeper in the Sub-Department of Oriental Prints of Drawings from 1913-32 and Keeper of Prints and Drawings from 1932-33.—Ed.

dynasty (618-907) master.<sup>3</sup> In 1927, Naitô Konan came up with the illuminating explanation that "for certain, it is not an original relic", but a close copy of at least the late Six Dynasties (221-589) period" (Naitô 1927). It is not unusual for scholars to disagree about the authenticity and date of a Chinese painting, but opinions have never differed as widely as with this scroll, which has been dated to as early as the Six Dynasties, to the Tang, and to as late as the Song (960-1279). The views expressed about it were always tentative, for although it was consulted as a source of reference for painting, fashion and other issues, it was never discussed as a subject in its own right. Nor has research in China since 1945 introduced any ground-breaking or revisionist arguments (see Yu 1962: 229 & index).

Two new studies that have stripped the scroll of its long-held façade are Suzuki Kei's illustrated commentary of January 1966, and the fifteen-page essay that accompanied the first collotype reproduction of the scroll in March of the same year by Basil Gray, (then) Keeper of Oriental Antiquities at the British Museum. Gray concluded that it was a "true relic" of the early Tang. Suzuki, by contrast, merely suggested that it did not suffer from the usual deficiencies of a copy, that its elegant line was something quite different from the Northern Song (960-1127) lineament, and that the identity of the copyist, the date of painting, the calligraphy, and the Tang- and Song-period seals all awaited careful explanation in future research (Suzuki 1966; Gray 1966).

After reading these two recent studies, I began to review the work of our eminent forebears in scholarship. Today (i.e., in 1967), half a century after the object again came to light, I am keenly aware that this study has not surmounted the research framework envisioned by Taki and Naitô. I have been much guided by the questions that the former had raised and the severe criticisms he had, especially concerning the provenance and seal impressions that the British Museum curators had accepted without qualification. I owe a deep debt of gratitude to the sharp-eyed Taki.

<sup>3</sup> See *Tôhoku Teikoku Daigaku chinretsuin kaisetsusho* (Commentary on exhibits at Tôhoku University [Sendai, Japan]).

Scholars recognise that there are no irrefutable theories as to the date and authorship of the *Admonitions*, and that the repute of the scroll itself far outshines anything written about it. I therefore investigated each issue with my own eyes until satisfied. Going back to the original objects and texts as I did, I realised how much of what has been said about the inscriptions, seals and so on, could be safely discarded. I also felt it necessary to examine and reorder any materials that had not previously been employed.

I believe the *Admonitions* scroll to be a copy of an original that is not extant.<sup>4</sup> Like others who believe it to be a copy, I have been slack about differentiating between the original and the British Museum painting that preserves this original. (The version of the *Admonitions* scroll in the Palace Museum, Beijing, will be introduced later.) I treat the British Museum *Admonitions* as a true and faithful copy, until the final stage of analysis, when I will treat the original separately in order to investigate the veracity of the attribution to Gu Kaizhi.

The *Admonitions* text is, to be sure, central to the painting, but it seems rash to assume, as many with preconceived ideas that these admonitions convey moral precepts have, that the artist who created the illustrations had the same aim and intention as Zhang Hua (232-300 CE), who wrote the text. It is crucial to distinguish between the meaning of the text and the agenda of the painter who selected and arranged the expressive forms, for this is precisely how to discern the painter's individuality and talent, and hence the chronological gap between text and painting. We should begin by questioning whether or not this *Admonitions* scroll is a

<sup>4</sup> One can tell it is a copy ~~big~~ because of the innumerable unclear passages that result from copyist's errors. In scene 1, the position of Yuandi's hand is such that he cannot draw his sword. The position of his left hand is also bizarre. The composition of the litter in scene 2, and the structure of the bed in scene 5 are incomplete. There are numerous moments, such as with the "carved" outlines of the mountains in scene 3, where the meaning and purpose of marks is unclear. The pinching position of the hunter's finger in this scene means that he is unable to pull the trigger of his crossbow. In scene 4, the right hand of the woman looking into the mirror is reflected the same way around in the mirror. In scene 5, the upper body of the man appears to be disconnected from his lower body. In various places, a mass of drapery lines stretches tortuously around the figure it supposedly describes. Two extreme cases are the hunter in scene 3, and the woman in scene 7.

didactic painting. Otherwise, when we come to ascertain its date, we will not have become sufficiently aware of its possible shortcomings. One should engage in a measure of direct analysis, but also approach an issue from other quarters.

The object in question has been passed down from collector to collector for over a millennium. As it passed through their hands, it accrued complex addenda over complex stages. These materials actually constitute its provenance, but if there is no build-up of reportage on them, such as has scarcely been pursued up to now, research does not progress. However that may be, provenance and archaeology are particularly thorny issues. In 1955, Toyama Gunji ascribed the calligraphy of one of the *Admonitions* colophons to the Jin-dynasty (1115-1234) emperor Zhangzong (r. 1190-1208), and suggested several versions of the *Admonitions* scroll could have existed.<sup>5</sup> But if Toyama is right, and we start asking how variant inscriptions and versions of the painting are related, we find ourselves in an almost impossibly complicated situation. We should, nonetheless, investigate the issues raised by Toyama's hypothesis.

The above provides a framework of the issues that concern me here, but my account does not follow this order. I should like to begin by exploring how the *Admonitions* scroll originated.

### THE ADMONITIONS TEXT: ITS HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

It is said that "Master Jia's daughter had five vices, was resented for not being a son, and was ugly, short and dark".<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, in the second month of 272 CE, the Jia clan was honoured when she was invested as a concubine of the Heir Apparent to the Western Jin (265-316) throne. At that

<sup>5</sup> *SDZS*, *Sō* (Song) I: no. 89, p. 259; *SDQJ*, *Song* II: nos. 89-91.

This colophon comprises transcriptions of the last few admonitions. They contain a significant number of variant characters when compared with the inscriptions on the painting itself. Qing sources (*DGL*; An Qi, *Moyuan huiguan*; *SQB*) attributed the "slender gold"-style calligraphy to Song Huizong (r. 1101-25), Jin Zhangzong's calligraphic model.—Ed.

<sup>6</sup> *JS* 31, "Biography of Huidi's Empress Jia" (v. 4: 963-66). Quotes in this paragraph are from the same source, unless noted.

time, the Heir Apparent was just fifteen years old, and in only his second year in the position. From the outset, she "intimidated the Heir Apparent by her many resentments and jealousies, abuses and deceptions". In the fourth month of 290 CE, when he acceded to the throne as emperor Huidi (r. 290-306), she naturally became empress, but grew "more cruel with each day". "Those who opposed her had no means to avoid her",<sup>7</sup> and it soon reached the point where she alone laid down the law.

The most significant events may be pieced together as follows: A year after becoming Empress, in the third month of 291 CE, she murdered the Grand Preceptor Yang Jun, but failed in an attempt to do away with the Empress Dowager Yang. In the sixth month, she secretly ordered the Prince of Chu, Sima Wei, to assassinate the young emperor's co-regents, the Prince of Ru'nan, Sima Liang, and the minister Wei Guan. He succeeded, only to be executed on her orders the following day. In the second month of 292 CE, the year Zhang Hua composed the "Admonitions" text, she finally succeeded in assassinating the Empress Dowager Yang. In the twelfth month of 299 CE, assisted by eunuchs loyal to her, she framed the Heir Apparent Yu, and had charges of treachery brought against him, which resulted in his being demoted to commoner status. Egged on by Prince of Zhao, Sima Lun, she eventually had him murdered in the third month of 300 CE.

As if all this were not enough, she was known to dispatch performing girls out into the streets in search of handsome men. They would be seduced into a carriage where she lay hidden behind matting, and then kidnapped. While detained in her company for several nights on end of entertainment and feasting, they would be bullied into having sex with her.

In the fourth month of 300 CE, following the *coup d'état* of the Prince of Zhao and his conspirators, the empress's dissipated régime, which had become the topic of popular songs like "The Ballad of the Luo" (*Luo zhong zhi yao*), was finally crushed. The Prince used the opportunity to settle an old score with the sixty-nine year old Zhang Hua, who he had put to death; the

<sup>7</sup> *JS* 35, "Biography of Pei Wei" (v. 4: 1041-47). Pei Wei (267-300), son of Pei Xiu (224-271), was a close friend of Zhang Hua.

Empress was imprisoned and demoted to commoner status. Zhang Hua's official biography records that his death "caused grief and pain from the court to the country".<sup>8</sup>

Zhang Hua (zi Mouxian) was a prominent courtier who was "versatile and widely experienced, and unusually erudite among his contemporaries", and distinguished "in that he maintained national stability despite serving a deluded emperor and tyrannical empress".<sup>9</sup> At any rate, he was opposed to the Empress Jia, who was "by nature tyrannical and cruel". She had the killings of sixteen or seventeen people on her hands, she had had the Heir Apparent's wet-nurse beaten to death, and had gruesomely aborted the pregnancies of palace women, whom she then branded as criminals. But whatever effects his "Admonitions" essay as an admonition or warning might have had on the empress, exactly what Zhang Hua hoped to achieve by it open to question. Although Zhang's "writing the 'Admonitions of the Instructress to the Court Ladies' was understood as slander", he was sufficiently looked up to "to know that in spite of the empress's malice and jealousy, she respected him". While it was impossible to speak his mind openly, he could still give shape to his general opinion in subtle words. He is surely someone who would have tried every means to curb her depraved conduct.

The preface to the "Admonitions" text, which is missing from the British Museum painting (but features in the Beijing version), describes how between the creation of Heaven and Earth and the establishment of the feudal order, a clan-based social system operated. As long as households were properly managed, there was peace in the world. Thus, women were earnestly and solemnly admonished to be meek and submissive. This had the aim of "maintaining the family system inculcated into women through

<sup>8</sup> JS 36, "Biography of Zhang Hua" (v. 4: 1068-77).

The "Admonitions" text, written in 292 CE, is widely believed to have been a satire on Empress Jia's conduct and character. For a summary of these events, see, also, Roger Greatrex, *The Bowu zhi, An Annotated Translation* (Stockholm, 1987): 11-12. See, also, A Straughair, "Chang Hua: A Statesman-Poet of the Western Jin Dynasty" (Canberra: ANU, 1973).—Ed.

<sup>9</sup> JS 35, "Biography of Pei Wei".

moral law" (Yonezawa 1952: 272). The basic concept is similar to the Later Han essayist Ban Zhao's (about 49-about 120 CE) *Precepts for Women* (*Nü jie*), and, especially, the Later Han general Huangfu Gui's *Admonitions of the Instructress* (*Nüshi zhen* 女師箴). However that may be, it is worth noting how Zhang Hua's precept,

Those who arrogate to themselves will not do so for long;  
ferocious persons will swiftly meet their doom.

is rather abruptly delivered. Whether or not one takes "these admonitions of the female officer" as a stance of opposition against the Empress Jia and her clan, a phrase such as the instructress's "daring to speak to the court ladies", for instance, is less pointedly personal. Pei Wei (267-300), Zhang Hua's ally who was also killed by the Prince of Zhao, Sima Lun, also left to posterity a <sup>text of the same title</sup> copy of the ~~Admonitions~~-text, and it did precipitate debate over the empress's atrocities. This scheme did not reach its conclusion, but the integrity of courtiers was revealed by this captivating piece of loyal remonstrance. Now, Zhang Hua employed long-established moral law as the pretext for his remonstrance, but how is this issue of loyalty informed in the painting?

### THE ADMONITIONS SCROLL: ITS MEANING AND EXPRESSION

#### Didactic and genre painting

In the past, the *Admonitions* scroll has been thought of as the classic example of the ancient didactic mode. Indeed, one recalls the other. No one doubts the link between the *Admonitions* painting and admonition, and it is certainly true that some scenes do "convey moral precepts by means of historical tales" (Tanaka 1936). These include the two scenes lost from the beginning of the British Museum painting. In the first of these (see the Beijing version, discussed below), Prince Zhuang of Chu's (r. 696-681 BCE) addiction to hunting is seen to be curbed by his concubine Lady Fan, who refused to taste the flesh of the birds he slaughtered. In the second, the daughter of the Marquis of Wei, by refusing to listen to the licentious music

ordered by him, prevails over her husband Duke Huan of Qi (r. 681-643 BCE).

The first two scenes of the British Museum scroll itself also belong in this category. The first of these depicts Lady Feng Wan throwing herself between her husband, the Han Emperor Yuan (r. 48-33 BCE), and a black bear which had broken loose at a combat of wild animals. The second shows Lady Ban Jieyu refusing to ride in the imperial litter lest she make her husband, the Han Emperor Cheng (r. 33-7 BCE), appear like one of the "bad last rulers" of the Three Dynasties (i.e., the Xia, Shang and Zhou), who were conventionally depicted with their favourite beauties, and not ministers, at their sides. None of these are at odds with the act of illustrating the meaning and content of ancient cautionary tales in which feminine virtues of personal conduct are exemplary.

However, some of the other seven "admonitions" are either unconvincing or incomprehensible, as such, and it is unclear why they stand as admonitions. More accurately, the *Admonitions* scroll represents a mix of the didactic and genre modes that may be usefully divided into three categories of genre painting.

Scenes in the first category appear to present didactic illustration, but are actually paintings of beauties. Literary sources indicate that this kind of painting already existed in the Han dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE).<sup>10</sup> An

<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., Cao Zhi (192-232), "Huazan xu" (Preface to the 'Eulogies on painting'): "Now painting belongs to the category of bird writing. Of old the illustrious Empress Ma (died 79 CE; Queen of Han Mingdi, r. 58-75 CE) was both beautiful in appearance and well stocked with virtue, and the Emperor held her in great honour. Once she was with him looking at paintings, and when they passed the shrine to the spirit of Shun of Yu (Yu Shun miao), they saw (the pictures of his Queens) Ehuang and Nüying. The Emperor pointed them out, and said jokingly to the Queen: 'Alas that I cannot find a queen like these!' Going on again, they saw the likeness of Tao Tang (Yao). Pointing at Yao the Empress said: 'Alas that the officials and all the ministries cannot get a man who knows how to rule as this one did!' The Emperor looked at her and smiled. From this (one sees) that the things which may be made evident by painting are many" (tr. Acker 1956: 77-78, n. 3, quoting Ono Katsunen, *Rekidai meigaki* (Kambun reading of *Lidai minghua ji*, 2 v., Osaka: Iwanami shoten, 1938), quoting *Tang lei han* 151). (This story is found in a surviving quotation from the preface to the lost "Eulogies on Paintings". Quotations are believed to survive in *YWLJ*, *Chu xue ji*, and *Taiping yulan* (see Acker 1954: 73-74, n. 2).) Another example from *LDMHJ* 1 is: "And how well Cao Zhi expresses [the idea that there is

example in the *Admonitions* scroll is Ban Jieyu's declining to ride in the imperial litter in scene 2. As she herself said, this was "because concubines are commonly portrayed at the side of the last emperors of the Three Dynasties". No one will disagree that these first four scenes, which are so comparable to the didactic expression seen the *Biographies of Exemplary Women* (*Lienü zhuan*) and *Women's Classic of Filial Piety* (*Nü xiaojing*) paintings, represent this first kind of female figure in the *Admonitions* scroll—the court beauty.

The second category of female figure comprises beauties that are not actual historical figures. Examples are scene 4, the "toilette" scene, which portrays three women, one engaged in combing another's hair, and a third regarding herself in a mirror, scene 8, in which a woman sits alone, reflecting on her conduct, and scene 9, which features the instructress and two palace ladies. In the last, the figure of the instructress holding the "red tube" cannot really be compared to the one conjured up by the awesome words of the Han-dynasty Mao commentary on the passage in the Classics to which this alludes—the "Meek girl" (*Jingnü*) ode from the "Odes of Pei" (*Peifeng*) in the *Book of Poetry* (*Shi jing*):

In antiquity, a female courtier was selected from among the palace women to carry a red tube, (meaning that she was charged with the duty of) recording the transgressions of her fellow concubines for their own instruction.<sup>11</sup>

nothing better than painting for preserving the appearance of great deeds] where he says: 'Of those who look at pictures, there is not one who [...] would not avert his eyes from the spectacle of a licentious husband or a jealous wife, and there is no one who, seeing a virtuous consort or an obedient queen, would not praise and value them'. From this we may know that paintings are the means by which events are preserved in a state in which they serve as models (for the virtuous) and warnings (to the evil)" (tr. Acker 1954: 73-75). Another example, from the "Biography of Song Hong" in the *History of the Later Han* (*HHS*) reads: "The throne had a new screen painted with exemplary women. The Guangwu Emperor (r. 25-57 CE) could not take his eyes off it, so Hong pulled a straight face and said: 'I have never met anyone as fond of virtue as they were of colour (a pun for women)'. The emperor took his point".

<sup>11</sup> For the original text of the ode, see James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, v. 4, pt. 1, ch. 5: 68-69, where Legge notes: "Mao (the commentator) makes the 'red reed' (or tube) to have been an instrument used by a literate class of ladies in the harem, who acted as secretaries to the mistress, and recorded rules and duties for all the inmates; and then he says that the presenting the red reed is equivalent to acquainting the speaker with the exact obedience she paid to the ancient regulations

However, the instructress in scene 9 is not irked by the undignified expressions of the court ladies who approach her, chatting and smiling (figs. 1 & 2). If this transmits the core meaning of the "Admonitions of the Instructress to the Court Ladies" (as understood in the *Book of Poetry*), then it is only in the form of a beauties painting masquerading as an admonition. So, why not call the scroll a pre-eminent painting of beauties?

One imagines that the demand for beauties paintings grew alongside the aesthetic appreciation of painting. However, if we draw analogies with what emerged in other schools of painting, we evidently cannot conceive of the post-Han demand as responding to those same historical conditions. Gu Kaizhi (about 345-406), to whom the original *Admonitions* scroll is traditionally ascribed, was active about a century after Zhang Hua (232-300). Because of this distance, one would not expect such a painter to have been motivated to represent the desperation of Zhang Hua faithfully. Moreover, he would surely have been unfulfilled by didactic illustrations executed in the centuries-old outline technique of the *Biographies of Exemplary Women*. In any case, it is obvious that something transformative and original has happened. As the great connoisseur and painter Mi Fu (1051-1107) said in his *History of Painting (Hua shi)*: "In paintings by the ancients, you always had to have admonitions". If this is so, we should now move towards a broader understanding of what "admonition" could mean, even to the point where the moral precept could become completely obscured. The development of didactic art grinds to a halt here in these first scenes of the

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of the harem! The mere statement of this view is its refutation"; of the 'red reed or tube', Legge writes "but what article is denoted by it, we of course, cannot tell. The bamboo tubes with which pencils are now made are called *biguan*. There may be many things of small tubes, painted or varnished red, among a young lady's possessions, one of which she might present to a friend or an admirer". In the 'Little Preface', the ode is said to be "directed against the times. The Marquis of Wei was without principle, and the Marchioness without virtue" (Legge, *op. cit.*, v. 4, pt. 1, ch. 2: 43). For a translation of 'red reed' as 'red flute', see Waley 1937: 33. The Qianlong emperor's titlepiece for the scroll, inscribed *tong guan fang*, "Fragrance of the Red Tube" (recorded *SQBJ* 36), alludes to this. See also Morohashi 1984: 4: 9569.117.—Ed.

*Admonitions* scroll, but other picture-making modes continued to develop, precipitating a third kind of genre painting.

Does scene 5, where a couple sit opposite one another within the screens and canopy of her bedchamber, really portray the "emperor... seated on a bench beside the bed in intimate conversation with (a lady)", as described by Gray (1966: 4)? Laurence Sickman's research produced the following insight (1956: 63):

The illustration is literal; a gentleman of aristocratic appearance sits on the edge of the canopied and curtained bed facing a delicate and rather haughty lady who is either being responded to or distrusted. The expression of the gentleman strongly suggests distrust. Whatever it may be, a sense of tense emotion has been captured and intensified by the brooding calm of the man and lady—action is concentrated in the fixed gaze which they exchange.

Although Sickman recognised the tension in the air between these two, one cannot imagine them having the type of conversation described above. Hu Jing (1769-1845) described this scene with the words (*Xiqing daji*, *Juan* 3):

The man and the woman are about to part... The man's collar is open and he is standing on his shoe. He is about to get off the bed in a hurry.

The woman's sleeve hangs down outside, while her right hand holds the screen around her bed. This has to be the position she would have assumed had she hurried to welcome him, or were he about to leave. The man's left leg is akimbo, while his right foot appears to be in the process of taking off or putting on his shoe (fig. 3). The woman's face has been retouched, but I really do not think, from the way the outside corner of her eye slopes upward, that she is cross-examining an inconstant lover. We do not get to hear their pillow talk, as it were, but we do see them exchanging sweet nothings. One thing is certain, that the moral gist of the admonition in the inscription—"If the words that you utter are good, all men for a thousand leagues around will make response to you"—has been completely ignored here. The painter has given his full attention to illuminating the final phrase, "even your bedfellow will distrust you". Thus, in this section, the admonition



is hidden in the shadows, and what we actually have is a genre-style rendering of the shape and form of a screened-off bedchamber.

Similarly, it is hard to say of scene 7, as Gray did, that "The emperor is reproving a lady, who approaches in submissive attitude with hands respectfully concealed in her sleeves" (1966: 5). Nor is it that "the wife is hearing out her husband's criticisms" (Umezawa 1926: 83); nor is it that:

One of the palace ladies is portrayed as moving slowly to the left. With her eyes half closed, she seems to be walking in a dream... We could hardly find a better example of the realisation of two of Xie He's artistic goals: animation through spirit consonance and structural method in the use of the brush (Wu 1997: 48-49).

Hu Jing's handle on the scene—"A man and a woman stand opposite one another, the man about to walk off, his hand raised as if to repulse the woman"—seems to hit the mark. This scene has a long text—

No one can please forever; affection cannot be for one alone; if it be so, it will end in disgust. When love has reached its highest pitch, it changes its object; for whatever has reached fullness must needs decline. This law is absolute. The 'beautiful wife who knew herself to be beautiful' was soon hated. If by a mincing air you seek to please, wise men will abhor you. From this cause truly comes the breaking of favour's bond.

—from which the tract "if by a mincing air you seek to please, wise men will abhor you" was chosen as the subject for illustration. But what is painted here is not the determined rejection on the part of the "wise man" in parallel with the text, but a man and a woman together: a woman of bewitching beauty advancing triumphantly upon a man who, surprised and embarrassed by her advance, shrinks back in disgust. We should evaluate the hand that rendered their emotional expressions more highly than I have been able to elucidate (fig. 4). At least, the painter cannily emphasised the idea of "if by a mincing air you seek to please" in place of "wise men will abhor you", so that the man becomes an utterly ridiculous figure.

One will recall the problems encountered with this scene by a modern Japanese painter. Describing his experience over September and October of 1922, Maeda Seison wrote (1954:71):

I spent fifty days in the (British) Museum from morning, when it opened, until evening, when its doors closed. Completely unhurried, I set about making an exact copy of the (*Admonitions*) scroll. First of all, I had problems executing that kind of lineament. Since it was wrong to paint as I personally might have wished, I truly adopted the copyist's way of looking at the object.

Looking at his copy today, one realises how many times the faces in this scene were repainted before Maeda the copyist was satisfied (fig. 5). Each time Maeda repainted a face, he stuck a slip of paper over the previous attempt, and painted a new face on top, which gives some idea of his anxiety and confusion as a copyist. "When I thought it was a superlative painting, why did I end up with such flirtatious expressions?," he would wonder.

The woman's rather mocking expression and the caricature of a man vexed by unambiguous female flirtation is the third type of genre figure we find in the *Admonitions* scroll. A similar contrast is also found in scene 2, where the extraordinarily expressive faces of the bearers jostling beneath Han Chengdi's carriage highlight his own empty expression as he regards Ban Jieyu. For a painter to suggest, as this one does, the sluttish or slovenly appearance of a woman by having her raise her skirts with one hand, surely rules out his having had serious didactic intent. In other words, this third kind of genre figure is quite different from the other two.

When Tanaka Toyozō (1881-1948) wrote, "I see this as the most complete example of the shift from 'admonishment' to 'aestheticism' among narrative figure paintings of its kind" (1936), he was probably referring to the first and second categories, history and beauties paintings. But this scroll is the very place to see the emergence of a third category, proper "genre painting". The *Admonitions* scroll is not some naïve model for didactic painting, but a sophisticated genre painting with some very particular idiosyncrasies.

The deployment of the rather clichéd precepts of the *Admonitions* text illustrates how enduring old creative principles were, but within these limitations, the painter accomplished fresh interpretation and meaning. This is what this third type of scene represents. Importantly, it provides us with a

beginning and an end for a chronology of the scroll's creation. The *Biographies of Exemplary Women*-style (i.e., classical) compositions mark this beginning, and the consciousness of this progressive and groundbreaking painter marks the end. The interaction between the sexes in the painting is unique, and emanates a distinctive period style. This is a painter who flouts the conventions of didactic painting in a wonderfully satirical manner. His art originates in the "spirit of the age" in which the (original) *Admonitions* painting was composed. Perhaps genre paintings like this were composed from early times, but, even if they were, the pictorial freedom under discussion here was a product of its own time.

The painting is so special precisely because it conveys the painter's genius, seen in the transformative treatment of indiscreet men and women, for turning the textual content upside-down and inside out, a practice that is quite opposed to the thrust of the admonitions themselves. It gives form to a new era of thought that not merely condoned, but welcomed fresh interpretations that inverted, satirised and lampooned long-held normative beliefs of moral learning. Elements of different periods within the chronological bounds described above all seem to co-exist in the painting.

### Two modes of narrative composition

Scene 3 is a unique spectacle within the history of genre painting. A gigantic mountain suddenly appears. To the left of it is a hunter. Above it are the sun and moon (fig. 6). It gives the impression of having some spiritual meaning, and Gray even thought "the mountain (could) be identified as the cosmic mountain" (1966: 4). Whatever the interpretation, the hunter, who approaches the mountain carrying his bow, is entirely out of scale with the mountain itself. Zhang Yanyuan, author of the *Record of Famous Painters through the Ages* (*Lidai minghua ji*; *LDMHJ*), noted that in Wei-Jin painting, "sometimes people are (drawn) larger than mountains".<sup>12</sup> Extant paintings confirm that scale in the earliest landscapes was primitive and naïve. In this

<sup>12</sup> *LDMHJ* 1: "On landscapes, trees and rocks" (tr. Acker 1954: 154).

instance, the hunter is painted as large as the other figures in the *Admonitions*, in a manner that is neither naturalistic nor realistic.

Be that as it may, it does not help to explain the composition of the scene. The hunter is actually smaller than the mountain, so Zhang Yanyuan's comment that "people are (drawn) larger than mountains" is not exactly germane. The scale of the animals on the mountain is correct: the horse is painted bigger than the hare and deer, the tiger is bigger than the horse, and the mountain is bigger than the tiger. Referring to the sun and moon to each side of the peak, Gray believed "the idea of such symbolism is primitive" (1966: 15).

It would appear, however, that his two interpretations are incompatible. After long consideration, I am convinced this scene presents a transparent illustration of the text. The sun and moon are painted to accord with the words "when the sun has reached its mid-course, it begins to sink; when the moon is full it begins to wane"; the mountain is painted so as to explain the phrase "to rise to glory is as hard as to build a mountain out of dust"; and the crossbow indicates how "to fall into calamity is as easy as the rebound of a tense spring".<sup>13</sup> The hunter is there to manifest "the speed of the rebound", to illustrate the twinkling of an eye in which the arrow is loosed. The arrangement shows everything in the text in minute detail. How could this have no meaningful connexion to the original it so accurately matches?

Numerous commentators have told us that here, "the man is shooting a bird", but this is no "hunting scene", nor may "the animals and hunter be compared to the glory or calamity in humanity". In these scenarios, the configuration of motifs is purely random. I do not believe we can say of the wild animals in the mountain, as Gray did, that "the white tiger and phoenix must be taken in the same symbolic meaning as in Gu Kaizhi's *Note on Painting the Cloud Terrace Mountain* (*Hua Yuntaishan ji*)".<sup>14</sup> They do not

<sup>13</sup> As Yu Jianhua pointed out. However, Yu did not recognise the significance of this explanation. See Yu 1962: 169.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Gray 1966: 15: "In the cosmological setting the central mountain should be represented in three registers, as Gu Kaizhi himself appears to lay down in his "Note

signify that this is a sacred or cosmic mountain replete with auspicious signs.<sup>15</sup> Anyone can see from Han-dynasty Bo-mountain censers (*Boshan lu*) and Tang-dynasty mirrors that such mountains have long been populated by wild animals. In addition, there is no point in explaining this scene by reference to Gu Kaizhi's text on painting, *Note of Painting Cloud Terrace Pavilion*, because that text is later than Gu Kaizhi: it was inserted into the *Lidai minghua ji* in the twelfth century (Kohara 1997).

The *Nymph of the Luo River* composition attributed to Gu Kaizhi provides further evidence of the narrative formula employed in this scene. In short, we know of five extant scrolls.<sup>16</sup> Sections of the versions in the Beijing Palace Museum and Liaoning Provincial Museum collections (published prior to 1967) include illustrations of Cao Zhi's (192-232 CE) masterful description of the nymph's beauty (figs. 7 & 8). This passage of the ode reads:

Her body soars like a startled swan  
Gracefully, like a dragon in flight,  
In splendour brighter than the autumn chrysanthemum,  
In bloom more flourishing than pine in spring;  
Dim as the moon mantled in filmy clouds,  
Restless as the snow whirled by the driving wind.  
Gaze far off from a distance:  
She sparkles like the sun rising from the morning mists;  
Press closer to examine:  
She flames like the lotus flower topping the green wave.<sup>17</sup>

To express this stunning beauty, each of these scenic elements and animals is meticulously painted about her; not a single one is omitted. The Liaoning scroll is later than the Beijing one, so its brushwork is much less complex,

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on Painting the Cloud Terrace Mountain". Here the mountain is imaged between heaven and water, in which it is reflected. He adds that he would place a phoenix above the mountain peak and a white tiger in a valley beside a stream. It can hardly be accidental that these creatures should be depicted on this mountain, and they must be taken in this symbolic meaning." The *Note on Painting the Cloud Terrace Mountain* is quoted in *LDMHJ 5* (HSCS edition, v. 1: 71-2).—Ed.

<sup>15</sup> See *YWLJ* 98 & 99: "Xiangrui bu" (Auspices and omens).

<sup>16</sup> Two in the Beijing Palace Museum, one in the Liaoning Provincial Museum, one in the Taipei Palace Museum, and one in the Freer Gallery, Washington D.C.. (A sixth, in the British Museum, is the topic of several papers to be given at the June 2001 conference.—Ed.)

<sup>17</sup> Translation of lines 39-48 from Shih 1976; for another translation, see Waley 1923: 60.

and much of the original charm is lost. Indeed, the perfunctory and literal compilation of the scene sets the Liaoning scroll apart from the other four, in which the ancient method of pictorial illustration is incomparably easier to understand.

This method whereby each individual motif mentioned in a text is pictured, is only found in narrative illustrations of classical texts. In addition to the *Nymph* and *Admonitions* scrolls, I know of the following four renditions of three literary themes:

- 1) "Nine Songs" (*Jiuge*) from the *Chuci* (*Songs of the South*): paintings in Osaka Fujita Art Museum, Osaka, and Liaoning Provincial Museum, Shenyang.
- 2) "Odes of Bin" (Odes of the State of Bin) (*Binfeng*) from the *Shijing* (*Book of Poetry*): painting by Ma Hezhi (active 2<sup>nd</sup> half 12<sup>th</sup> c.), in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. (See Xu 1991.—Ed.)
- 3) *Latter Red Cliff Ode* (*Hou Chibi fu*): painting by Qiao Zhongchang (active 1<sup>st</sup> half 12<sup>th</sup> c.), in the Nelson-Atkins Museum, Kansas City.

The reader is referred to essays on each of these by the present writer (Kohara 1981, 1982, & 1991), but let us now take a look at (3), the painting in the Nelson-Atkins Museum attributed to Qiao Zhongchang.

The passage reproduced in figure 9 marks the time in the tenth month of 1082 when the exiled scholar-official Su Shi (1036-1101) composed the *Latter Red Cliff Ode*, after a second tour of the cliffs at Huangzhou (in modern Hubei). The text here reads:

Clambering over roots twisted like dragons, I pulled my way up to the eagle's precarious nest and looked down into the hidden halls of the river god. I gave a long, shrill whoop. Trees and grasses shook and swayed, the mountains rang, the valley echoed. A wind came up; roiling the water, (and I felt a chill of sadness, a shrinking fear).<sup>18</sup>

All the motifs in the text are depicted except for the figure of Su Shi himself (hence my brackets). The *Admonitions* is the earliest example of this practice, which was not used after the twelfth century.

<sup>18</sup> Tr. Chaves 2000: 139, quoting Watson 1965: 87-93.

We attend now to the complicated problem of the landscapes in the *Nymph* and *Admonitions* paintings. In the *Lidai minghua ji* we read:

In (Wei and Jin dynasty works that Zhang Yanyuan had seen), wherever landscape (motifs) are painted, then the aspect of the crowded peaks resembles (the teeth of) a pearl-inlaid comb of a rhinoceros horn. Sometimes the waters have no room to float (a ship); sometimes people are (drawn) larger than the mountains. Almost always trees and rocks are put in to set off the places (shown). The appearance (of the trees) as if they were planted in rows is like that of the spread fingers of outstretched arms. But to understand fully the meaning of the ancients consists entirely of seeing clearly the things in which they excelled and not in sticking to the changes that have since become common (tr. Acker 1954: 154).

This would seem to be an apt description of the primitive, naïve qualities of these *Nymph* scrolls (fig. 10). There are areas where the rendering is less than brilliant, but the overall form of the *Admonitions* mountain is still far more complex. It comprises piled up, inward-facing segments of mountain, and slopes and cliffs skilfully rendered in fine, "engraved" lines (*goulexian*). We also find an outline technique used for the shrubbery that is piled up along the paths leading from the valleys into the foothills and up to the peaks. This attention to linear subtlety, as well as the compositional expertise, and the lofty conceptualisation—all so sharply focussed here—are nowhere to be seen in the *Nymph of the Luo River* scrolls. "The symbolic stage for the main characters within the world of the painting" (Yonezawa) (i.e., the landscape) in the *Nymph* scrolls can hardly be compared to the emancipated mountain landscape of the *Admonitions* scroll. The mountains in the *Nymph of the Luo River* lack the naïve charm of the early period that the expressive form in *Admonitions* still retains.

And it is not just the landscape: the same point can be made for the figures. Neither in emotional expression, nor posture and bearing do the figures in *Nymph* scrolls match those in the *Admonitions*. It is true that the *Nymph* scrolls illustrate entire passages of <sup>the</sup> *mode*, that there appears to be no sacred quality about their mountains, and that in each case the sun contains a three-legged crow. But even though they all have these essential features of ancient style, the *Admonitions* scroll has priority.

But let us be more specific about this landscape issue. The naïve and coarse qualities of the landscapes of murals in two recently excavated Eastern Jin (317-419 CE) tombs indicate that landscape painting was then not yet an independent genre, being no more than a constituent in the explication of the main figure or event (figs. 11 & 12; Gansu 1979, Liaoning 1984). These landscapes are not primitive because the tombs they are in lie great distances from metropolitan centres, but because Eastern Jin landscapes were primitive. It is evident, therefore, that the landscape in the *Admonitions* scroll is not an Eastern Jin painting.

Max Loehr identified what is unusual about the mountain in scene 3 (1980: 18):

More important, however, is the question of how faithfully this scroll represents the style of a fourth-century original. The answer must be that, except the motif of the mountain, there are no significant traits to conflict with the earliness of its style. But the mountain is treated in a manner incomparably more sophisticated than the archaic hills of the *Nymph of the Luo River*, or, for that matter, any mountain scenery up to the sixth century if not the seventh.

As a means to resolve this anomaly, I should like to propose the following hypothesis: that this mountain was inserted at the time the British Museum's copy of the *Admonitions* was made as a substitute for whatever preceded it. In other words, it is not a fourth-century mountain, but a seventh- or eighth-century one.

It is not unusual in China for copyists to completely modernise part of a painting they are supposedly trying to reproduce faithfully. The evidence in this case lies in what Maeda Seison said about the condition of the *Admonitions* scroll after copying it (1957):

Areas where the original silk medium had disintegrated have been repaired with patches of additional silk. These repairs are crude, and the touching up of the painting on them is also generally inept. What I imagine could have happened is that over the many years of wear and tear, silk patches were inserted and touched up again and again, but that the restoration techniques used were poor. My discovery of these conditions as I copied the scroll was not this dispiriting throughout, but the most problematic and demanding area of all was the mountain with its hunter and pheasants.

The lineament that describes the mountain is the hardest to "read" in the whole scroll (fig. 13).

Be that as it may, the linear technique used to render this mountain is as sophisticated as that seen in the landscape in cave 103 at Dunhuang (fig. 14). To the right and centre of the cave 103 mural we find piled-up mountains made of contours in the form of concentric circles. The line patterning of two small mountain-groups in the middle is especially close to that seen on two Tang mirrors, one from the Hōryū-ji collection and another in the Shōsō-in (figs. 15 & 16). The former predates 738, the year the Empress Kōmyō presented it to the Hōryū-ji. The latter predates 756, the year she presented it to the Shōsō-in. A similar mountain face composed of concentric circles will be recalled from the lower left of the *Admonitions* mountain. In the upper portion of the cave 103 landscape is a mountain chain that evinces pictorial recession, an effect achieved with rows of downward slanting parallel lines. Parallel lines of this type were employed to create the right edge of the mountain in the *Admonitions*.

As with the Eastern Jin murals (figs. 11 & 12), the small mountains in Northern Wei (386-533) and Northern Zhou (557-580) *Jātaka* pictures at Dunhuang are all arranged on a level (fig. 17). The right edge of the *Admonitions* mountain recedes into the picture from lower right to upper left, with the lines arranged in parallel. The use of these (receding) parallel lines is not seen in the Six Dynasties and Sui (581-617) periods, and only begins in the Tang, when, by arranging a succession of small mountains at an incline, painters were able to represent an independent, large mountain. Even so, the *Admonitions* mountain is not as fully developed as the one in cave 103, so would appear to predate the eighth-century cave painting.

A second piece of evidence is the line engraving on the sarcophagus of Princess Yongtai (685-701), granddaughter of the usurper Empress Wu Zetian (r. 684-705) (fig. 18). Empress Wu executed the sixteen-year-old princess in 701, but she was reburied in 709 close to her grandfather

Gaozong's tomb.<sup>19</sup> The pheasant flying in the upper left of figure 18 is similar to the one flying over the mountain in the *Admonitions* (fig. 6). They show the same pictorial "tricks" for rendering these birds, viz., the head plumage, the mottled tails, the form of the shorter lower tail feathers, the extension of the head, and the outstretched wings of a bird in flight. It is as if they were painted with the idea of showing how a pheasant flies in mind. However, this idea has become conventionalised, and there is no doubt they are works of the same period.

The evidence introduced above shows the mountain in the *Admonitions* to be a Tang painting. Indeed, it can only be explained as a Tang landscape, as it was by Max Loehr, when he described the mountain as "incomparably more sophisticated" than the rest of the scroll. The date of the pictures in Princess Yongtai's tomb—709 CE (or 701, if one goes back to the date of her first burial)—now becomes extremely important, because it gives us the confidence to advocate an actual date for our copy of the *Admonitions*. Whereas before one could only say it was Tang (618-907), we can now say it was painted around this decade, the 700s.

The *Admonitions* scroll transmits a rich seam of ancient art-forms, but is also the culmination of a series of innovations. Scene 6 is a good example. This illustration of a family group is based on the last line of the relevant text, "Let your hearts be as locusts and your race shall multiply" (fig. 19). The male protagonist and his wife occupy a fairly large area at the front right. Opposite them sit two attendant women (concubines?) with three young children. In the central upper portion of the picture, painted somewhat smaller, are an old person, a boy and a girl.

To Yonezawa's eye, "this [approximated] the Han concept of perspective (*shangxia yuanjin fa*, literally, "method of [describing] position and distance"), a representational scheme in which distant things are small

<sup>19</sup> Princess Yongtai's tomb was discovered in 1960 near Xi'an. The princess was executed along with her husband and numerous relatives for remarking upon her grandmother's love affairs. She was reburied in 709 after being posthumously rehabilitated by her father Zhongzong (restored 705-709). For a brief description, see, e.g., Loehr 1980: 38-41.—Ed.

and nearby things are large". It is more likely, however, to indicate the survival of the value system of ancient figure painting, in which the status of a figure is intimated by his or her relative size. In this case, the male head of the family is the largest; his wives and concubines are proportionately smaller; relatives in their dotage and grandchildren are painted the smallest. The scene was obviously rendered with the idea in mind that greater persons should be larger than lesser persons. In the Wei-Jin tomb murals discovered (in the years before 1967) in North Korea and Liaodong (north-eastern China), the main figure seems preposterously large for the picture frame, while his surrounding retinue of courtiers and maids are, by contrast, so small that they resemble puppets (figs. 51, 52, 53 & 54). The status of these figures is obvious enough to anyone.

I am not arguing that the *Admonitions* painter overcame this archaic value system, but that his resurrection of it assured the success of his figural perspective. First, he fitted the figures in each of the three groups into a triangular design; then he aligned the three triangular groups inside a proportionately larger isosceles triangle. The viewer's gaze would then be drawn, at an angle, from the lower right corner up to the left, and from there into the heart of the scene at the very centre. We should appreciate that this consummate handling of the composition actually transforms archaic concepts of size. It signalled both the end of the road for classicism, and the beginning of a fresh, new pictorial framework.

### THE "RUISI DONGGE" SEALS

Late in the Wanli period (1573-1620), the *Admonitions* scroll contained a colophon by the pre-eminent connoisseur and artist Dong Qichang (1555-1636).<sup>20</sup> But this and other erstwhile colophons have since disappeared. We all recognise how much we depend on literary sources to tell us about the transmission and provenance of an artefact, but the connoisseurship of collectors' seals remains a fundamental problem as well. Most will agree that

<sup>20</sup> Zhang Chou (1577-1643), *Qinghe shuhua fang*: "Zi zi ji" (Zi-character collection).

the only unimpeachable seals on this scroll (prior to its entry into the Qing imperial collection in the first decade of the Qianlong reign, 1736-95) are those of individuals known from literary records to have encountered the scroll during the Ming and early Qing. That it was passed down among the greatest collectors and <sup>was</sup> seen by the greatest connoisseurs is proof of its fame in those periods.<sup>21</sup>

What remain problematic, however, are the Tang- and Song-period (618-1279) seals on the *Admonitions* painting and its scroll mounting. Taki Seiichi articulated this concern when he wrote:

So, are the (Northern Song) imperial "Zhenghe" and "Xuanhe" seals genuine, or not? Binyon grudgingly acknowledged doubt about them, but in traditional China, old connoisseurs' and collectors' seals impressed on ancient paintings and calligraphies have been considered as indispensable as a stockpile of firewood... We have unconsciously discovered, as it were, that we have lost confidence in each and every one of these Song imperial seals. It has become hazardous in the extreme to propose any kind of argument based on them, and imperative to avoid them by whatever means.

With one or two exceptions in Japan, I am not aware of any scholarly scepticism towards them, nor do I see the grounds for Taki's rejection of them, but it is a fact that they are not all up to the standards of design and execution one would expect. One has to wonder what mediocre persons are responsible for the inept carving and lame design of some of these seals, and one's suspicions are inevitably aroused when seals that should have been impressed close together, according to a logic of chronological increment, are not (figs. 2 & 20). When and where were the fraudulent seals cut and impressed?

<sup>21</sup> The collectors include Zhang Yujun in the Hongwu reign (1368-98), Zhang Bin in the Zhengtong reign (1436-49), Yan Song in the Jiajing reign (1522-66), Gu Congyi in the Longqing reign (1567-72), Xiang Yuanbian (1525-90) in the Wanli reign (1573-1620), Zhang Xiaosi in the Chongzhen reign (1628-44), Dan Zhongguang in the Shunzhi reign (1644-61), Liang Qingbiao in the Kangxi reign (1662-1722), and An Qi (Yizhou) in the Qianlong reign (1736-95). Zhu Yizun (1629-1709) viewed the scroll in the collection of Mr Wang of Jiangdu in 1672, but Wang's collector's seals do not appear on the scroll. If the scroll Zhu Yizun saw is indeed the British Museum scroll, then this Mr Wang would have been its keeper between Dan Zhongguang and Liang Qingbiao. (See Zhu Yizun, *Pushuting shuhua ba*). The connoisseurs include Gao Shiqi (1645-1704) and Wu Sheng, author of *DGL* (prefaces dated 1712).

This question hinges on whether or not one sees the "Ruisi Dongge" ([Palace of] Imperial Contemplation, East Wing) seal as lying beneath the "Xuanhe", "Shaoxing", and "Guangrendian" seals at the end of the scroll. It is bizarre that the "Xuanhe" and "Shaoxing" seals, which should date to very close after the construction of the Palace of Imperial Contemplation (Ruisidian), do not (in a philatelic sense) "cancel" that Northern Song palace seal (i.e., the "Ruisi Dongge" seal), while the Tang "Guangrendian" seal is obviously *over*, and hence later than the Northern Song Ruisidian palace seal. Nor does it stand to reason that the gourd-shaped "Yu shu" (imperial calligraphy) seal is not accompanied—as it should be—by Emperor Huizong's inscription.

The above does not stop us from deducing which of these "imperial seals" are forgeries. But before we attend to them individually, we may ascertain that they had to have been impressed by the time Xiang Yuanbian (1525-90) acquired the scroll in the late sixteenth century. They would have already appeared close together at the top of the opening and closing passages of the painting, leaving no blank space for Xiang Yuanbian to crowd with his seals, which he necessarily impressed along the blank lower edges.

Professors Loehr and Yonezawa both state that the earliest seal on the *Admonitions* scroll is the "Hongwen zhi yin" (seal of the [Academy for the] Dissemination of Culture) impressed at the end of the painting (fig. 2; Loehr 1980: 18). "Hongwen zhi yin" is a library seal of the palace that the first Tang emperor (Gaozu, r. 618-626) renamed the Hongwenguan (Academy for the Dissemination of Culture) in 626 CE. Loehr and Yonezawa took this Hongwenguan seal to indicate that the *Admonitions* dated to no later than the early Tang. But were they right?

The "Hongwen zhi yin" seal is fairly well known, appearing, for instance, on the manuscript *Mid Autumn* (*Zhongqiu tie*) attributed to the Eastern Jin calligrapher Wang Xianzhi (344-386) (fig. 21). But it is commonly acknowledged today that *Mid Autumn* is a forgery made of text lifted from Mi Fu's *Twelfth Month* (*Shier yue tie*) manuscript. So, the

Hongwenguan seal on Wang Xianzhi's *Mid Autumn* is inadmissible as evidence.

A similar seal is found on Wang Xianzhi's father Wang Xizhi's (321-379) *Parcel of Salt Fish* (*Guozha tie*), preserved in an ink rubbing (fig. 22). Close to this seal are engraved the names of Mi Fu's friends Xue Shaopeng (active late 11<sup>th</sup>-early 12<sup>th</sup> c.) and the painter Xu Chongsi. Unfortunately, there is no means of authenticating this seal. It was recorded (in *LDMHJ* 3) as having been "very small",<sup>22</sup> but the "Hongwen zhi yin" seal in figure 22 could hardly be described as such.

Another impression of the Hongwenguan seal is found on the funerary text for Princess Ru'nán written by the early Tang court calligrapher Yu Shinan (558-638) (fig. 23). The artistic quality of this seal is at least as poor as the *Admonitions* specimen is, and they may both be dismissed as forgeries.

The situation with the "Xuanhe" and "Shaoxing" seals immediately above the "Hongwen zhi yin" seal at the end of the *Admonitions* painting is also irresolvable (fig. 2). The legends of these twelfth-century seals have deteriorated even more than with the seventh-century seal, and they are now very faint.

That still leaves the "Ruisi Dongge" seal. The *Shiqu baoji* and Gray both counted five impressions of the "Ruisi Dongge" seal.<sup>23</sup> However, faintly visible in scene 6 is a half-faded impression of this large seal, and, perhaps more importantly, it is genuine (fig. 3). Another in scene 8, "Be watchful: keep an eager guard over your behaviour", under the Qianlong emperor's (r. 1736-95) eightieth birthday seal ("Bazheng maonian zhi bao"), is also genuine. If the "Ruisi Dongge" seal was impressed even here in the tiniest

<sup>22</sup> Zhang Yanyuan's entry reads: "There are also seals (with the characters) Hongwen (standing for Hongwenguan i.e. College for the Development of Literature). I suppose that these were old seals from the Dongguan (Eastern Tower). Those used for stamping books are very small" (tr. Acker 1954: 232).—Ed.

<sup>23</sup>Cf. Gray 1966: 7: "After two oval seals of Qianlong, there follows the big square Song imperial seal *Ruisi Dongge*, which is repeated five times on later sections of the scroll."—Ed.

scene, it stands to reason that it should originally have been impressed in every scene.

Scene 5, the "bedroom" scene, is perhaps the exception to this rule (fig. 3). Even when a painting is restored with silk patches and touching up as extensively as here, it does not usually "read" so illogically. The shading within the outlines of the furniture and the table legs is rather unprofessional, and, in places, quite unconvincing visually. The canopy of the screened bedchamber is adequately foreshortened, but evidences a large silk patch with repainting across it. This canopy is indeed odd, as are the panels that resemble plywood boards. The problem is that this roof, which has been wrapped with silk to form a canopy, gives no indication of being early in date (as with the same passage in the Beijing scroll), which is to say that it is a much later addition to the painting (fig. 24). But the problems do not end there. The shapes of the dangling ribbons are also rather odd, as are the folded-back curtains and irregularly sized panels. The panel that hides the man's torso (his torso appears to join his lower body behind it) is a particularly obvious shortcoming.

There is evidence of how these features should look. A scene depicting a couple in conversation on a screened bed arranged with furniture, screens and tables similar to those in scene 5 is found on a fifth-century stone-engraved portrait in the Tenri Sankô-kan in Nara (fig. 25). Decorated with flame shapes and lotus, the canopy of this screened bed is supported by a rectangular frame, and bears polychrome decorative patterns. Swathes of patterned fabric hang from the frame, and long bands resembling circular-ring chains hang around the four posts. Another, similar engraving is in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The arrangement around the couple in the Boston portrait is the same as in the Tenri Sankô-kan piece, except that it has just two water birds on top of the bed (fig. 26). What these comparisons tell us is that a substantial area of the original silk on which the top of the bedchamber in scene 5 was once painted has been lost and poorly restored. Without a doubt, a "Ruisi Dongge" seal impression would once have filled this space.

We may also note that the inscription of scene 5 intrudes into the previous scene of a lady at her *toilette*, and that the area of painting below it is not original. The "flying" train of the maid who is combing hair does not make compositional sense—owing to the fact that this passage was filled in by a later hand. The addition of the train most probably occurred when a substantial strip of silk was sliced off in a remounting. The inscription lost thereby was then re-copied on the silk that now obtained (fig. 27). The cramped appearance of this section (which at just 10 cm is shorter than average) results precisely from the loss of the original silk on which the "Ruisi Dongge" seal was likely to have been impressed.

The "Ruisi Dongge" seal really does have *gravitas*. Because of its majestic size, and because the wear-and-tear to its impressions does not appear to be anything but natural, I do not believe it to be a later forgery. Many pre-Ming palace seals survive,<sup>24</sup> but none is as beautiful or as noble as this one. I believe in it, and I believe it is the earliest genuine seal on *Admonitions* scroll.

Let us see how it compares with other examples. The seal appears in not a few art catalogues as well as on works of art.<sup>25</sup> Some of those works are now in Beijing and Taipei. Seals very similar to the one in question appear, for instance, at the head of two paintings attributed to Han Huang (723-787) in the Beijing Palace Museum, *Five Oxen (Wuniu tu)* (fig. 28),<sup>26</sup> and *Literary Gathering in a Garden (Wenyuan tu)* (fig. 29), and on  *Holding a Horse (Muma tu)*, (attributed to) Han Gan (about 715-after 781), in the

<sup>24</sup> Guo Ruoxu (active 1070-75), *Tuhua jianwen zhi* (Experiences in painting), *juan 6*, in and around the section "Li Zhu yin zhuan" (Seals of Li the Last Ruler) (*HSCS* edition, v. 1: 92) lists pre-Ming palace seals including "Neidian tushu", "Neihe tongyin", "Jianye wengfang zhi bao", "Neisi wen yin", "Jixiandian shuyuan yin", and "Jixiandian yushu yin". Other pre-Ming palace seals include "Xuanhedian bao", "Jixidian bao", "Kenning zhi dian", "Jianye wengfang zhi yin", "Kuizhangge bao", "Xuanwenge bao", "Deshoudian bao", "Tianli zhi bao", "Huangyu tushu", and "Huangyu zhenwan".

<sup>25</sup> Catalogues include Zhou Mi's (1232-98) *Yunyan guoyan lu*, Gao Shiqi's (1645-1704) *Jiangcun xiaoxia lu*, Bian Yongyu's (1645-1712) *Shigutang shuhua huikao*, *SQBJ*, Li Zuoxian's (*jinshi* 1835) *Shuhua jianying*, and Wu Rongguang's (1773-1743) *Xinchou xiaoxia ji*. For the works of art, see Kohara 1967 (pt. 1): 28, n. 6.

<sup>26</sup> The Beijing scroll is a *doppelgänger* of the *Five Oxen* scroll in a private collection in Kurashiki, Japan. The Kurashiki scroll has no "Ruisi Dongge" seal.



Taipei Palace Museum (fig. 30). It is hard to tell whether these seals are forgeries without seeing all the paintings at once. However, these old masterworks, which are all recorded, represent the top tier of Tang and Five Dynasties painters, and would seem to prove that part of the Song imperial collection was indeed housed in the East Wing of the Palace of Imperial Contemplation.

The "Ruisi Dongge" seals we find on these three paintings are quite distinct from the specimen on Wang Xianzhi's *Equan tie* ('Flock of geese'), which is evidently a red herring (fig. 31). In this seal, the character *rui* 睿 (imperial) is even wrongly written (as 毅), and the form of "heart" (*xin*) radical 心 (no. 61) of the character *si* 思 (contemplation) is crudely done.<sup>27</sup> Tellingly, it is surrounded by Xiang Yuanbian's seals, which means it is surely a forgery based on specious learning and carved around about the Jiaping period (1522-66) to which we have just traced it. The *Flock of Geese* (*Equan tie*) itself is a freehand copy by Mi Fu, and the "Ruisi Dongge" seal on it a contemptible forgery. A similar but slightly different version of this seal is found on Wang Xizhi's *Four Sheets of Flying White* (*Sizhi feibai tie*) (fig. 32). Yet another configuration of the seal-script legend is found on Su Shi's *Poetry Scroll* (*Shi juan*) (fig. 33). Forgeries of the "Ruisi Dongge" seal were once quite the fashion.

We return now to the questions of which Song emperor owned the original "Ruisi Dongge" seal, and when he had it carved. Gray referred to Deng Chun's (active 1127-67) *Huaji* (*Painting, Continued*; a collection of records about the period from 1074-1167), which mentions that "the Ruisi hall already existed under Huizong" (1966: 7), but this source says nothing about whether it originated at Huizong's court. A more fruitful source is the "Districts" (*fangyi*) section in the *Songhuiyao jigao* (*Collected essentials of Song government, edited draft*), according to which, the Palace of Imperial Contemplation (Ruisidian) was built in the eighth year of Emperor Shenzong's

<sup>27</sup> This seal-script *si* character is comparable to the *si* in Xie Shichen's (1488-about 1567) "Xie Sizhong shi" seal, as well as Geng Shaozhong's (d. 1686) "Zhan si ji", Chen Ruao's (active Kangxi period, 1662-1722) "Wo si guren", and Gong Erze's (active Qianlong period, 1736-95) "Siwuxiezhai" seals.

(r. 1068-85) Xining reign period, i.e., in 1075 CE, to the west of the Palace of Imperial Luminosity (Qinmingdian).<sup>28</sup> The text reads:

At first, Zhezong (r. 1086-1100) did not dare to hold feasts in the Palace of Imperial Contemplation (Ruisidian), it having been built by the late emperor... Following in the footsteps of Shenzong and Zhezong, Huizong spent his mornings in this peaceful building, but gradually it changed from a place of "imperial contemplation" into a place for the discussion of matters of state and for the consumption of delicacies. By the Xuanhe period (1119-25) it was used exclusively for banqueting and entertainment.

So, at Huizong's court, the Palace of Imperial Contemplation must have been a place where state business was conducted and feasts were held. It would appear that in the Northern Song period, buildings like the Hall of Great Purity (Taiqinglou) and the Six Pavilions,<sup>29</sup> for which there are documentary receipts for paintings and calligraphy, had no connexion with the Palace of Imperial Contemplation. The *Songhuiyao* indeed has no record of artworks being housed in the Palace of Imperial Contemplation.

There are numerous records about the palace buildings in which the Song Imperial art collections were housed. However, none of them record what was housed in the Ruisidian either. Zhou Mi (1232-98) records that Huizong used the east wing of the building for manufacturing perfumes and spices, but nothing is mentioned about calligraphy and painting.<sup>30</sup> The only evidence I know of is Xue Shaopeng's statement that an ink rubbing of the Dingwu version of the *Orchid Pavilion Preface* (*Dingwu Lanting xu*), which his father had acquired and was in his family collection, was appropriated by Huizong and placed, significantly, in the east wing of this palace.<sup>31</sup>

## DATING THE INSCRIPTIONS

<sup>28</sup> This date is corroborated in Li Lian (1488-1566), *Bianjing yiji zhi*.

<sup>29</sup> The Pavilions were: "Dragon picture" (*Longtu*), "Heavenly seal" (*Tianzhang*), "Treasuring culture" (*Baowen*), "Visionary plan" (*Xianmo*), "Subtle counsel" (*Weiyou*), and "Diffusion of culture" (*Fuwen*). See, also, *Songhuiyao jigao*, sections "Yu shu", "Mishusheng", and "Mige".

<sup>30</sup> Zhou Mi, *Zhiyatang zachao*.

<sup>31</sup> Wang Mingqing (1127-about 1215), *Huizhu houlu*, *juan 3*.

Of all the various problems surrounding the *Admonitions* scroll, opinion seems to be most divided over the authorship and date of the inscriptions. Some compare the calligraphy in them to the sixth-century monk Zhiyong's (fig. 34; Naitô Konan, Ise Sen'ichirô). Others cite the Eastern Jin and/or early Tang sutra-writing style (fig. 35); Nakamura Fusetsu [1866-1943], Fukui Rikichirô [1886-1972], Yu Jianhua). Still others cite Wang Xianzhi (fig. 36; Dong Qichang [1555-1636]), or Song Gaozong (r. 1127-62) (fig. 37; Chen Jiru [1558-1639]), or say it is close to the early Tang court calligraphers Yu Shinan (558-638) and Chu Suiliang (596-658) (figs. 38 & 39; Paul Pelliot [1878-1945], Basil Gray). Indeed, Xiang Yuanbian and Zhu Yizun believed it to be the calligraphy of Gu Kaizhi himself. In more recent research, which is our chief concern here, the calligraphy and painting in the *Admonitions* are seen as coeval. This has made stylistic analysis of the calligraphy an important basis for establishing the date of the painting. Indeed, this is why Naitô believes the painting to be Six Dynasties; why Fukui, Gray and Tang Lan (Tang 1961) believe it to be early Tang; and why Taki favours a Northern Song date for it.

The reasons for this manifest failure to nail down the period style of the calligraphy, which is what has precipitated this array of views, stem from possibly faddish critical prejudices, from a mistaken preconception that the calligraphy and painting are coeval or nearly so, and from the following point having been overlooked.

Scene 2 is unlike all the other scenes in that its inscription is not positioned to the right of the illustration. Actually, it lies between Lady Ban and her lady-in-waiting (fig. 40). Not recognising that this was an exceptional arrangement, Ise Sen'ichirô deemed the lady-in-waiting to be part of the first scene (1922). He took the apparent lack of connexion with what was happening on either side of her to indicate that she was standing in introspection. To write, as he did, that this was a world in which it was possible to occupy both these states (stillness and movement) at once, was a grievous error. Taki saw this problem as follows: "... it has not been ascertained whether the lone figure of a woman standing belongs to this

scene (i.e., scene 1), or to the following one (scene 2)". The reason why Ise got it wrong, and why Taki was inconclusive, is that the inscriptions are otherwise written to the right of the illustration.

Why is this the only scene to be presented in this contrary manner? The impression of "Ruisi Dongge" seal at the beginning of the scene fills one third of the height of the actual painting, leaving no room for an inscription to be placed to the right. Immediately after the seal came the lady-in-waiting, making the space to the left of her the only possible position for the inscription.

In other words, the seal came before the calligraphy. Clearly, when the inscription came after, it could not have been executed in the seventh century CE by the likes of Zhiyong, Yu Shinan or Chu Suiliang. It absolutely must date to after the construction of the Palace of Imperial Contemplation in 1075 CE. It follows, moreover, that if one has any doubt about the "Ruisi Dongge" seal, then on that account the calligraphy must be ascribed to a correspondingly later date. This framework is fixed.

Another case should serve to prove the priority of the "Ruisi Dongge" seals over the inscriptions. This is scene 7, the "rejection" scene, where the seal was impressed on a lost 3cm high area of the original silk at the top. Now, the process of transcribing the text here was no different from in other scenes (fig. 4). Had this inscription been written long or even shortly before the impression of the "Ruisi Dongge" seal, a section of it the size of the missing seal would be missing at the upper edge. The fact that it is not indicates that the inscription was written some considerable time after part of the seal was trimmed off in remounting.

It is my belief that the *Admonitions* texts were not originally inscribed beside each scene. This is, in part, because the inscriptions of scenes 5 and 6 were "irreverently" inscribed where there was no real place for them (fig. 41), and, in part, because none of the calligraphy on the scroll appears to be that old. This formula—having pictorial illustrations without text—is similar to what we find with the *Nymph of the Luo River* scrolls. (Although they are copies, the antiquity of their compositions is not doubt). The text on the

Liaoning version is so obviously later added, which serves to corroborate this link (fig. 42).

It is also possible to describe how the *Admonitions* inscriptions are not stylistically pre-Song. In making comparisons with other extant works, scholars have usually compared the form and composition of individual characters. But ultimately, it is impossible to speak of the stiff and coarse *Admonitions* calligraphy in the same breath as the elegant and powerful brushwork, the lofty character and magnanimity of spirit with which Six Dynasties, Tang and Song calligraphy is imbued (fig. 43). In general stylistic terms, little meaning is communicated through the brushwork, while the disunited, poorly aligned sequences in each column of characters are jarring to the eye. I have already rehearsed the argument that the calligraphy could be no earlier than the Northern Song. But as long as we go on comparing the calligraphy of the *Admonitions* scroll with ancient styles, as our predecessors wrongly have, our evaluations of its refinement will diverge drastically, and everyone will continue to hold their own opinion. In the light of this difficulty in ever reaching a consensus, I believe it is time to address unexplored angles.

Although we can never conclusively identify the calligrapher, he has written in something resembling an ancient style. Taki proposed a date as follows:

The calligraphy is in Tang dynasty style albeit of a lesser, lowlier sensibility. I now feel it is justifiable to see this writing as comparable to the Song dynasty form of Tang style. With no obvious name to ascribe the calligraphy to, I think we are left with a tentative, mediocre hand...

This seems to me to be a fair and honest evaluation of the quality of the calligraphy, to be nothing if not far-sighted.

So what is the likeliest date after the Song for the execution of the inscriptions? We know for a fact that they were present when Xiang Yuanbian acquired the scroll from the description he wrote on it: "A possession of the Song Imperial Collection by Gu Kaizhi of the Jin dynasty, painting of the Admonitions of the Preceptress, with text in small square

script. A divine object; genuine" (see appendix). They were also there for a fact when the scroll belonged to Yan Song (1480-1565) in the Jiajing period (1522-66).<sup>32</sup> This narrows the period in question to between the Yuan (traditionally 1279-1368) and the Jiajing (1522-66). When a copy of the scroll was made in the (Yuan) Zhizheng period (1341-67), inscriptions were included.<sup>33</sup> However, they were arranged somewhat differently to those on the British Museum *Admonitions*. Just to state that the calligraphy dates to the first half of the Yuan (i.e., late 13<sup>th</sup> -early 14<sup>th</sup> c.) is overly speculative. There are some unresolved problems here.

### COMPARISONS WITH RECORDED ADMONITIONS SCROLLS

It is hard to argue convincingly, for lack of rock-solid evidence, but the sequence of the illustrations seems to have got jumbled after Xiang Yuanbian purchased the scroll. In the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), especially in the middle to late Ming, pictorial albums and handscrolls were commonly reformatted into folding screens to facilitate viewing. But when they were converted back into albums and handscrolls, little attention was paid to the sequencing—and some pretty horrendous remounting occurred. It is very likely that the *Admonitions* scroll suffered this fate. Undergoing recurrent mounting, the edges of the original silk were repeatedly trimmed, which resulted in the scenes fairly shrinking in size. Evidently, extensive patching and retouching was also necessary. It is possible the "Ruisi Dongge" seal had already long been missing from scene 5. In any event, without bothering to re-establish the correct sequence of scenes, Xiang Yuanbian proceeded to stamp forty-one of his personal seals all over the scroll.

There is no reason why anyone who viewed the scroll should have remarked upon to the disordered sequence or the deterioration of its condition. The Qing collector An Qi (1683-1742?) recorded the scenes up to "Lady Ban Jieyu's refusal to ride in the imperial litter" in minute detail, but then showed just how perplexed he was by the order of the scenes by simply

<sup>32</sup> Zhang Chou (1577-1643), *Qinghe shuhua fang*.

listing the remainder, and omitting to mention scenes 7 and 8. The version of the *Admonitions* scroll that preserves the correct sequence—the Beijing Palace Museum copy—was a latter day production, made around the time that Liang Qingbiao (1620-1691) owned the British Museum *Admonitions*. However, before turning to the copy in Beijing, the reader should properly have been awed by the utterly incomparable antiquity of the British Museum *Admonitions*. On one hand, its jumbled sequence of scenes and the deterioration of illustrations themselves cloud its hoary antique quality, but on the other, the countless seal impressions we find on it help us to imagine the scroll's rich history and provenance. My own endorsement of the painting is echoed by An Qi's lavish praise for the *Admonitions*: "the colouring and wash<sup>34</sup> is fresh and lovely, full of divine *qi*... The brushwork and composition attain the ultimate of lofty antiquity".

### *Shiqu baoji*

Toyama Gunji observed that in addition to the *Admonitions* scroll recorded in *Juan* 36 of *Shiqu baoji*, there is another of the same name in *Juan* 44.<sup>35</sup> In fact, these and the British Museum *Admonitions* are one and the same scroll. So why was the same object re-entered in the Qianlong imperial catalogue? It is because the *Admonitions* and three handscroll paintings by Li Gonglin—*Shu River* (*Shuchuan tujuan*), *Nine Songs* (*Jiuge tujuan*), and *Dream Journey over the Xiao and Xiang Rivers* (*Xiao Xiang woyou tujuan*)<sup>36</sup>—were cut out for exceptional treatment.

This picture (i.e., the *Admonitions*) has always been kept in the Imperial Library; but subsequently, having acquired the *Shu River*, *Nine Songs* and *Xiao-Xiang* rolls by Li Longmian (Gonglin), I had it

<sup>33</sup> Discussed in Kohara 1967 (pt. 2): 19.

<sup>34</sup> This colouring is unquestionably touched up. See He Liangjun (1506-73), *Siyouzhai congshuo*: "Recently, I saw Yanshan's (i.e. Gu Congyi [active 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter 16<sup>th</sup> c.]) *Admonitions of the Instructress to the Court Ladies* again. While the brushwork was that of Gu Hutou (Gu Kaizhi), some of the silk and colouring was brand new". The touching up should therefore date to before 1569, the date of He Liangjun's preface to his book.

<sup>35</sup> See SDQJ Song II: nos. 89-91, pp. 159-60.—Ed.

<sup>36</sup> The *Xiao Xiang* painting (Tokyo National Museum) is designated as a "National Treasure" in Japan.

shifted to the Jingyi Pavilion of the (Jianfu) Palace, ... The inscription says: 'The Four Objects of Beauty (*Si mei*) are brought together (in one room) to express profound admiration' (tr. Gray 1966: 9; see appendix).

the Qianlong emperor triumphantly wrote in his 1746 colophon to the *Admonitions*. The four great paintings so beloved of the late Ming collector Gu Congyi had been reunited in the Qing imperial collection. "Deeply impressed by the unexpected reunion of these ancient and classical treasures," as the emperor went on, "(We) have hastily scribbled these few words, to show that (We) regard this roll as 'a sword reunited with its fellow.'" In other words, the re-cataloguing of the *Admonitions* scroll in the *Shiqu baoji* owed to its removal from the Imperial Library (Yushufang) to the Studio of Tranquil Delight (Jingyixuan).<sup>37</sup>

As the Qianlong imperial collection became ever more bloated, long-separated pairs or groups of scrolls, and orphaned passages of paintings were uncovered and reunited. Such discoveries were dubbed "the destiny of brush art", and the objects concerned were transferred and re-housed accordingly.<sup>38</sup> As a result, the palace seals impressed on them did not always tally with the *Shiqu baoji* catalogue record.

<sup>37</sup> These "Four Beauties" were apparently above the *shang deng* or "top category" in the Qianlong inventory. The *Admonitions* scroll has a small orchid painting by the Qianlong emperor on the brocade insert preceding the colophon attributed to Song Huizong/Jin Zhangzong. The other three, respectively, have his paintings of plum blossoms, cut stems of orchid and chrysanthemum, and ink bamboo. Further, at the end of each scroll, respectively, are specially commissioned colophon-paintings by the Qianlong emperor's courtiers: Zou Yigui's (1686-1772) *Pine, Bamboo, Rock and Spring* (*Songzhu shiquan tu*); Ding Guanpeng's (active about 1726-71) *Picture of the Poetic Intent of Du Fu's "Eight Poems on Autumn Elation"* (*Du Fu Qiuxing ba shou shiyi tu*); Zhang Ruoi's (1713-46) *Qu Yuan Humming & Walking* (*Qu Yuan yinxing tu*); and Dong Bangda's (1699-1769) *Picture of Su Shi's Poetic Intent* (*Su Shi shiyi tu*).

<sup>38</sup> Among the best-known examples is the re-grouping of three mss of calligraphy: the Wang Xizhi 'Clearing After Sudden Snow' (*Kuaixue shiqing tie*; once kept in the Qianqinggong), the Wang Xianzhi 'Mid-Autumn' (*Zhongchui tie*; once kept in the Imperial Library), and the Wang Xun *Poyuan tie*. These were the three rare specimens of calligraphy for which the Hall of the Three Rarities (Sanxitang) was founded in the Palace of Nourishing the Mind (Yangxindian). They were all given imperially inscribed titles and impressed with a *relievo* rectangular seal cut for this collection reading "Sanxitang jingjian xi" (Imperial Seal for an Essential Mirror in the Hall of the Three Rarities). Further, each of these three calligraphies received a

The Qianlong emperor amassed the largest and grandest collection of Chinese art ever seen. He and his associates became completely inebriated by their immense good fortune in living in such a prolonged era of sagely enlightenment and cultural efflorescence. The *Admonitions* scroll had already had an ornate finale in *Shiqu baoji chubian* (first edition), but having been re-housed, it reemerged in the *xubian* (second) edition to a glorious overture.

## TWO COPIES OF EARLY PAINTINGS

A number of unprecedented research papers on Gu Kaizhi appeared in China after WWII, prompted by the rediscovery of two artefacts in the Palace Museum, Beijing. One was a copy of the *Admonitions* scroll attributed to Li Gonglin; the other, a scroll called *Wise and Benevolent Women* (*Lienü renzhi tu*) from the series *Biographies of Exemplary Women* (*Lienü zhuan*) attributed to Gu Kaizhi (Ma 1956 & 1958; Jin 1958; Tang 1961; Wen 1955). I want now to explore links between them and the British Museum *Admonitions*.

### The Beijing copy of the *Admonitions* scroll

This artwork is recorded in the *Shiqu baoji chubian* inventory of the Imperial Library (*juan* 32) as being the "*Admonitions of the Instructress to the Court Ladies* handscroll painted by Li Gonglin" in ink-outline technique (*baimiao*) on white paper (*sujuan ben*). It contains 12 illustrations. There is no painter's seal or signature. The Qianlong attribution to Li Gonglin merely apes the views of the fourteenth-century colophon-writers.<sup>39</sup> This scroll does not grab our attention because of its overall similarity to the British Museum version, but because it preserves the illustrations for the two admonitions missing from the beginning of that painting. It is significant precisely because it

painting by the emperor and one by a courtier, as well as imperial colophons and inscriptions. In other words, they received treatment similar to the "Four Beauties" that had once been in Gu Congyi's collection. See, also, Kohara 1985: 18.

could enable us to resurrect the layout of the entire British Museum scroll prior to the disappearance of these scenes.

At the head of the Beijing *Admonitions* is the preface to the "*Admonitions*" text. The first admonition is illustrated in two pictures, one of man in a hat in discussion with a woman (fig. 44), and another in which a woman is pictured sitting upright before a bench or table and some bronze vessels (fig. 45). The second admonition is illustrated with a picture of a woman seated opposite two musicians playing sets of chimes (fig. 46). There is plenty of open space to each side of the paintings and inscriptions.

The text missing from the first scene in the British Museum scroll, "When a black bear attacked the emperor, Lady Feng threw herself in its path", is also found in the Beijing scroll. The text to scene 2 of the British Museum scroll, depicting Lady Ban refusing to ride in the imperial palanquin, is in its proper position in the Beijing scroll, that is, to the right of Lady Ban's lady-in-waiting. In the bedroom scene, the legs of the table (daubed in black in the British Museum scroll) are, in the Beijing scroll, depicted in outline, but the bedpost has been filled in (fig. 24).

However, the finer points about the Beijing scroll amount to these alone, so any other "defects" of the British Museum scroll cannot be not reliably explained by further reference to it. Anomalies including the position and posture of Emperor Yuandi's hand holding his sword, the finger-tip pulling the trigger of the cross-bow, the hand seen in the mirror, as well as the unintelligible lie of drapery lines are all the kind of simplification that occurs when copies are made. And, merely recognising consistencies, say, between each of the palanquin and bed *ensembles* is no help in recovering the precise original forms of the British Museum painting. In a comparison of the mountain scenes, for instance, the Beijing mountain has not just an improbable shape, but the face and the texturing of it is incompetent. The dots in the centre mean nothing at all, the horse has disappeared altogether, and the tiger, which seems to have lost half its body, is ludicrous (fig. 47).

<sup>39</sup>These colophons are by: Bao Xilu (1345); Xie Xun (1370); Zhang Mei[he] (1390); and Zhao Qian (1392).

What all this seems to mean is that the Beijing copy was made at a time when the British Museum scroll differed little from its present form, or, put another way, since scenes of the original scroll did not suffer any drastic "losses" in the copying process, the copy must have been made at a date when there was relatively little restoration to the model. Were it indeed by Li Gonglin, or as scholars in China and Gray would say, a Southern Song (1127-1279) copy, what we cannot understand of the British Museum scroll in its present condition should be intelligible by reference to the Beijing copy. But the Beijing scroll does not perform this rôle. Mr Wei Yu argued that it was a Song copy because its inscriptions observed the Southern Song taboos on temple names of that dynasty's emperors (1961). But since the taboos are also observed in a Daoguang period (1821-50) print edition of the *Biographies of Exemplary Women* that purports to be re-cut after a Song version of a Gu Kaizhi painting (fig. 48), the observance to Song taboos cannot be taken as evidence of a Song date.

The Beijing copy does not approach the calibre of the British Museum scroll—its artistic shortcomings have been identified above—, so its significance hangs on the question of whether or not it preserves the initial passage lost from the British Museum *Admonitions*. Were these two scenes in the Beijing scroll really copied from the lost section of the British Museum scroll? I have my doubts about this.

Leaving aside the preface dialogue for a moment, we find that the first four admonitions—Lady Fan, the daughter of the Marquis of Wei, Lady Feng and Lady Ban—feature in this same order in the *Biographies of Exemplary Women*. Although the British Museum and Beijing paintings both illustrate the same series, the former scroll is by an artist who develops rich, complex and diverse figural compositions to describe scenery and movement at moments of danger (the bear attacking) and psychological intensity (the palanquin scene). The latter scroll, with the exception of the solitary woman sitting erect, is by an incompetent hand whose mediocre compositions are neither artistic nor insightful. (Scene 8 in the British Museum scroll, "be watchful: keep an eager guard over you behaviour", in which a woman also

sits alone, is an illustration of the text, and should not be seen as similar to the vernacular image in the *Biographies of Exemplary Women*.)

Being a copy, we tend not to question how the Beijing painting represents the emotional expression and line quality of its model. But let us for a moment examine the attitudes, movements, postures and dispositions of the figures. It is difficult to see the artist who was capable of a wide range of expressions, from the rather un compelling final scene in which the ladies giggle and chat, to the complex inner emotional workings of the figures in the "rebuff" and "bedroom" scenes, as the same person who executed the three rather lifeless illustrations at the head of the Beijing scroll. Although they appear to show what the British Museum scroll had lost, they are in fact based on illustrations like those in a print edition of the *Biographies of Exemplary Women*, strongly suggesting that they were lifted from just such a source. The *Biographies of Exemplary Women* woodblock illustrations were necessarily prepared for printing on paper, and feature just one or two figures in each scene. Any expression of movement is unnecessary. They suffice as artless illustrations of the text. The complex compositions of the British Museum scroll are not to be found here. It is regrettable that no direct model for the Beijing scroll can be cited, but prints like the one after the preface, illustrating a tirade between a couple, are common enough types (fig. 32). That said, the conjecture of the designer as to what background to "sample" from ancient painting was not wholly without foundation. In other words, the painter who copied the British Museum scroll was perceptive enough to position the inscriptions in a coherent and orderly way vis-à-vis the pictorial scenery, but lacked the talent to compose new scenes to replace the two lost ones.

To judge by the ample space given each illustration, by the length of the paper actually used, and by the way that the lengths of paper are five times bridged at the joins with the seal "Hebei tangcun" (with the one exception of the "bedroom" scene, where it has been removed), there is no evidence that the Beijing scroll underwent any extraordinary remounting procedures, such as we have seen with the British Museum scroll.

The only collectors' seals on either the paper or the mounting of the Beijing scroll are those of one individual, Liang Qingbiao (1620-92). We must wonder why there is not a single seal of the Yuan and Ming collectors and connoisseurs who appended colophons,<sup>40</sup> or any sign of its provenance prior to Liang Qingbiao, between early Ming and early Qing. Stylistically, there is nothing to prevent us from regarding the Beijing scroll as a copy that Liang Qingbiao had made. We know he had the wherewithall, because Sun Chengze (1592-1676) tells us that he acquired the *Biographies of Exemplary Women* scroll, to which we turn presently, from Liang Qingbiao's collection.<sup>41</sup> Which of the cognoscenti of Liang Qingbiao's time and in his circle recorded his having seen this painting?<sup>42</sup> The fact is that it only came to light after it entered the Qianlong imperial collection.

Copies have not always been made to deceive, but also to preserve and transmit. The colophons attached to the Beijing scroll would seem to indicate that the ancient copy of the *Admonitions* scroll (i.e., the British Museum painting) was the only version extant as late as the Zhizheng period (1341-67). They also tell us through whose hands it passed from then down to the Jiajing period (1522-66). Although it suffered the loss of the illustrations at the front, it was nonetheless handed down to posterity with the remaining illustrations in their proper order as far as the Zhizheng period.

### **The *Biographies of Exemplary Women (Lienü zhuan)* Scroll**

In stark contrast to the low value of the Beijing *Admonitions* scroll as a source of information, the *Biographies of Exemplary Women* scroll is of far-reaching significance. This painting is the copy attributed to Li Gonglin noted above, and is recorded in the Qianlong emperor's Imperial Library inventory (*SQBJ chubian* 32), as follows: "A handscroll, *Biographies of Exemplary Women*, painted by Gu Kaizhi of the Jin". Painted in ink on silk, it bears no signature or seal. It features some 28 figures—15 men, 9 women, and 4

<sup>40</sup> Including Li Yuanjiao, Jiang Cizhai, Wu Pozheng, and Xiao Shiyong.

<sup>41</sup> Sun Chengze, *Gengzi xiaoxia ji* 8.

<sup>42</sup> Including Song Lao (?-after 1696), Cao Rong (1613-85), An Qi, Gao Shiqi and Sun Chengze.

children. It preserves ten "Biographies of the Benevolent and Wise" (*Renzhi zhuan*) from the fifteen in *juan* 3 of the *Biographies of Exemplary Women* text by Liu Xiang (about 79-6 BCE) of the Western Han.<sup>43</sup> The work has an antique flavour to it: the women's dress and fashion accessories are, at first glance, obviously comparable to those in the British Museum painting (figs 49 & 50). Things like the endlessly overlapping drapery folds, the long low hems of the dresses and their upward flying trains, the hairstyles and wing-like tiaras all immediately recall the same cultural era as the British Museum painting. However, the gambolling silken outlines (and even the feel of the light silk) of the British Museum scroll have been transmogrified into crude "iron-wire" (*tiexian*) outlines. The drapery outlines are more formalistic and simplified, and the daubing strokes used to shade the drapery are extremely clumsy.

Wu Hung recently wrote of this painting (1997: 47):

The figures in the *Wise and Benevolent Women (Lienü renzhi tu)* scroll appear to be acting; their subtle expressions suggest inward contemplation. The costumes are carefully drawn; the folds, emphasised by dark and light inkwash, are convincingly three-dimensional. Although we cannot know the extent to which such stylistic attributes belonged to the original work or were supplemented by the Song-dynasty copier, we can recognize the period character of the painting by the selection of motifs.

But this is not so. The lineament we see here is that used to render drapery in the eighth century. There is no shortage of examples of it: the *Shôtoku Taishi (Shengde Taizi sanzun xiang)* portraits in the Japanese Imperial Collection; the *Torige dachi-onna (Niaomao linü)* screen in the Shôsô-in; the *Five Planets and Twenty-eight Constellations (Wuxing ershiba she zhenxing tu)* attributed to Liang Lingzan (active 714-42) in Osaka Municipal Museum; and *Portraits of the Emperors (Diwang tu)* attributed to Yan Liben (about 600-674) in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. One could hardly say this painting was a copy after anything like these.

<sup>43</sup> Liu Xiang, *Biographies of Exemplary Women (Lienü zhuan)* (in *Sibu congkan* no. 060). Early illustrations of this text are outlined in Wu 1989: 252-3. For translations, see Safford 1890 and O'Hara 1945; see also Wu 1989.—Ed.

The *Biographies* picture can be dated by the "painting within the painting" on a screen placed behind Duke Ling of Wei (fig. 49). This landscape recalls the period-style of the Dagan (1107-10) period—Mi Youren's (1075-1151) ink-wash landscapes, for instance—, but is not up to the standard of the Yuan-dynasty Mi-style painter Gao Kegong (1248-1310), which makes it hard to date even to the Yuan period. In light of the crude ink-outlines and expressions of the figures, this copy of the *Biographies* cannot be any older than the early Ming (1368-1644).

It is not just the analogies in *haute couture* that call our attention to the *Biographies*. More significant is the similarity to the British Museum *Admonitions* of the expressive techniques used to render figural movements and emotions, which suggest that its painter drew upon a certain familiarity with the *Admonitions*. In spite of being monochrome rather than in colour, the poses of the figures—with their hands extended, wrists raised, crestfallen faces, and looks askance—express an array personalities and psychological traits. These ably serve the development of the monotonous verbiage from the original text, and make the whole more amusing and entertaining (fig. 50). (With this level of technical quality lacking in them, the first two scenes of the Beijing *Admonitions* remain highly suspect.) We may recognise the personality and talents of the same painter in the British Museum *Admonitions* and the *Biographies* scrolls, which, in fact, accords well with Mi Fu's evaluation of the paintings (as he knew them) at the beginning of his *Hua shi*:

Currently in a literatus collection is a Tang copy of the *Biographies of Exemplary Women* by Gu Kaizhi... that is virtually identical to Mr Liu's *Admonitions of the Instructress to the Court Ladies*.

Mi Fu's use of the term "virtually identical" tells us of the certain existence, as late as the Yuanyou period (1086-93), of a "Tang copy" much older than the *Biographies* scroll extant today.

It appears, then, that the original *Biographies of Exemplary Women* and *Admonitions* scrolls were painted by the same person or at about the same time. The *Biographies* scroll is, therefore, valuable as comparative

evidence that the *Admonitions* scroll is not a uniquely transmitted relic of antiquity. It confirms for us how the primitivism of pictorial engraving on stone was ditched in favour of a new and liberated kind of didactic painting. Extolled for being like a breath of fresh air, it now became the critically acclaimed school of genre painting. Within this field of genre painting, the so-called Gu Kaizhi style was peerless.

#### DATE AND AUTHORSHIP

The main thrust of my research on this scroll has been to establish the date of the *Admonitions* scroll, and the identity of the painter of its original. Two pieces of evidence serve to link this painter with Gu Kaizhi. One is the brief note just quoted from Mi Fu's *History of Painting* that mentions an *Admonitions* scroll "seen in Liu Youfang's collection" after an original by Gu Kaizhi. The other is the Song imperial catalogue record found in *juan* 1 of the *Xuanhe painting manual* (*Xuanhe huapu*; *XHHP*) of 1120 CE.

The biographies of and anecdotes about Gu Kaizhi contain no record of his having painted this subject, nor does Mi Fu mention any signature on the horizontal scroll in Liu Youfang's collection. However, Mi's *History* also records:

The *Three Heavenly Ladies* (*San tiannü*) in (a fellow collector) Xue Shaopeng's collection is said to be by Gu Kaizhi, but is really an early Tang painting.<sup>44</sup>

The ease with which Mi Fu makes light of the authorship—a flippant attitude seen throughout Mi's book towards prestigious styles and big names like Wang Wei (699-759) and Wu Daozi (active about 710-60)—would seem to infer that the *Admonitions* scroll did not yet have the signature of Gu Kaizhi, merely the attribution to him. By contrast, in the Tang and pre-Tang sections of the *Xuanhe huapu*, the authors fail to resolve numerous discrepancies between the works as described in their catalogue and in Zhang Yanyuan's *Lidai minghua ji*. Indeed, they showed an inability to

<sup>44</sup> *Three Heavenly Beauties* (*San tiannü meiren*) said to be by Gu Kaizhi in *XHHP* 1 (*HSCS* edition, v. 2, p. 3) should be the same painting.—Ed.



acknowledge the existence of copies in the catalogue. Many extant works recorded in it of course are copies, and this makes it a fairly unreliable source. The attribution to Gu Kaizhi that envelops the *Admonitions* scroll is, therefore, an act of imperial refiguring, an act that we must rethink.

### Signature and lineament

There is no doubt that the four-character signature "painted by Gu Kaizhi" at the end of the *Admonitions* was not written on the original from which the painting was copied, but added at some stage well after the copy was made. But because the crude calligraphy of this signature does not match the fine painting, is weakly executed, and placed in an eye-catching position at the centre of the painting, there is no doubt that it is a later-added forgery. After I ascertained that there was no signature on the scroll in about 1582, it became clear that the Gu Kaizhi "signature" we see today was written between then and the publication of Zhang Chou's (1577-1643) *Qinghe shuhua fang* (the author's preface is dated 1616) (see Kohara 1967 [pt. 2]: 22). All the fake Tang and Song seals were also impressed at this time, while the scroll was in Xiang Yuanbian's possession. The "Shaoxing" linked seal at the right edge of the signature overlaps the "page" radical 頁 (no. 181) of the character Gu 顧. Nor did Xiang Yuanbian, when he stamped his seal "Xiang Zijing jia zhen cang" (Treasured possession of Xiang Yuanbian) to the left of the signature, make any special attempt to avoid it. Thus, the most likely scenario has the four-character signature being carefully inserted after the scroll had entered Xiang's Hall of Heavenly Music (Tianlaige) and had that collector's seals stamped all over it.

We have refuted the argument that the *Admonitions* is by Gu Kaizhi, and have suggested that it is a copy made in or before the Northern Song (960-1127). However, I see the exquisitely balanced lineament—likened by the Yuan critic Xia Wenyan (14<sup>th</sup> c.; *THBJ*) and by An Qi to "spring silk-worms spitting silk"—as somewhat different from the taut Northern Song line that (as Suzuki put it) "contains its meaning". On this basis, the scroll may be traced back to at least the Northern Song. Comparisons with pictorial

engravings from the tombs of Princess Yongtai (709 CE) and Wei Jiong (708 CE) should enable us to put its date back to the Tang. However, although lineament is an important factor in the dating of the painting, it is not a deciding factor. On the basis of lineament alone, it is not possible to go beyond a rough guess that it may date to the Tang. This uncertainty about its date within the Tang or pre-Tang era leaves us no wiser as to the date of the customs in it, or, indeed, as to the date of the original *Admonitions* itself. To establish these dates more precisely we must depart the field of art history to conduct an archaeological investigation of the objects and fashions displayed in the painting.

### Furniture and fashion, and Wei-Jin murals

The *Admonitions* scroll once played a substantial role as evidence of Six Dynasties material culture and fashion (Harada 1936). But since becoming widely acknowledged as a copy, no revisionist studies of the objects depicted in it have appeared in Japan. Gray's 1966 essay and the primary sources quoted in his footnotes 7 to 15, in particular, are of interest as a summary of European and American scholarship, but the comparative materials Gray cited do not amount to corroborating evidence.<sup>45</sup> Even as secondary sources they are uncertifiable, and their dates are unclear. Gray's exhaustive study of the evidence from Han to Song (i.e., 2<sup>nd</sup> c. BCE-13<sup>th</sup> c. CE) led only to the rather vague conclusion that "the evidence suggests a pre-Song date of manufacture".<sup>46</sup> However, his final conclusion was that the *Admonitions*

<sup>45</sup> Gray cited the Han lacquer toilet boxes found at the Ulsan tombs in Korea for the flower-decorated lacquer toilet boxes (1966: 12); *The Thirteen Emperors* attributed to Yan Liben in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston for the bed (1966: 12); *Fu Sheng Teaching the Classics* attributed to Wang Wei in Osaka Municipal Museum for the table (1966: 13); the figures on the *Torige dachi-onna* screen in the Shôsô-in, and copies of paintings by Zhou Fang and Zhang Xuan for the hair-styles (1966: 13); the stone coffin in the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City "which may be Sui" for the dresses (1966: 13); Han-dynasty Bo Mountain censers (*Boshan lu*), wall paintings of the Tamamushi Shrine at the Hôryû-ji temple, Nara, and the painted leather plectrum-guard of a *biwa* lute in the south section of the Shôsô-in for the mountain (1966: 15-16).

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Gray 1966: 12: "If the *Admonitions* scroll is scrutinized for evidence of date of the *composition*, we find the following indications of its being pre-Song."—Ed.

scroll was a "true relic of the early Tang", of sixth- to seventh-century date.<sup>47</sup> To refine his argument, I should like to revisit the following two points:

- (1) The style of the calligraphy which must be presumed to be contemporary with the painting, also agrees with the [early Tang] date proposed (1966: 16).
- (2) These are not the [dress or hair] fashions of either middle or late Tang, as represented in (a) the pottery tomb figures and (b) donor figures on the Dunhuang paintings (1966: 13).

I have argued above why (1) is inadmissible. Regarding (2)(a), the "pottery tomb figures", there is no reliable research on the dating of these figures, nor does a look at extant figurines support his early Tang theory. As for (2)(b), "donor figures on the Dunhuang paintings", it is not clear which ones are being referred to, but the fashions in the *Admonitions* scroll are patently different from High, middle and late Tang donor figures, as well as being distinct from those in early Tang paintings.<sup>48</sup> The donor figures on Dunhuang paintings cannot be used as evidence in the manner he described.

Nevertheless, we should reconsider the theory of a vague early Tang date, because underlying it is the undeniable fact that a Tang copyist would have retained as much as possible of the *mood* of the then recent era of Gu Kaizhi. What Gray's view boils down to, by contrast, is a total reliance on the calligraphic style (which he likened to Chu Suliang's) because what he really wanted was for the British Museum *Admonitions* to be the oldest one possible.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Gray 1966: 16: "It has been argued that the actual style of the painting agrees best with the period just before the Tang or very early in that dynasty, that is to the 6<sup>th</sup> or early 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D."—Ed.

<sup>48</sup> Early Tang: cave 329, east wall; cave 225, north wall.  
 High Tang: cave 103, south wall; cave 205, south wall; cave 217, north wall.  
 Middle Tang: cave 159, east wall.  
 Late Tang: cave 85, south wall and ceiling; cave 107, east wall; cave 144, east wall; cave 192, east wall; cave 17, north wall.

To help in dating the *Admonitions* I should like to introduce the following items of comparative evidence.<sup>49</sup> We begin with the murals in four fourth- and fifth-century tombs.

- (1) Mural of 357 CE in the tomb of Dong Shou at Anyue (Anak), Huanghai Beidao, North Korea (fig. 51).
- (2) Jin-dynasty mural at Wangjiacun, Liaoyang (fig. 52).
- (3) Eastern Jin mural, tomb at Yuantaizi, Chaoyang, Liaoning Province (fig. 53).
- (4) Mural of 408 CE in the tomb at Dexingli, North Korea (fig. 54).

In each of the four murals can be seen a screened-off bed hung with gathered layers of drapes stretched over a frame canopy. The trailing and uncertainly painted ribbons of the *Admonitions* scroll are certainly remnants of this embroidered square canopy. The apparently useless screens around the daises were originally used as one set, as was the custom of the day. The protagonist sits in the most important "host" position, like the ruler in scene 1 of the *Admonitions* scroll (fig. 20). We can understand visually both how the drape material is stretched and what the geometric plan of each dais is, which supports the notion that in outline, these features in the *Admonitions* painting are not primitive or emergent. A comparison with the picture of Lady Fan, wife of King Zhuang of Chu (cf. figs. 44 & 45) on a fifth-century lacquer screen in Shanxi Provincial Museum is also apt (fig. 55). Recognisable traits of fashion include the scumbled red shading within the drapery lineament, as well as the flying tassels and thick folds of the skirts.

The tiaras in the *Admonitions* scroll, which beat like the wings of a phoenix, comprise small decorations suspended from a number of strands or shafts. They are quite similar to a gold flower- and tree-shaped ornament unearthed from a Jin-dynasty tomb at Fangshencun, Beipiao, Liaoning

<sup>49</sup> It is hoped the reader will consult the existing detailed scholarship. For (1), Dong Shou's tomb, see Hong 1959, Okazaki 1964 and Gaojuli 1985. For (2), see Li 1959. For (3), see Liaoning 1984. For Princess Yongtai's tomb, see Shaanxi 1964. For the tomb at Chentaizi, see Chentaizi 1960.

Province (fig. 56; Chentaizi 1960). A phoenix-patterned gold belt ornament was excavated from the same tomb.

Scene 2 of the *Admonitions* shows the ruler riding in a palanquin with a gauze-like covering. Similar ox-carriages that are not completely enclosed by curtains do exist, but the typical form of the carriage can be seen on Wei-dynasty commemorative stelae.<sup>50</sup> A comparable ox-cart is engraved on the same stone as, but to the left of figure 25 (fig. 57). And another ox-cart can be seen beside the screened dais (in fig. 26) found on the stone engraving (with an inscription dated 527 CE) unearthed from Mt Beimang at Luoyang (fig. 58), now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The screened dais and ox-cart in the Boston engraving may be said to be coeval. Pennsylvania University Museum also has a stone pillar of 524 CE engraved with an ox-cart of similar form.

Contrary to what one might expect, therefore, when the objects and fashions in the *Admonitions* scroll are compared with the archaeological evidence, as above, they correspond fully with no other cultural style but the Jin. Of all this evidence, the exquisitely designed tiaras seem to clinch the connexion. Also very relevant is (1), the tomb of a prominent ethnic Han family annihilated in northern Korea under the Gaojuli regime in 357 CE. The mortuary inscription of this tomb employs the Eastern Jin reign date "Yonghe 13<sup>th</sup> year" (corresponding to 357 CE),<sup>51</sup> so it is not without good reason that it is taken to represent the culture of the central plains. Finally, we should observe the close correspondence between the women's fashions in the *Admonitions* and those in the polychrome brick designs of Northern Dynasties date excavated from a Southern Dynasties tomb at Deng County in Henan Province (fig. 59; Chen 1958).

However, simply recognising close links and similarities between the material culture in the *Admonitions* (or its model) and these materials, does

<sup>50</sup> An investigation of this whole horse-and-carriage group (Hayashi 1961) confirms the defects of these structures in both the British Museum and Beijing scrolls, described above.

<sup>51</sup> In fact, the reign period had changed, and the date should have been "Shengping 1<sup>st</sup> year".

not permit us to date the original *Admonitions* scroll to the first half of the fourth century. In terms of artistic quality, the gulf between provincial, primitive murals and something like the *Admonitions*, which can only be called a gem of metropolitan culture, is impossibly wide. None of these northern murals rule out the *Admonitions* scroll's being as early as or contemporary with them, but there is no one piece of evidence that would enable us to juxtapose the two objects and determine them to be of the same date. It is also difficult to tell what regional differences between the culture on the periphery of China and in the central plains these two kinds of evidence reveal, whether and to what extent these differences owe to gaps in our chronology for painting history, or, indeed, what their origins are. It is no good just supposing that provincial objects and fashions depicted in murals must be expressively naïve and unskilled. The transformations in linear expression and in content that we find in the *Admonitions* are not only geographical, but also historical factors.

So, as we turn to examine the authorship of the *Admonitions*, we find that its painter's period of activity came shortly after the mural in Dong Shou's tomb (357 CE), such that the name of Gu Kaizhi (about 345-406) floats up tantalisingly before us. The problem of the artistic separation between the central plains and the periphery of China is that we have had to consider the development of these two comparatively different types of artwork, but there is a strong case for arguing that there is a gap of about fifty years between the (original) *Admonitions* painter and Gu Kaizhi. Gu Kaizhi was famous in various texts for the speed and fluency of his brush line, and for the superb personalities of his figures.<sup>52</sup> This evaluation seems singularly appropriate for what we can imagine of the original from the extant *Admonitions*, which inevitably lost something in the copying. His desire to innovate (see his essay in *LDMHJ* 5) and his concern with facial expression, in particular, are the very qualities that appear before us in the sublime figural expressions of the *Admonitions*.

<sup>52</sup> *LDMHJ* 1, 2 & 5; Xu Song (8<sup>th</sup> c.), *Jiankang shilu*.

A genuine eccentric, his talent for ribaldry, recounted in Liu Yiqing's (403-44) *New Tales from Around the World* (*Shishuo xinyu*) and in his own official biography (*JS* 92: 2404-6), fostered an ideal cultural environment for the daring innovations he would visit upon didactic painting.<sup>53</sup> Together, these observations give us every reason to continue to recognise him as the pre-eminent, groundbreaking painter of the period. The attribution to Gu Kaizhi that the supremely talented connoisseur Mi Fu perpetuated was the affirmation of a champion of ancient painting who knew more about the subject than anyone. It cannot have been taken lightly, or based on pure imagination. All in all, therefore, the attribution of the *Admonitions* scroll to Gu Kaizhi is quite constructive.

## CONCLUSION

For me, the British Museum's *Admonitions* scroll is a Tang dynasty tracing copy of an original scroll (*moben*) that transmits the customs of Gu Kaizhi's time. I would only say that it is possible to sustain the attribution to Gu Kaizhi, and am inclined to leave detailed conclusions to the researchers of the future.

Through the above analysis, it became clear how the *Admonitions* scroll, once described as containing rather little of its original detail, has been handled so much that it is literally covered all over by wounds. But then again, it was worshipped in the gushing words of the Qianlong emperor as a "divine omen from antiquity" (*qiangou shenwu*). This scroll has put up with more than a human lifetime of rolling and unrolling, like the Sphinx enduring the desert sandstorms. It keeps within it the unlimited answers to the questions we hurl at it, as it lies silent in the King Edward VII (r. 1901-10) Wing of the British Museum. Such is the allure of the extraordinary and beautiful *Admonitions* scroll.

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<sup>53</sup> *Shishuo xinyu* 5. See, also, Yao Zui (active 557-589), *Xuhuapin, xu* (Evaluation of Paintings, Continued; Preface); Zhang Huaiguan (8<sup>th</sup> c.), *Shu gu* (Calligraphy dealer); and *LDMHJ* 1.

APPENDIX: Seal transcriptions<sup>54</sup>On the front protective wrapper (ge shui) of yellow brocade:

5.1 "Zhenghe" 政和 (relief, rectangle)—Zhenghe (1111-17 CE) palace seal

1.1 "Tianlaige" 天籟閣 (relief, rectangle)—Xiang Yuanbian (1525-90)

3.3 "Xiang Yuanbian yin" 項元汭印 (intaglio, square)

3.4 "Yuan yang hu chang" 鵞鴛湖長 (intaglio, square)

1.3 "Xiang Shuzi" 項叔子 (intaglio, square)

"Xiang Zijing jia zhen cang" 項子京家珍藏 (relief, rectangle)

1.4 "Gong bao shi jia" 宮保世家 (intaglio, square)

3.6 "Xiang Molin jianshang zhang" 項墨林鑑賞章 (intaglio, square)

4.2 "Ju lu" 麴廬 [Fungus hut] (intaglio, rectangle)

4.3 "Tian chou geng nou" 田畝耕耨 [Ploughing and hoeing paddy fields and arable land] (intaglio, square)

3.2 "Zuili" 攜李 [a place in Zhejiang] (relief, round)

5.2 "Zhang Zezhi" 張則之 (relief, square)—Zhang Xiaosi (active about 1602)

2.2 "Da Zaixin" 筮在辛 (relief, square)—Da Zhongguang (1623-92)

2.1 "Bin chen" 賓臣 (relief and intaglio, square)

1.2 "Liang Qingbiao" 梁清標 (relief, square)—Liang Qingbiao (1620-91)

"Jing xin bao shui xue" 淨心抱水雪 (relief, square, with double border)

4.1 "An shi Yizhou shuhua zhi zhang" 安氏儀周書畫之章 [Seal of calligraphies and paintings of Mr An Yizhou] (intaglio, rectangle)—An Qi

2.3 "Boyatang baowan yin" 博雅堂寶玩印 [Seal on a precious plaything of the Hall of Breadth and Elegance] (intaglio, rectangle)

3.1 not identified

Bridging the border:

Inscription: "Juan zi qishi hao" 卷字柒拾號 [scroll zi, number 70]—inventory number

1: seal with a three (?)-character legend between confronted "dragons" (relief, oval)

2: "San huai zhu ren" 三槐主人 [Master of the Three Locust Trees] (relief, square)

"Si wu xie [zhai?]" 思無邪 [relief, square)—Gong Erze (active 1736-95) ?

"Bin yin" 斌印 (relief, square)—Zhang Bin (active 1436-49)

3: "Xiang shi Zijing" 項氏子京 [Master Xiang Zijing] (intaglio, square)—Xiang Yuanbian

Scene 1 (opening passage):

"Qian gua" 乾卦 [the qian trigram] (relief, round)—Shaoxing imperial seal ?

<sup>54</sup> After Kohara 1966 (pt. 1): 27-28, n. 1. Most of the seals listed here pre-date the *Admonitions* scroll's entry into the Qing imperial collection. (Some Qianlong and later seals are included for clarity). The numbers provided before some of the seals indicate their positions within the given section of the scroll: 5.1, e.g., indicates the first seal in the fifth column, counting from right to left and from top to bottom. Seals that bridge adjoining lengths of paper, silk and/or brocade are numbered from top to bottom.

"Xuanhe" 宣和 (relief, linked squares)—Xuanhe (1119-25 CE) palace seal

"Yu shu" 御書 [Imperial calligraphy] (relief, gourd-shape)—Song Huizong (r. 1101-25)

"Zijing fu yin" (relief, square)—Xiang Yuanbian

"Xiang Yuanbian yin" 項元汭印 (relief, square)

"Shen pin" 神品 [Divine category] (relief, linked squares)—Song Huizong ?

"Molin mi wan" 墨林秘玩 [Private plaything of the Ink Forest (Hall)] (relief, square)—Xiang Yuanbian

"Zhang Bin zhi yin" 張斌之印 [seal of Zhang Bin] (relief, square)—Zhang Bin

Scene 1 (middle passage):

"Ruisi Dongge" 睿思東閣 [(Palace of) Imperial Contemplation, East Wing] (relief, square)—Northern Song palace seal

"Molin Xiang shi Zijing" 墨林項氏子京 [Molin, Master Xiang, Zijing] (intaglio, rectangle)—Xiang Yuanbian

"Xianzhitang yin" 賢志堂印 [seal of the Hall of Worthy Ambition] (intaglio, square)—Song imperial seal

"Nanhua waishi" 南華外史 (intaglio, rectangle)

Bridging border:

"Xuanhe" (relief, rectangular)—Xuanhe (1119-25 CE) palace seal

Scene 2:

"Ruisi Dongge"—Northern Song palace seal

"Xiang Yuanbian yin" (intaglio, square)—Xiang Yuanbian

"Molin mi wan" (relief, square)

"Xiang shi Zijing" 項氏子京 (intaglio, square)

Scene 3:

"Ruisi Dongge"—Northern Song palace seal

"Taohuayuan li ren jia" 桃花源裏人家 [Abode at Peach Blossom Spring] (relief, rectangle)

Scene 4:

"Ruisi Dongge"—Northern Song palace seal

"Xiang Molin fu miji zhi yin" 項墨林父秘笈之印 (relief, rectangle)—Xiang Yuanbian

Scene 5:

"Xiang Molin Zijing fu zhencang shuhua zhang" 項墨林子京父珍藏書畫章 (intaglio, square)—Xiang Yuanbian

Scene 6:

"Ruisi Dongge"—Northern Song palace seal

"Molintang" 墨林堂 (intaglio, square)—Xiang Yuanbian

"Ju ni zhi chou" 沮溺之儔 (intaglio, square)

Scene 7:

- "Ruisi Dongge"—Northern Song palace seal
- "Zijing zhencang" 子京珍藏 [Treasure from Zijing's collection] (relief, square)—Xiang Yuanbian
- "You he bu ke" 有何不可 (intaglio, square)

Scene 8:

- "Ruisi Dongge"—Northern Song palace seal
- "Xiang Yuanbian yin" (relief, square)—Xiang Yuanbian
- "Molin shanren" 墨林山人 (intaglio, square)

Scene 9:

- "Molin waishi" 墨林外史 (intaglio, square)—Xiang Yuanbian

Scene 9 (end):

- "Ruisi Dongge"—Northern Song palace seal
- "Guangrendian" 廣仁殿 [Palace of Widespread Humanity] (relief, rectangle)—government seal
- "Hongwen zhi yin" 弘文之印 [Seal of (the Office for) the Dissemination of Culture] (relief, square)—Tang government seal
- "Xuanhe" (relief, rectangle)—Xuanhe (1119-25 CE) palace seal
- "Shaoxing" 紹興 (relief, linked squares)—Shaoxing (1131-62 CE) palace seal
- "Shen pin" [Divine category] (relief, linked seals)—Song Huizong
- "Ji ao" 寄傲 (relief, gourd-shape)
- "Xiang Yuanbian yin" (relief, square)
- "Molin mi wan" (relief, square)
- "Xiang Zijing jia zhen cang" 項子京家珍藏 (relief, rectangle)
- "Lu Jingguo yin" 陸經國印 (relief, square)—Lu Jingguo
- "Zhang Bin zhi yin" (relief, square)—Zhang Bin

Bridging border (all half seals):

- 1: "? ? ? shang"
- 2: "Xiang Zijing jia zhen cang" (relief, rectangle)—Xiang Yuanbian
- 4: "Molin shanren" (intaglio, square)
- 5: "Xiang Shuzi" (intaglio, square);
- 3?: "Bin yin" (relief, square)—Zhang Bin

On central divide (bluish brocade following blank beige strip):

- 2.1 "Shaoxing" (relief, linked squares)—Shaoxing (1131-62 CE) palace seal
- 1.1 "Tianlaige" [Hall of Heavenly Music] (relief, rectangle)—Xiang Yuanbian
- 2.4 "Xiang Yuanbian shi shending zhenji" 項元下氏審定真迹 [Genuine traces authenticated by Master Xiang Yuanbian] (intaglio, square)
- 2.3 "Pingsheng zhenshang" 平生真賞 [True appreciation of a lifetime] (relief, square)
- "Leng yan jing she" 楞嚴精舍 (intaglio, square)
- 2.5 "Zuili Xiang shi shijia baowan" 攜李項氏世家宝玩 [Treasured plaything of the Xiang family of Zuili] (relief, rectangle)
- 3.3 "Xiang Molin jianshang zhang" 項墨林鑒賞章 [Connoisseurship seal of Xiang Molin] (intaglio, square)

- 3.1 "Xiang shi Zijing" (intaglio, square)
- 2.2 "Lu Jingyan yin" 陸經筵印 (intaglio, square)—Lu Jingyan
- 3.2 "Zhang Zezhi" (relief, square)—Zhang Xiaosi

Bridging border (of the bluish and grey brocades):

- 1: "Qun yu zhong mi" 群玉中秘 (relief, square)—Jin Zhangzong (r. 1190-1208)
- Two border seals
- 4: "Chang" 長 (relief, square)—Jia Sidao (1213-75)

On central divide (buff brocade with phoenix in cloud pattern):

- 1.1 "Neifu tushu zhi yin" 內府圖書之印 [Palace library seal] (relief, square)—Jin Zhangzong (r. 1190-1208)
- 1.3 "Qiuhuo tushu" 秋壑圖書 (relief, square)—Jia Sidao
- 2.1 "Jiangshang Dan shi tushu yin" 江上筮氏圖書印 (relief, rectangle)—Dan Zhongguang
- 1.3 "Jiaolin Yuli shi tushu" 蕉林玉立氏圖書 (relief, square)—Liang Qingbiao
- 1.2 "An Yizhou jia zhencang" 安巖周家珍藏 (relief, rectangle)—An Qi

Bridging border (of the buff and yellow brocades):

- 1: "? ? ? ?" (relief, square)
- 2: "De mi" 得密 (relief, gourd-shape)
- 3: "Zi sun yong bao" 子孫永保 (intaglio, square)
- 6: "Gong bao shi jia" 宮保世家 (intaglio, square)
- 5: "Shen you xin shang" 神遊心賞 (relief, square)
- 4: "Bin chen" (relief & intaglio, square)
- 7: "? ? ? ?" (intaglio, square)

On central divide (yellow brocade):

- 1: "Shiqi zhi yin" 士奇之印 (relief, square)—Gao Shiqi (1645-1704)
- 2: Orchid painting and one seal (relief, round)—Qianlong emperor (r. 1736-95)

Inscription (tr. Gray 1966: 8):

長夏幾餘偶閱顧愷  
之女史圖因寫幽蘭一  
枝取其窈窕相同之  
意云尔  
來青軒御識

"One summer's day in a moment of leisure I chanced to examine Gu Kaizhi's picture of the Preceptress. Accordingly I drew a spray of epidendrum, with no other intent but to illustrate the idea of beauty in chaste retirement. Written by the Emperor in the Laiqing Pavilion."  
3: two seals (both relief, square)—all of Qianlong emperor

Bridging border (of yellow brocade and brown silk):

- 1: border seal (intaglio, square)
- 2: border seal (intaglio, rectangular)
- 3: "Molin shanren" (intaglio, square)—Xiang Yuanbian
- 4: "Zi sun shi chang" 子孫世昌 (intaglio, square)

On brown silk:

Transcription of text to scenes 7-9 (variant text)—attributed, variously, to Song Huizong, Song Gaozong and Jin Zhangzong  
Seal of Zhang Yujun (active 1368-98)

Bridging border (of brown silk and grey brocade with phoenix pattern):

- 1: "Yu shang" [Imperial appreciation] (relief, rectangle)
- 2: "Ye qi yu yin" 岩溪漁陰 (relief, rectangle)
- 3: seal (relief, rectangle)

On grey brocade:

- 1.1 "Liang Qingbiao yin" (intaglio, square)—Liang Qingbiao
- 1.2 "Jiaolin" (relief, square)
- 1.3 "Bazheng maonian zhi bao" 八徵耄年之宝 (relief, square)—Qianlong emperor (r. 1736-95)

Bridging border (of grey brocade and a slip of paper [?]):

- 1: "Yan lu" 研露 (relief, square)

On slip of paper:

Colophon (seal script) (tr. Gray 1966: 8):

宋徽府所藏  
晉顧愷之小楷書女史箴圖神品真蹟  
明墨林山人項元下家藏珍秘

"A possession of the Song Imperial Collection by Gu Kaizhi of the Jin dynasty, painting of the Admonitions of the Preceptress, with text in small square script. A divine object; genuine. Now the highly prized possession of Xiang Yuanbian of the Ming dynasty, called also Molin Shanren."

- 1: "Xiang Yuanbian yin" (relief, square)
- 2: "Molin mi wan" (relief)
- 3: "Xiang Molin jianshang yin" (intaglio, square)

Bridging the border:

- 1: "Yunxia[zhai?]" 雲霞(齋) (relief, rectangle)
- 2: "Neifu shuhua zhi bao" 內府書畫之宝 (intaglio, square)

Colophon of Qing Gaozong (Qianlong) (tr. Gray 1966: 8-9):

"Gu Kaizhi of the Jin dynasty was skilful at painting in colour. He said himself that the power to express a man's soul in a portrait depended entirely on 'a certain thing'; and he knew that without entering deeply into samādhi this power could not be attained. This scroll, illustrating the Admonitions of the Preceptress, has been handed down for more than a thousand years. Yet the radiance of genius shines forth from it; every expression and attitude is full of life;—an art not to measured by the compasses and plumb-lines of later men.

Dong Qichang says in his inscription upon Li Longmian's (i.e., Li Gonglin, about 1041-1106) picture of the Rivers Xiao and Xiang: 'Mr Secretary Gu (i.e., [Gu Congyi], about 1520-about 1580) was the owner of four famous rolls, and in enumerating them he mentions this one first.' How rightly! This picture has always been kept in the Imperial Library, but subsequently, having acquired the Shu River, Nine Songs and Xiao-Xiang rolls by Li Longmian, I had it shifted to the Jingyi Pavilion of the [Jianfu] Palace, so that together they might correspond exactly to the famous group mentioned in Dong's note. The inscription says: 'The Four Objects of Beauty are brought together (in one room) to express profound admiration.' Deeply impressed by the unexpected reunion of these ancient and classical treasures, I have hastily scribbled these words, to show that I regard this roll as 'a sword reunited to its fellow'. Written by the Emperor in the Jingyi Pavilion, five days before the summer solstice of the year *bingyin* (1746) in the reign of Qianlong."

Three seals of Qing Gaozong: "Qian", "Long", "Yushu" ("Written by the Qianlong emperor").

Bridging the border:

A half-seal; the other half at the beginning of the following.

Mounted separately, a painting by Zou Yigui (1686-1772), *Pine, Bamboo, Rock and Spring* (*Songzhu shiquan tu*), inscribed: "Chen Zou Yigui gong hua" (Respectfully painted by your servant Zou Yigui), with two small seals.

Two Qianlong imperial seals.

## LIST OF FIGURES

Unless otherwise noted, all figures are of the *Admonitions* scroll in the British Museum: handscroll mounted on two panels (title, wrappers and colophons; painting); ink and colours on silk, h. 19.5cm.

<sup>1</sup> Scene 9, detail: the instructress. "Thus has the Instructress, charged with the duty of admonition, thought good to speak to the ladies of the palace harem."

<sup>2</sup> Scene 9, detail: two court ladies approach the instructress.

<sup>3</sup> Scene 5: the bedroom scene. "If the words that you utter are good, all men for a thousand leagues around you will make response to you. But if you depart from this principle, even your bedfellow will distrust you."

<sup>4</sup> Scene 7: the rejection scene. "No one can please forever; affection cannot be for one alone; if it be so, it will end in disgust. When love has reached its highest pitch, it changes its object; for whatever has reached fullness must needs decline. This law is absolute. The 'beautiful wife who knew herself to be beautiful' was soon hated. If by a mincing air you seek to please, wise men will abhor you. From this cause truly comes the breaking of favour's bond."

<sup>5</sup> Scene 7: the rejection scene, from Maeda Seison's (1885-1971) copy of the *Admonitions* scroll. Made in autumn 1922. Collection of Tôhoku University, Japan.

<sup>6</sup> Scene 3: the landscape and hunter. "In nature there is (nothing) that is exalted which is not soon brought low. Among living things there is nothing which having attained its apogee does not thenceforth decline. When the sun has reached its mid-course, it begins to sink; when the moon is full it begins to wane. To rise to glory is as hard as to build a mountain out of dust; to fall into calamity is as easy as the rebound of a tense spring."

<sup>7</sup> Anonymous (Song period), copy of Gu Kaizhi's *Nymph of the Luo River (Luoshen fu)*. Detail of a handscroll; ink & colour on silk. Palace Museum, Beijing.

<sup>8</sup> Anonymous (Song period), copy of Gu Kaizhi's *Nymph of the Luo River (Luoshen fu)*. Detail of a handscroll; ink & colour on silk, h. 26.3 cm. Liaoning Provincial Museum, Shenyang.

<sup>9</sup> Qiao Zhongchang (active first half 12<sup>th</sup> c.), *Latter Red Cliff Ode (Hou Chibi fu)*. Detail of a handscroll; ink on paper, h. 29.5 cm. Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City. "Clambering over roots twisted like dragons, I pulled my way up to the eagle's precarious nest and looked down into the hidden halls of the river god. I gave a long, shrill whoop. Trees and grasses shook and swayed, the mountains rang, the valley echoed. A wind came up; roiling the water, and I felt a chill of sadness, a shrinking fear."

<sup>10</sup> Anonymous (Song period), copy of Gu Kaizhi's *Nymph of the Luo River (Luoshen fu)*. Detail of a handscroll; ink & colour on silk. Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C..

<sup>11</sup> "Moon, Queen Mother of the West, three-legged bird, and nine-tailed fox", mural on west wall of antechamber in tomb no. 5, Dingjiazha, Jiuquan shi, Gansu Province. Eastern Jin dynasty (317-419 CE). (*Wenwu* 1979.6: pi. 2).

<sup>12</sup> "Hunter and mountains", copy after mural in tomb at Yuantaizi, Chaoyang xian, Liaoning Province. Eastern Jin dynasty (317-419 CE). (After *Wenwu* 1984.6: pi. 5.1).

<sup>13</sup> Scene 3, the landscape and hunter. From Maeda Seison's (1885-1971) copy of the *Admonitions* scroll, made in autumn 1922. Collection of Tôhoku University, Japan.

<sup>14</sup> Landscape in the illustration of the tale of the illusory city from the Lotus Sutra. Mural in Dunhuang cave 103. High Tang dynasty.

<sup>15</sup> Landscape scenery on a mirror. Tang dynasty, early-mid 8<sup>th</sup> century. Tokyo National Museum. Presented to the Hôryû-ji by Empress Kômyô in 738 CE.

<sup>16</sup> Landscape scenery on a mirror. Tang dynasty, mid 8<sup>th</sup> century. Shôsô-in collection. Presented to the Shôsô-in by Empress Kômyô in 756 CE.

<sup>17</sup> Rows of mountains in *Jâtaka* (lives of the historical Buddha) pictures. Mural in Dunhuang cave 428. Northern Zhou dynasty (557-580).

<sup>18</sup> Detail of a palace lady, line engraving on stone sarcophagus, tomb of Princess Yongtai (685-701) at Qian xian, Shaanxi Province. Tang dynasty, 709 CE.

<sup>19</sup> Scene 6, the family group. "To utter a word, how light a thing that seems! Yet from a word, both honour and shame proceed. Do not think that you are hidden; for the divine mirror reflects even that which cannot be seen. Do not think that you have been noiseless; God's ear needs no sound. Do not boast of your glory; for Heaven's law hates what is full. Do not put your trust in honours and high birth; for he that is highest falls. Make the 'Little Stars' your pattern: do not let 'your fancies roam afar'. Let your hearts be as locusts and your race shall multiply."

<sup>20</sup> Scene 1, Lady Feng Wan places herself between the emperor and a black bear. The inscription for this scene has long been lost. Seals that should have been impressed close together, according to a logic of chronological increment, are not.

<sup>21</sup> The "Hongwenguan" (Academy for the Dissemination of Culture) seal, detail from Wang Xianzhi (344-386; ms. copy after), *Mid Autumn (Zhongqiu tie)*. (After *SDQJ* 4: 96).

<sup>22</sup> The "Hongwenguan" (Academy for the Dissemination of Culture) seal, detail from Wang Xizhi (321-379), *Parcel of Salt Fish (Guozha tie)*. Ink rubbing. (After *SDQJ* 4: fig. 44).



<sup>23</sup> The "Hongwenguan" (Academy for the Dissemination of Culture) seal, detail from Yu Shinan (558-638), *Tomb Inscription for Princess Ru'nan (Ru'nan gongzhu muzhi)*, dated 636 CE. Handscroll; ink on paper, 26.3 x 39.5 cm. Shanghai Museum. (After *SDQJ* 7: 81).

<sup>24</sup> The bedroom scene. From the copy of the *Admonitions* scroll. Palace Museum, Beijing.

<sup>25</sup> Genre scene with musicians. Stone engraving. Northern Wei dynasty (386-533). Tenri Sankô-kan, Nara.

<sup>26</sup> Genre scene. Stone engraving (rubbing of ?), excavated at Beimangshan, Xiaochang, Luoyang. Dated 527 CE. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

<sup>27</sup> Scene 4, the toilette scene. "Men and women know how to adorn their faces, but there is none who knows how to adorn his or her character. Yet if the character be not adorned, there is a danger that the rules of conduct maybe transgressed."

<sup>28</sup> The "Ruisi Dongge" seal (in the lower left corner), detail from Han Huang (723-787; attributed to), *Five Oxen (Wuniu tu)*. Detail of a handscroll; ink & colour on paper, 20.8 x 139.8 cm. Palace Museum, Beijing.

<sup>29</sup> The "Ruisi Dongge" seal (in the upper left corner), detail from Han Huang (723-787; attributed to), *Literary Gathering in a Garden (Wenyuan tu)*. Detail of a handscroll. Palace Museum, Beijing.

<sup>30</sup> The "Ruisi Dongge" seal (in the upper left corner), on Han Gan (about 715-after 781; attributed to), *Holding a Horse (Muma tu)*. Album leaf. National Palace Museum, Taipei.

<sup>31</sup> The "Ruisi Dongge" seal, detail from Wang Xianzhi (344-386; copy after), *Equn tie ('Flock of geese')*. Detail of a handscroll. (After *SDQJ* 4: 94-95).

<sup>32</sup> The "Ruisi Dongge" seal from Wang Xizhi (321-379), *Four Sheets of Flying White Script (Sizhi feibai tie)*. Detail of an ink rubbing.

<sup>33</sup> The "Ruisi Dongge" seal from Su Shi (1037-1101), *Du Fu's 'Poem on the Alder Tree' (Du Fu Kaimu shi juan)*. Detail of a handscroll.

<sup>34</sup> Zhiyong (active late 6<sup>th</sup>-early 7<sup>th</sup> c. CE), *Thousand Character Classic (Qianziwen)*. Late 6<sup>th</sup> c. CE. Detail of an album (?); ink on paper, 24.5 x 10.9 cm. Ogawa Collection, Kyoto. (After *SDQJ* 5: 60-83).

<sup>35</sup> Anonymous (Eastern Jin, 317-419), detail of a sutra transcription. (After *Dong Jin zhujing jiyao*).

<sup>36</sup> Wang Xianzhi (344-386; copy after), *The Twenty-ninth (Nianjiu ri tie)*. (After *SDQJ* 4: 102).

<sup>37</sup> Song Gaozong (r. 1127-62), *Preface to Emperor Huizong's Literary Collection (Huizong wenji xu)*. Detail. Private Collection, Japan.

<sup>38</sup> Yu Shinan (558-638), *Stela for the Confucius Temple (Kongzi miaotang bei)*. Detail of an ink rubbing, 28.3 cm. (After *SDQJ* 7: 70).

<sup>39</sup> Chu Suliang (596-658), *Stela for Master Meng (Meng Fashi bei)*. Detail of an ink rubbing. (After *SDQJ* 8: 6).

<sup>40</sup> Scene 2, detail of Lady Ban, inscription, maid and "Ruisi Dongge" seal. "Lady Ban, by her refusal lost the pleasure of riding in the imperial litter. Was it that she did not care to? No! but she was anxious to avoid even hidden and remote consequences."

<sup>41</sup> Scenes 3 & 4, detail of the transitional space between scenes.

<sup>42</sup> Anonymous (Song period), copy of Gu Kaizhi's *Nymph of the Luo River (Luoshen fu)*. Detail of a handscroll; ink & colour on silk, h. 26.3 cm. Liaoning Provincial Museum, Shenyang. The narrative text is an obvious later addition to the scroll.

<sup>43</sup> Scene 6, detail of the inscription from the family group. "To utter a word, how light a thing that seems! Yet from a word, both honour and shame proceed. Do not think that you are hidden; for the divine mirror reflects even that which cannot be seen. Do not think that you have been noiseless; God's ear needs no sound. Do not boast of your glory; for Heaven's law hates what is full. Do not put your trust in honours and high birth; for he that is highest falls. Make the 'Little Stars' your pattern: do not let 'your fancies roam afar'. Let your hearts be as locusts and your race shall multiply."

<sup>44</sup> Detail of the preface and first part of first scene: Lady Fan prevails over (her husband) King Zhuang (r. 696-681 BCE) by refusing to taste the flesh of newly slaughtered birds. From the copy of the *Admonitions* scroll. Palace Museum, Beijing.

<sup>45</sup> Second part of first scene: Lady Fan refusing to taste the flesh of birds newly slaughtered by her husband King Zhuang (r. 696-681 BCE). From the copy of the *Admonitions* scroll. Palace Museum, Beijing.

<sup>46</sup> Second scene: the daughter of the Marquis of Wei awes her husband Duke Huan of Qi (r. 681-643 BCE) by refusing to listen to his licentious music. From the copy of the *Admonitions* scroll. Palace Museum, Beijing.

<sup>47</sup> The mountain and hunter scene. Detail from the copy of the *Admonitions* scroll. Palace Museum, Beijing.

<sup>48</sup> The daughter of the Marquis of Wei and her husband Duke Huan of Qi (r. 681-643 BCE). From *Biographies of Exemplary Women (Lienü zhuan)*, a

Daoguang period (1821-50) re-cut of a Song dynasty (960-1279) woodblock print edition. The last stroke of the character Huan in the cartouche in the upper right corner is missing in observance of the Song dynasty taboo on this character.

<sup>49</sup> Duchess (the unworthy Nanzi?) serving her husband, Duke Ling of Wei (r. 533-492 BCE). From *Biographies of Exemplary Women (Lienü zhuan)*. Detail of a handscroll; ink on silk. Palace Museum, Beijing.

<sup>50</sup> Scene 3, the story of Cao Xi and his wife. From *Biographies of Exemplary Women (Lienü zhuan)*. Detail of a handscroll; ink on silk. Palace Museum, Beijing.

<sup>51</sup> Copy of a mural depicting the deceased. Tomb of Dong Shou, Anyue (Anak) tomb no. 3, Huanghai Beidao, North Korea. Dated 357 CE. (See Hong 1959, Okazaki 1954, and Gaojuli 1985).

<sup>52</sup> Line drawing of a mural depicting the deceased feasting. Tomb at Wangjiacun, Liaoyang, north-east China. Jin dynasty (265-419 CE). (See Li 1959).

<sup>53</sup> Copy of a mural depicting the deceased. Tomb at Yuantaizi, Chaoyang, Liaoning Province. Eastern Jin dynasty (317-419 CE). (After *Wenwu* 1984.6: pl. 5.2.)

<sup>54</sup> Mural depicting the deceased. Tomb of the Prefect of Youzhou (Youzhou shisanjun taishou), Dexingli, North Korea. Dated 408 CE.

<sup>55</sup> Lady Fan, wife of King Zhuang of Chu (r. 696-681 BCE). Lacquer painted screen from tomb of Sima Jinglong and his wife, Datong, Shanxi. Northern Wei dynasty, before 484 CE. Shanxi Provincial Museum.

<sup>56</sup> Flower- and tree-shaped gold ornaments. Unearthed from Jin tomb no. 2, Fangshencun, Beipiao, Liaoning Province. Jin dynasty (265-419 CE). (See Chengtaizi 1960).

<sup>57</sup> Ox-drawn carriage, musicians, and genre scene. Stone engraving. Northern Wei dynasty (386-533 CE). Tenri Sankô-kan, Nara. (See, also, fig. 25).

<sup>58</sup> Ox-drawn carriage. Detail of a stone engraving, unearthed at Mt Beimang, Xiaochang, Luoyang. Dated 527 CE. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. (See, also, fig. 26).

<sup>59</sup> Four women. Polychrome-painted brick from northern China, excavated from a Southern Dynasties tomb at Xuezhuang, Deng County, Henan Province. (See Chen 1958).

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