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# CRANES ABOVE KAIFENG: THE AUSPICIOUS IMAGE AT THE COURT OF HUIZONG

By PETER C. STURMAN

AMONG THE MANY BEAUTIFUL PAINTINGS ATTRIBUTED TO THE late Northern Song emperor Huizong (r. A.D. 1100–1125), none is so enchanting as the short handscroll entitled “Auspicious Cranes” (Fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> Twenty white cranes appear against an azure sky above city gates bathed in magical clouds. Colors and patterns harmonize with such wondrous, elegant decorum that the viewer is left wondering how any artist could conceive such otherworldly beauty. Yet, according to Huizong’s own inscription and poem that follows to the left, the painting simply records an actual event witnessed by thousands one evening early in the year 1112 (Fig. 2):

On the evening of the day after *shangyuan*,<sup>2</sup> the *renzhen* year of the Zhenghe reign (February 26, 1112), auspicious clouds suddenly formed in masses and descended about the main gate of the palace, illuminating it. Everyone raised their heads to gaze at them. Suddenly a group of cranes appeared flying in the sky. Two came to perch atop the “owl-tail” ridge-ornaments of the gate, completely at ease and self-composed. The others all wheeled about in the sky, as if responding to some rhythm. Residents of the capital walking about all bowed in reverence, gazing from afar. They sighed at length over the unusual sight. For some time the cranes did not disperse. Then they circled about and flew off, separating at the northwest quarter of the city. Moved by this auspicious sight, I wrote the following poem to record its fact.

In the pure break of day, multi-hued rainbows caress the roof’s ridge,<sup>3</sup>

The immortal birds, proclaiming good auspices, suddenly arrive in favorable response.<sup>4</sup>

Wafting about, originally denizens of the Three Immortal Isles,<sup>5</sup> Pair after pair, they go on presenting their thousand-year-old forms.<sup>6</sup>

They seem to be imitating the blue *luan* that roosted atop the jeweled halls,<sup>7</sup>

Could they possibly be the same as the red geese that congregated at Heaven’s Pond?<sup>8</sup>

Lingering, they call and cry at the Cinnabar Palace,  
Thus causing the ever-busy common folk to know of their presence.

This ostensibly historical document is painted in the meticulously fine style associated with Huizong’s officially sponsored Painting Academy. As such, it joins a number of paintings attributed to the emperor which, though strongly suspected of being from the hands of academy painters rather than the emperor himself, are essentially unquestioned as representative of the Huizong aesthetic.<sup>9</sup> The issue of authorship is an interesting one, not so much for reflecting what may or may not be the individual hand of Huizong (the traditional concern), but rather because it touches upon what I

consider to be the much more significant issue of style. Gathering support from textual sources, including one written by a contemporary witness to the activities of Huizong’s court, Xu Bangda has argued that the “true” Huizongs are not these fine, jewel-like paintings but another group of paintings attributed to the emperor—mostly ink on paper and of slightly clumsy appearance.<sup>10</sup> Such paintings, Professor Xu continues, would have been very much influenced by the developing *wenren*, or literati aesthetic of the late Northern Song, and their slight touch of awkwardness should be viewed as a positive, cultivated quality.<sup>11</sup> He goes on to associate this group of monochromatic paintings with the style of Xu Xi, the Five Dynasties Period bird-and-flower master of Jiangnan heavily favored by the late Northern Song literati. In contrast, the meticulous *gongbi* style paintings, including “Auspicious Cranes,” are considered to belong to the stylistic tradition of the early Song academicians Huang Quan (A.D. 903–68) and his son Huang Jucai.<sup>12</sup> Undoubtedly, the authenticity of these “literati-style” paintings is much more problematic than the academic-style paintings attributed to Huizong, and they consequently demand much more study. Nevertheless, Xu Bangda calls forth enough evidence to present a significant case for the existence of this other Huizong style.<sup>13</sup> And this, I argue, should make us reevaluate the broader question of the interaction between style and function in the academic-style Huizong paintings, if only by demonstrating the emperor’s awareness and willingness to make use of stylistic alternatives.

The crux of the issue is revealed in Benjamin Rowland’s conclusion that “Huizong’s precise, realistic recording of the surface texture of natural objects was simply the result of his desire to record with loving care the little things that filled his days with pleasure.”<sup>14</sup> When confronted with a meticulously realistic style of depiction, we naturally tend to presume that the artist’s sole concern was to capture the objective appearance of his subject, to have his painting function, in other words, like a photograph. It is a tendency, moreover, wholeheartedly encouraged by such firsthand accounts as Huizong’s own inscription to “Auspicious Cranes.” But as Rowland implicitly suggests by coining the term “magic realism” to describe the Huizong style, and by perceptively analyzing choice Huizong paintings that essentially demonstrate the

unreality of the final image, there is more to a realistic style than simply realism.

This paper will focus on "Auspicious Cranes" as a representative of the refined, academic-style paintings associated with Huizong's name. These paintings claim to represent an unadulterated, objective view of their subjects, but, as I will demonstrate with "Auspicious Cranes," the function of these paintings so strongly suggests an elaborate hidden political agenda that any claim to objectivity is thoroughly compromised. Herein, I believe, lies the key to understanding the rationale behind this rarefied style of painting. I will conclude by examining what I call Huizong's "appropriation of reality" in the larger perspective of Northern Song painting and theory.

### *Auspicious Phenomena at Huizong's Court and the "Xuanhe ruilan ce"*

The appearance of the twenty cranes in the evening sky above Kaifeng on February 26, 1112, was hardly an isolated auspicious event during Huizong's reign. On May 26, 1103, the Grand Astrologer reported to the throne that the Five Planets were all moving in unison in the sky, a reflection of an era of great peace.<sup>15</sup> On September 6, 1107, it was reported that in Hebei the Yellow River had mysteriously risen and cleared for seven days during the previous month, a phenomenon that would repeat itself many times in several different locales over the next few years.<sup>16</sup> Sweet dew, thick as honey and with a lustrous glitter, was found in the niches of the willow trees and other plants around the official buildings of the capital on December 6, 1109. Huizong himself composed a poem for this blessed event.<sup>17</sup> Auspicious grains with branching stalks and multiple ears were found at Caizhou (Runan, Henan Province) and Yuanzhou (Yichun, Jiangxi Province) during the summer of 1110—portents of a bountiful harvest.<sup>18</sup> The magic, brightly colored *lingzhi* fungus was discovered growing by the steps of the Temple of Imperial Ancestors of the Auspicious Tally Palace (Xiangfugong Shengzudian) in Qianzhou (Ganzhou, Jiangxi Province) on December 5, 1111. This was considered to be the ancestors' grateful answer to the profundity of Huizong's filial piety.<sup>19</sup> On February 29 of the following year, a ten-thousand-year-old toad was discovered with the magic fungus growing from its back in Xin'an, just west of the capital.<sup>20</sup> On March 6, 1113, auspicious multi-colored auras called *daiqi* and *chengqi* were seen about the sun.<sup>21</sup> Rocks were found whose natural markings wrote out auspicious messages, such as *ming*, "bright."<sup>22</sup> Other missives from Heaven were found written in purple in cross-sections of cut

trees: *daji*, "great auspiciousness," and *wan Song nian-sui*, "[long live] the Song dynasty for ten thousand years." In the latter instance, which was reported in Wuyi, Zhejiang on October 5, 1113, Heaven demonstrated some calligraphic range to its celestial orthography, writing the first two characters in the seal (*juan*) script and the last two in the standard (*kai*) script.<sup>23</sup> Numerous other auspicious discoveries made during Huizong's reign are found in the historical documents, from huge gold nuggets shaped like auspicious clouds to auspicious clouds shaped like dragons, from so-called phoenixes to *qilin* ("unicorns") born from cows.<sup>24</sup> And these, we must assume, are but a small fraction of those actually reported.

All of these phenomena are known in Chinese as *ruiying*, "auspicious responses." *Ruiying* are not omens *per se*, as they do not portend future events.<sup>25</sup> The emphasis, rather, is on the present: Heaven offers its blessings with the appearances of the strange and wonderful in response to the enlightened rule of its son, Emperor Huizong. *Ruiying* are Heaven's way of communicating with the earthly realm, a fact particularly well illustrated by the literal messages occasionally discovered on rocks and in tree trunks. It is tempting to dismiss this plethora of auspicious responses as nothing more than a manifestation of the superstitious rule of Huizong, an emperor notorious for his devout belief in Daoism. Yet, there is nothing intrinsically Daoist about *ruiying*. They are mentioned in some of China's earliest literature, including Confucius' *Analects*,<sup>26</sup> and they are such an ingrained feature of Chinese epistemology that even the great Han dynasty skeptic Wang Chong (A.D. 27–ca. 100) dared not deny their fundamental validity.<sup>27</sup> Especially in the early centuries of this millenium *ruiying* attracted much attention, earning, as a number of scholars have shown, an important place in the pictorial art of the Eastern Han period.<sup>28</sup> Their popularity also resulted in illustrated compendia (*tu*) that described their various properties and associations. Of this mostly lost literature, Sun Rouzhi's fragmentary and reconstructed *Ruiying tu* of the sixth century is the most valuable.<sup>29</sup>

Every dynasty, and probably every reign, had its fair share of auspicious phenomena. In this regard, there is nothing unusual about the purported events of Huizong's reign. Where Huizong differs is in the much increased emphasis he placed on *ruiying*. The consequence of this was the fostering of circumstances that encouraged more and more sightings. The pattern had already appeared at the very start of his reign, when, in the eleventh lunar month of 1100, Huizong issued a decree requesting that all prefectures and commanderies present their auspicious discoveries to the court; if the actual phenomenon could not be

turned in, a painting should be made describing its appearance.<sup>30</sup> One item recorded on silk was the auspicious grain discovered in Yuanzhou in 1110, seven *chi* tall, with a stalk splitting into two branches, each culminating in seven ears of heavy grain.<sup>31</sup> That painting no longer exists, though a comparable image can be seen in an anonymous hanging scroll in the National Palace Museum, Taipei (Fig. 3).<sup>32</sup> Over time the message was clearly transmitted that Huizong wanted *ruiying*, and *ruiying* he received, in astonishing numbers. There is a steady increase in numbers of auspicious responses through the years of the Zhenghe reign (1111–18), with an apparent peak around 1115, when, for example, on June 5 a staggering 12,060 specimens of the magic fungus were collected by whole villages in Qizhou (Hubei).<sup>33</sup> Back at the court, the prime minister Cai Jing, who was particularly attuned to the emperor's way of thinking, led the various high officials in a constant chorus of congratulatory hymns that praised the auspicious signs raining down from Heaven. The most exemplary of these ornate writings can still be perused in the collected works of Wang Anzhong (1076–1134), editorial director in the Secretariat during the Zhenghe reign and Huizong's personal favorite when it came to creating the lush literary phrases worthy of describing these important phenomena.<sup>34</sup>

For the modern reader who remains skeptical of Heaven's role in the appearance of unicorns and phoenixes, questions immediately arise concerning the credibility of such reports and, in the broader picture, the motives that may underlie Huizong's active promotion of auspicious phenomena. These are both important issues for understanding the psychological climate of Huizong's court—in a manner of speaking, its grasp of reality. Let us address the second question first. Were there specific political motives prompting this encouragement of *ruiying*, something on the order of Wang Mang's manipulation of portents to justify his usurpation of the Han throne, or Tang Taizong's similar actions during the founding of his dynasty?<sup>35</sup> Common sense would lead one to expect *realpolitik* issues to be lurking in the background, and yet, if such issues exist, they are not immediately obvious. Unlike Wang Mang and Tang Taizong, Huizong was not founding or consolidating a new dynasty, nor did he face, to the best of my knowledge, serious challenges to his legitimacy. The only political issue that emerges as potentially related is the campaign to recover the northern territories of You and Yan, areas lost to the Liao during the collapse of the Tang dynasty and much coveted by Huizong as physical proof of his own reign's greatness.<sup>36</sup> A connection is suggested by the fact that the plan to recover the north, according

to Cai Tao, arose at the start of the Zhenghe reign, coinciding with the accelerated pace of *ruiying* sightings.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, if this was a background motivating force, it remains fundamentally different from the issues of legitimacy that invariably arise with the founding of a new political order. There would have been no need to justify recovery of the lost territories, and consequently, if the auspicious responses were related, they would have functioned less as an actual political tool than as a vague expression of wishful thinking.

It is precisely an amorphous blending of reality and unreality that seems to make up Huizong's *ruiying*, and this brings us back to the question of their credibility. From the narration of the auspicious responses given above, it should be clear that in most cases events become *ruiying* through subjective interpretation. When a cow gives birth to a deformed calf, the only inherent truth is that the poor creature is abnormal. It becomes a *qilin* only when that abnormality is interpreted in a positive manner. From our removed perspective we see a clear pattern of the Huizong court eagerly encountering the aberrant and unusual, slight or gross, and in almost every instance interpreting it positively. An excellent example is Cai Tao's account of the toppling of Taihe Mountain in Yiyang (Henan), southwest of the capital. When the news first reached the court, Huizong and Cai Jing were extremely fearful, fully recognizing the metaphorical implications of a mountain (i.e., emperor or dynasty) collapsing. The mood changed to joy, however, when it was announced that considerable quantities of crystal were found within—the mountain's collapse could now be interpreted as the Earth's opening up to present its rarities to the court.<sup>38</sup> To Huizong's credit, there is evidence that not all of the various *ruiying* were accepted indiscriminately—at least one ten-thousand-year-old toad sprouting *lingzhi*, for example, was determined to be a fraud,<sup>39</sup> and the phoenix of 1116 the product of some farmer's wishful thinking. But, on the other hand, evidence of a skeptical attitude is hard to find and, at least in the case of the "flowering toad," compromised by contradictory information: while this strange *ruiying* is on one occasion said to be disproven by the emperor himself, it appears again (yes, there was more than one such toad!), praised as a particularly fantastic auspicious phenomenon in a congratulatory memorial by Wang Anzhong, thus documenting its acceptance.<sup>40</sup> This apparent contradiction seems symptomatic of a court determined to factualize its own created fiction.

In this hazy world where the borders of reality and fiction overlap emerges the auspicious image, an image that acts to confirm its own reality once created. The auspicious image is the retelling of the *ruiying*, and



through that retelling ambiguity is eliminated and subjectivity thoroughly concealed. From the simple, concise statements of the historical records to the richly decorous memorials of Wang Anzhong, the *ruiying* earn credibility through imperial sponsorship and become fact. When it comes to self-confirmation, however, nothing convinces like a picture,<sup>41</sup> and Huizong saw to it that pictorial records too were made to concretize these fragile truths. The program was an ambitious one—volumes of paintings collectively entitled “Xuanhe ruilan ce” and thus described in Deng Chun’s *Hua ji* of 1167:

The realm was at great peace for many years and various auspicious creatures and objects [appeared], bringing with them good fortune. Memorials [describing them] were submitted daily, and the court scribes continuously recorded [their fact]. Among living creatures there were the red crow,<sup>42</sup> white magpie,<sup>43</sup> heavenly deer,<sup>44</sup> and birds of intricate plumage, all cavorting about the imperial gardens. Of plants and flowers there were the juniper-growing *lingzhi* fungus, the pearl lotus, golden tangerines, double-stemmed bamboo, flowering melons, and pear-leaved crab-apples—stems split and interconnected,<sup>45</sup> too many to enumerate. [The emperor] thereupon chose the most unusual, some fifteen types in all, and sketched their forms in the “red and blue,” entitling the project “Xuanhe ruilan ce,” “The Xuanhe Reign Album of Sagacious Viewing.” There were the various strange and rare plants and flowers such as the *suxin* and *moli* jasmine, fish pelargonium, and the sal tree. The regions from which these plants came were exhaustively surveyed, and the nature and genus of their products studied in great detail. Descriptions were composed to song, and their appearances captured in painting, all to be added as a second volume. Afterwards, jade-colored *lingzhi* appeared, competing in showy beauty by the imperial palaces, and sweet dew fell from the midnight heavens onto the purple bamboo. The *yang* [sun] crow and cinnabar [moon] rabbit, the [five colored] parakeet and snowy eagle, the pheasant from Yueshang, of jade-like substance gleamingly pure,<sup>46</sup> and the *yuzu* chick, golden-hued and brilliant<sup>47</sup> . . . the lotus-nesting tortoise, the free-wheeling phoenix, ten-thousand-year-old rocks, split trunks and double leaves, a banana plant divided in two. . . . All in all there were fifteen different divine objects chosen for the contents of volume three. The fourth volume was composed solely of rare birds and animals of pure white color, each one’s form lovingly described. And on and on they were added, ceaselessly, until the project grew to some thousand volumes in all. For each, the emperor ordered his high officials to write inscriptions at their end. Certainly, in all endeavors past and present, nothing could match this in beauty.<sup>48</sup>

A briefer description appears in Tang Hou’s *Gujin huajian*, where it is specified that each of the hundreds of volumes was comprised of fifteen sheets of two leaves each.<sup>49</sup> While it could well be argued that the subject matter of most of the extant academic-style paintings firmly attributed to Huizong more or less accords with Deng Chun’s description, three paintings in particular have been singled out as likely survivors of this staggeringly ambitious project: “The Five Colored Parakeet” in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (Fig. 4), “Auspicious Dragon Rock” in the Palace

Museum, Beijing (Fig. 5), and “Auspicious Cranes.”<sup>50</sup> That these three paintings were indeed a part of the “Xuanhe ruilan ce” cannot be proven without more information. Nevertheless, their shared formats, measurements, and style practically guarantee that at the least they once belonged to the same album or series of albums.<sup>51</sup> Each composition evenly divides into a painting and an inscription with eulogizing poem written in the “slender gold” calligraphy of Emperor Huizong, and each painting describes in painstakingly beautiful detail subjects that perfectly accord with Deng Chun’s description of the “Xuanhe ruilan ce.”

The “dragon rock,” according to Huizong’s inscription, presided over a particularly magical corner of what one presumes to have been an imperial garden, south of Encircling Emerald Pond (Huanbichi) and west of Fangzhou Bridge (Fangzhouqiao), ready to soar across the facing Surpassing Ocean (Shengying).<sup>52</sup> This is not one of the famed message or glyph rocks described above, though Huizong has written in gold the two characters *xiang long*, “auspicious dragon,” directly on its pitted surface just under the right edge of its water-filled recess at the top (Fig. 6). Rather, it is a rock whose bizarre formation suggests the twisting movements of a dragon “emerging to give shape to an auspicious response.” Dragons are creatures of clouds and rain, Huizong’s poem reminds us, and the rock symbolizes, by association, Heaven’s moist, life-nurturing forces. Perhaps this explains the rock’s unusual pool of water from which grow two yet-unidentified plants.<sup>53</sup> If the dragon rock was interpreted as a symbol of the emperor’s enriching powers, the five colored parakeet served as a reminder of Huizong’s and China’s direct position under Heaven—the center to which the less civilized, outlying regions pay tribute. The parakeet, Huizong tells us, has come to the imperial precincts from Lingbiao, far to the south.<sup>54</sup> It was tame, of noble bearing, and, in keeping with the general association of these rare birds, “capable of uttering many a fine speech.”<sup>55</sup>

From even these brief descriptions it becomes apparent that subtle differences can exist in the symbolic functions of the *ruiying*. The rock is a dragon, ever-changing, mysterious, and representative of the primal nurturing powers shared by Heaven and Huizong. The parakeet is a glittering jewel from a far-away land, tribute offered to the court in recognition of its omnipotent authority. To the casual glance they appear equally realistic. Yet, given the different manners in which these two *ruiying* function and the specific associations they engender, how could these images not reveal some degree of that subjective interpretation so central to the very concept of auspicious response? Huizong virtually admits as much. In the inscriptions and poems of both of these paintings one

finds the emperor repeatedly commenting on the inadequacies of his descriptions, whether in words or in pictures.<sup>56</sup> Such polite disclaimers, I believe, are less an admission of technical shortcomings than a reflection of the awareness that the meanings of his subjects are difficult to express. And meanings, we should be aware, are cultural property; more often than not they have little to do with the world of objective fact.

A final word on the “Xuanhe ruilan ce.” As Tang Hou comments, the vastness of the project (up to fifteen thousand paintings) strongly suggests the employment of a number of academy painters. They would have been working in concerted effort, quickly and efficiently, to create images that satisfied the imperial conception. Certainly, they would not have been idly waiting for the *ruiyi* to appear, one by one. One need not jump to the conclusion that these three paintings were indeed once a part of the “Xuanhe ruilan ce,” and that they were not painted by Emperor Huizong (his inscriptions, after all, are quite adamant about personal authorship), to recognize the likelihood of some degree of temporal and spatial dislocation between subject and painting. This is a particularly important issue with “Auspicious Cranes” because of the date mentioned in the inscription. Seen alone, the painting immediately appears to have been made on or close to that day, February 26, 1112, but the fact that its two sister scrolls have no such date clearly indicates that February 26, 1112, was simply the date of the appearance of the cranes; there is no reason to presume that it was the date of the painting. In fact, it is more than likely that there was a considerable lapse of time between the purported incident and the painting of the image, perhaps even years. This further underscores the fact that despite the objective view implied by the paintings’ naturalistic style, these images, in their final form, have been refracted through any number of interpretive prisms.

There is little question that the auspicious image played an important role at Huizong’s court. On February 6, 1114, in honor of the *lingzhi* fungus and auspicious multi-eared grains that had become prevalent, Huizong ordered heraldic pennants created to display their images proudly. An order came down the same day for flags of the solar auras, the multi-hued *dai* and *cheng qi*. In the following year images of glyph rocks adorned these regal banners, and on January 4, 1117, the auspicious cranes, which had blessed the realm with their magnificent forms a number of times since Huizong’s accession, earned their flag.<sup>57</sup> These pennants were simply a part of the imperial regalia that accompanied some of the official affairs of the court. Yet they must have been visually stunning—prominent and powerful symbols of Heaven’s favor.<sup>58</sup> For us they signify the degree to which the auspicious

image permeated the atmosphere of Huizong’s court. As Cai Tao has written:

During the Daguan [1107–10] and Zhenghe [1111–17] reigns . . . pure banquets filled the realm. The four barbarian tribes responded to [these] airs and came with knees bent to receive orders [from the throne]. The heavenly auras—generative, enshrouding mists—were also of extraordinary [shape and manner]. There were no untoward affairs in or outside the court, and daily there were only discussions of the rites, music, and auspicious phenomena. One could say it was the ultimate glory of the great peace.<sup>59</sup>

### *Dancing Cranes, Huizong’s Music, and the Lantern Festival*

Before we investigate some of the specific factors that underlie the image of “Auspicious Cranes,” a brief introduction to the Manchurian crane (also known as the Japanese crane, *Grus japonensis*) is in order. It is, by any account, an impressive bird, large (a wing-span up to two-and-a-half meters) and of dramatic black and white plumage with a bright red patch atop its head. On the Asian continent these cranes migrate slightly south from their summer nests in central and eastern Manchuria to eastern China through the autumn and winter months. They are capable of soaring at tremendous heights, well over a mile high, where they are unseen by human eyes but clearly heard, continuously trumpeting with powerful, low guttural calls. Cranes are remarkably long-lived.<sup>60</sup> Such characteristics, and a myriad subtleties, were well known in China from an early date. Many appear in a fragmentary work entitled *Xiang he jing*, *Classic of Crane Physiognomy*, said to have been composed by an immortal of the sixth century B.C. named Lord Fouqiu.<sup>61</sup> The crane, we learn, is a *yang* bird who roams in the *yin*. Its body exalts cleanliness; hence its white color. Its sounds are heard in Heaven; hence its red crown. The crane’s constituent affinities with metal and fire result in a developmental pattern determined by these elements’ respective numbers, nine and seven, when added together. Thus it is that after one hundred sixty years the male and female cranes need only look at each other for her to conceive. And after sixteen hundred years the female bird, mammal-like, gives viviparous birth to the *luan* and *feng* phoenixes. The limits of the crane’s longevity are inestimable. Little wonder it is called the elder of the avian world and the courier of immortals.

In the considerable body of legends, anecdotes, and poems devoted to this sacred bird in China two general themes predominate: the crane’s immortal nature and its toleration of human company (it is inappropriate to speak of “taming” a crane). Duke Yi of Wei (acceded 668 B.C.) was so fond of his cranes that they were paraded around in great carriages like grandees

and dignitaries and awarded official rank.<sup>62</sup> The early Song poet Lin Bu (967–1028) preferred cranes to children (and the blossoming plum to a wife); a chastened Su Shi was in awe of their high-minded independence.<sup>63</sup> As a result of this affection and admiration, the crane was often depicted in painting. An unmatched level of excellence in the individual portrayal of cranes is said to have been attained with the works of the early eighth-century Tang courtier and painter Xue Ji.<sup>64</sup> Huizong, too, was a keen student of the crane's manners. A scroll attributed to him, reproduced many years ago in *Shina nanga taisei*, presents his rendition of "The Six Cranes," a subject made famous by Huang Quan in the middle of the tenth century,<sup>65</sup> and Deng Chun's *Hua ji* describes a longer scroll the emperor painted early in the Zhenghe reign depicting some twenty cranes in various poses.<sup>66</sup>

None of these descriptions, however, reveals the crane's most noteworthy talent, which is dancing. All cranes dance. It may not be the most refined of ballets, but with head bobbing, wings waving, and its body bouncing and twirling about, the sight of a crane dancing is undoubtedly impressive.<sup>67</sup> The peculiar thing about the crane's dance is that it does not appear to coincide with any particular behavioral pattern. Rather, cranes apparently dance for the pure pleasure of it, at any age, in any season, and at any time of the day. Duets may be more common prior to the mating season, but solo and group performances are also seen. A few deft movements on the part of a human partner are sometimes all it takes to get a crane started. A charming detail of an acolyte encouraging two cranes from the fourteenth-century painter Chen Ruyan's "The Land of Immortals" establishes that this was also well known in China (Fig. 7).

Chinese accounts of the crane's propensity for dancing differ from those of Western observers, however, in that they recognize the bird's highly developed appreciation for music. This special gift appears originally to have been associated with a rare breed of jet-black cranes called *yuan he* (primal cranes).<sup>68</sup> When the Yellow Emperor practiced music on Kunlun Mountain, such cranes came to dance by his side. And in a celebrated passage from *Han Feizi* these cranes arrive to witness the marvelous *qin* playing of Master Kuang of the sixth century B.C., court musician to Duke Ping of Jin:

Following the performance of the first part, there came from the south black cranes, two times eight, and assembled at the end of the ridge of the galley roof. After the performance of the second part, they lined up themselves in a row. When the third part was performed, they raised their necks to sing and stretched their wings to dance. Among the notes the pitches of *gong* and *shang* echoed in Heaven; thereby Duke Ping was much pleased and the audience were all amused.<sup>69</sup>

Similar affinities for sublime music were soon recognized in the slightly less rare Manchurian crane. Typically, the bird's musical acumen was coupled with its special role as companion to the gentleman or scholar—one who truly "understands the sounds" (*zhi yin zhe*). This is not a particularly common subject in Chinese painting, but there are pictorial examples of cranes responding gracefully to the *qin* playing of lofty recluses, such as in an eighth-century Tang dynasty mirror of the Shōsōin (Fig. 8),<sup>70</sup> and an anonymous Southern Song fan of late twelfth- to early thirteenth-century date in the Palace Museum, Beijing (Fig. 9). Close to the time of Huizong, Li Gonglin (ca. 1049–1106) painted his contemporary Zhao Wu playing the *qin* for the family crane—a tradition, Su Shi tells us, inherited from his father, the morally upright official Zhao Bian (1008–84).<sup>71</sup>

The association of dancing cranes with exceptional music will prove to be the fundamental theme of "Auspicious Cranes." The underlying principle, as described in the passage on the primal cranes in Sun Rouzhi's *Ruiying tu*, is that the cranes arrive when the ruler possesses the virtue of music.<sup>72</sup> In this respect, dancing cranes might be considered slightly mundane manifestations of a principle associated with those most rarefied of Chinese birds, the *feng* and *huang* phoenixes and the *luan*. The appearance of the *feng* and *huang*, immortal birds that embody the essence of benevolence (*ren*), was closely associated with sage governance. They are said to have been common during the reigns of the sage emperors Yao and Shun, perching and nesting atop the palace roofs,<sup>73</sup> and they arrived, gamboling, when Shun's legendary Shao music was performed in nine parts.<sup>74</sup> As for the *luan*, a bird whose attributes are not easily distinguished from the *feng* and *huang*, Sun Rouzhi records that "it recognizes the pitches of the bells; when the bell pitches are [in proper] tune it arrives, singing and dancing in harmony."<sup>75</sup> A perusal of Huizong's poem on "Auspicious Cranes" reveals how the iconography of these musical phoenixes, directly or indirectly, figures prominently in the image of the cranes above Kaifeng.

At least thirteen different dated occasions of the auspicious arrival of cranes during Huizong's reign are documented in historical sources, from 1099 to 1120.<sup>76</sup> February 26, 1112, is not among them, but not all *ruiying* were included in the official histories that survive today. Our understanding of "Auspicious Cranes" is guided by what is described of these occurrences, especially recurring patterns that help delineate the basic cultural composition of this particular *ruiying*. One general point of agreement is that the birds, in keeping with the Manchurian crane's migratory habits, always appear during the late fall and winter months. More significantly, this is a *ruiying* that

is mostly limited to the imperial precincts of the capital at Kaifeng (or at least only recorded as a *ruiyang* when the cranes appeared here). Other factors vary, such as the times of day in which the cranes appear and the directions from which they arrive and to which they depart. Moreover, when specified, there proves to be no constancy in the number of cranes that appear each time. Not including the four times “thousands” of cranes are said to have filled the sky, the reported number of birds are ten during the ninth lunar month, 1105; two in the winter of 1106; twenty-four late in 1112; four in the tenth month, 1113; sixteen in the ninth month, 1118; and, the one odd-numbered exception, five that came on December 10, 1118, apparently as not unwelcome gate-crashers to Huizong’s birthday celebration at the Palace of Accumulated Auspices (Chuxianggong). This is not to presume a complete absence of significance to the number of cranes—numerology has always been a subject of fascination in China, particularly to Daoist-inclined emperors, and it is a striking fact that with only one exception it is always an even number of cranes that arrive—but beyond this any inherent meaning in their numbers is unclear. Despite this variation, the description of the twenty-four cranes that arrived at midday during a banquet for assistant officials held at the Extended Happiness Palace (Yanfugong) on December 13, 1112, may suggest how to read the disposition of the twenty cranes depicted in Huizong’s painting. According to Cai Jing and others, the cranes came from the west and circled about in the sky above the Hall of Sagacious Planning (Ruimodian) before dividing into three groups and flying off in different directions. We will return to this.

The common denominator determining the appearance of the cranes has already been suggested: their affinity for beautiful music. The cranes consistently arrive during official celebrations, especially ritual services and banquets, apparently as an attentive and uninhibited audience to the accompanying musical performances.<sup>77</sup> In this respect the cranes are simply confirming a cultural pattern that had been established as early as Master Kuang’s *qin* playing for Lord Ping of Jin. To appreciate the full significance of the cranes that visited Kaifeng in the early 1100s, however, one must know more about Huizong’s music. As Kenneth DeWoskin and others have well described, music was considered the purest medium of communication in China, capable of being sublimely self-expressive and morally affecting at both personal and public levels.<sup>78</sup> It was of paramount importance to the imperial court, for, together with the rites, it provided the essential physical and moral definition to dynastic rule. A nation’s greatness or degeneracy was audible in its music;<sup>79</sup> the music of the rituals, when

proper, assured alignment with the powers above, hastened the distance from earth to Heaven, and by consequence strengthened the bond of its Mandate. But to play the proper music one must know the proper tones, and this had proven a perpetual, vexing problem since the Han dynasty, as it was presumed that the standard pitches established by the sages of antiquity had long been lost.<sup>80</sup> Various solutions had been proposed and tried but none, according to Huizong, that could be considered successful in attaining the elusive perfection of the standard *huangzhong* pitch. As described by Liu Bing (*jins* 1100), the quality of court music had particularly degenerated during the Five Dynasties Period:

In the chaos and destruction of the Five Dynasties Period the musical tones were scattered and lost. Zhou Shizong [r. 954–59], seeing that the music was unresolved, inquired of his craftsmen, but none was able to address the problem. He thereupon ordered Wang Pu to investigate and establish a new system. [Wang’s] model, however, proved vulgar and lowly, and the sounds were harsh and agitated. It was not simply a question of Wang Pu’s knowledge being insufficient to establish the subtle; these harsh and agitated sounds were an appropriate reflection of the times.<sup>81</sup>

Liu goes on to describe the various attempts by Song emperors and their ministers to rectify the tones. He concludes, however, that “all of the pitch levels that resulted were ultimately derived from Wang Pu’s efforts; none could, in transcendent fashion, be established independently.” Huizong sought to rectify this inherited state of affairs. For this ambitious emperor, however, the goal was not simply to raise the quality of his music to the level prior to the Five Dynasties Period. He brought with his accession the majestic goal of creating an imperial rule that would surpass even those of the Han and Tang dynasties, and his music would provide the proof. According to Liu Bing’s account, the music of the Song court at this time was in a state of absolute cacophony, mirroring the profusion of theories and methods that had arisen in the absence of canonical works (presumed to have been lost prior to the Han). Disdaining the endless debates of the more conventional music scholars, Huizong looked for an “extraordinary person” (*yiren*), whom he found in a former soldier from Western Shu (Sichuan) named Wei Hanjin. Wei claimed to have received the secrets of the *ding* tripods and music from a purported Tang dynasty immortal named Li Liang (sometimes called Li Babai, or “Li Eight Hundred”) who was conversant with the “body as measurement” methods derived from the Yellow Emperor and Music Master Kui, who served the sage emperor Yu. According to an official communication submitted by Wei Hanjin on February 27, 1104, the sublime Dajuan music, established by the Yellow Emperor

and maintained over a number of succeeding generations, was lost when the instruments were washed away during the great floods. Yu, in reconstituting the proper tones, adopted the Yellow Emperor's original method of using the fingers on his left hand as standards of length for the pitch pipes. The middle, fourth, and fifth fingers, or "lord," "officials," and "objects" fingers, were used to ascertain, respectively, the *gong*, *shang*, and *yu* tones of the Chinese five-fold division of sound. The first finger and thumb, "people" and "affairs," which correspond to the *jiao* and *zheng* tones, were left out "because people and affairs are governed by the ruler and officials, and nourished with objects." As each finger is divided into three joints, the combined nine sections of the three last fingers were presumed to establish the nine *cun* length of the *huangzhong*. From the *huangzhong* the other eleven pitches could be generated.<sup>82</sup>

It is for the musicologists to determine the viability of Wei Hanjin's theories.<sup>83</sup> For our purposes it is enough to recognize that Wei Hanjin's proposal had immense attraction to the egotistical and gullible young Huizong. In the first month of 1105 Huizong turned twenty-four (*su*), the optimum age for "proper finger length," especially as the number suggested certain magical properties by being divisible in multiples of four and six or three and eight.<sup>84</sup> With the pitches thus settled, beautiful sounds emerged, "and all who heard it were glad of heart; harmonious singing and euphonious airs were born spontaneously."<sup>85</sup> In the eighth month of the same year the new music was completed and christened Dasheng, "Great Brightness."

Another aspect of Wei Hanjin's expertise was actually put to good use prior to his application of the "imperial digit" method that led to Huizong's reformation of the court music. This was his knowledge of the Nine Tripods. The original Nine Tripods, forged with the metals of China's nine regions during the reign of the sage emperor Yu, had for all later dynasties served as powerful symbols of China's sovereignty over its far-flung territories. It is thus little wonder that in Huizong's program to structure potent symbolic apparatuses the forging of his own Nine Tripods took early precedence. There apparently was some link between the Nine Tripods and the new court music that is now not entirely clear.<sup>86</sup> Probably it was purely ceremonial—the solemn importance of the rituals associated with the tripods deserving of worthy sounds. In any case, it was in conjunction with Wei Hanjin's forging of the Nine Tripods in the first month of 1104 that the cranes made their first true appearance, undoubtedly heralding the new music that was in the process of being elicited from Huizong's left hand. Cai Tao describes the forging with marvelous atmosphere,

especially the solemn, sleepless pacing of the emperor watching a night sky lit with an eerie red glow. With the establishment of the tripods in their individual chambers within the Nine Movements Palace (*Jiucheng-gong*),<sup>87</sup> tens of thousands of cranes covered the sky. The following day, as Huizong made a personal inspection, the cranes reappeared above multi-hued, light-radiating clouds.<sup>88</sup> According to the *Song shi*, this took place in the eighth month, 1105, just a few days before the formal naming of the new music.<sup>89</sup> In the ninth month, 1105, the ceremonial music for the tripods was completed, and the emperor assembled his officials in the Hall of Great Celebration (*Daqingdian*) to receive their congratulations. It was on this day that the new Dasheng music was officially inaugurated. As the new music played ten cranes appeared, circling and crying in the sky.<sup>90</sup> A year later, in the winter of 1106, two cranes appeared during the services for the Great Tripod (*dingnai*). According to Huizong's own "Record of the Dasheng Music" (written on September 16, 1110), "After this, every time the music was played the cranes would appear—a mutual calling between form [music] and shadows [cranes]."<sup>91</sup>

It becomes a likely assumption that Huizong's new music was played the evening of February 26, 1112, and that it was in response to this music that the twenty cranes entered the skies of Kaifeng to pirouette above the main palace gate. In fact, we can be much more precise in our assumptions of what took place that evening, and even what is left unseen, beyond the borders of the painting. The day after *shangyuan*, the sixteenth day of the first lunar month, is the third day of the Lantern Festival, which, as Cai Tao has written, attained a level of unmatched grandeur during his dynasty.<sup>92</sup> Hashima Kazuhiko and Patricia Sieber have well demonstrated the importance of the Lantern Festival during the Northern Song.<sup>93</sup> It was an open and prolonged celebration utilized by the court to establish the public image of a benevolent yet powerful emperor whose primary concern is the welfare of his subjects. On the one hand, the splendor of the court was displayed in fullest fashion, with elaborate banquets for the assembled officials and a magnificent lantern display to impress, among others, foreign envoys. But the Lantern Festival was also the occasion when the emperor and his officials were presented at their most visible and approachable, joining with the populace in their appreciation of the colorful lights and praying for their well-being. The people, in turn, announced their wish for the emperor's longevity. It was a celebration of that most fundamental of Chinese ideals: the unity of the emperor and his people.

During the five nights of the Lantern Festival residents of the capital city were allowed to roam freely, viewing the various public displays of popular

entertainment amidst a background of constant music and dancing.<sup>94</sup> Undoubtedly, however, the central focus of the celebrations was precisely below the cloud-kissed roofs so beautifully detailed in “Auspicious Cranes.” This is the main gate to the palace (*duanmen*), the central south-facing gate otherwise known as Xuandemen, The Gate of Proclaimed Virtue. It is described as being comprised of five aligned gateways, glistening with red lacquer and golden nails, covered with bricks and stones interspersed with intricate inlaid carvings of flying dragons among the clouds, and roofed with brightly reflecting green ceramic tiles (some of these features are evident in color reproductions of the painting).<sup>95</sup> Across from the gate the towering Lantern Mountain, festooned with strips of colored silk, was built for the viewing pleasure of the strollers who congregated in the arcades along the main avenue.<sup>96</sup> A large plaque inscribed with gold ink was set atop it, pronouncing the happiness shared between the reign designation (i.e., emperor) and common people.<sup>97</sup> Between the mountain and the gate two tall poles decorated with pieces of colored silk were set up in a large, fenced-off area. Hanging from them were *papier-mâché* effigies of various popular dramatic characters, which, dancing in the wind, “looked just like flying immortals.” On a tented platform music and opera were performed by musicians who served the government in a lesser capacity, and on either side, soldiers displayed their martial skills with some entertainment of their own.<sup>98</sup> To cite Huizong’s own verse, “Here’s a riot of music and songs like a cauldron boiling.”<sup>99</sup> Little wonder the cranes came the evening of February 26, 1112—what intelligent bird could resist such theatre?

Difficult as it is to limit discussion of such rich topics as Huizong’s music, the forging and worship of the Nine Tripods, and the Lantern Festival to such thumb-nail sketches, it is necessary lest we lose sight of the cranes altogether in the extraordinary setting of Huizong’s court. What emerges with clarity is the intricate interweaving of Huizong’s complex organization of symbolic political actions with objective fact. The results are paintings such as “Auspicious Cranes,” whose formal language bespeaks truth but whose content is inseparable from the personal motivations of an ambitious emperor and the elaborate constructs he built to give them form. Thus introduced to the essential referents and *modus operandi* of Huizong’s dialectics, we are prepared to analyze the painting.

Two factors must be recognized as the primary determinants in the arrival of the cranes: Huizong’s reformation of the court music and the specific occasion of the Lantern Festival with its attendant activities under the main gate leading to the palace. One might question the compatibility of the refined court music

with the kinds of popular entertainments described by Meng Yuanlao, but it must be remembered that what Huizong’s fingers had provided was a system of pitches that would then generate all kinds of music, and according to the Confucian theory of music, even the most popular songs ultimately reflected the virtue of the reign. In fact, herein lies the true auspiciousness of this *ruiying*: it is Heaven’s response to the harmony that exists between the highest and lowest elements of society, precisely the Lantern Festival’s object of celebration. Consequently, the rhythm mentioned in Huizong’s inscription to which the cranes seem to be responding cannot simply be attributed, say, to the fluttering of the *papier-mâché* dolls hung from the tall poles, which, after all, must have appeared very encouraging from above (cf. Fig. 7). Rather, they are responding to a much more pervasive and profound air generated by the emperor’s virtue and given audible form in his people’s music. This is important for our understanding of the painting because it thus invests the disposition of the cranes with meaning.

Our analysis of the image of these cranes above Kaifeng, in the absence of informative contemporary descriptions, relies first and foremost on the internal logic of the image itself. One observation provided by the historical records, however, may offer us a point of departure. This is, as mentioned earlier, the division of the twenty-four cranes that arrived later that same year into three groups as they flew off from the palace. Twenty-four, we are reminded, was Huizong’s age when his fingers were first measured for the pitches, and the significance of the number appears to have at least partly derived from its possible division into various multiples (three by eight and four by six are both mentioned in the *Song chao shishi*). Thus, while never specified, given the Chinese love of numerical balance, it seems likely that these cranes divided into equal parties of eight. Let us presume that this division into groups is what cranes do when they visit the palace.<sup>100</sup> Discounting the two cranes resting atop the roof ridge in “Auspicious Cranes,” we are left with another number that is multiply divisible, eighteen (three by six and two by nine, or vice versa). After careful consideration, I have concluded that while there are no clear-cut divisions evident, reading the cranes as three groups of six helps to establish a certain pattern to their design. In my proposed groupings I have followed the rule that, as the cranes are in perpetual movement, one crane is related to another less by spatial proximity than by shared direction, especially as suggested by the direction of their trailing legs. The first group is the easiest to determine, introduced by the two cranes entering the scene from the upper left. These actually are the last two of a group led by one crane nearing the right edge of the painting (Fig. 10).

The second group is traced by presuming a subsequent abrupt turning upwards and back to the center. At the height of this climb the cranes suddenly swoop back down over the center of the roof before once more beginning to climb (Fig. 11). Another presumed shift of direction (back to the right) would lead to the third group, which circles over the top and then back around, in essence beginning the whole pattern over again but from the other direction (Fig. 12). What we discover is a spatiotemporal design defined by a unidirectional, linear pattern, which, once repeated, would create the form of a figure eight. At this point of the performance it would seem to suggest something suspiciously like the Daoist *taiji* diagram, but there is too much imprecision in this analysis to jump to such interesting conclusions.

While one might argue about the specific groupings of the cranes, or even whether such groupings are valid in this painting, the overall pattern that I have described is substantiated by other sources. Of these, the most important is undoubtedly the classic literary description of dancing cranes in China, Zhao Bao's (d. A.D. 466) "Rhapsody on the Dancing Cranes."<sup>101</sup> This well-known poem, which shares with "Auspicious Cranes" both time (winter) and setting (the imperial palace), would undoubtedly have been known to whoever made this painting and in all likelihood played some role in the formation of its image. The language it uses to describe the flight of the cranes is by nature somewhat imprecise, but it nevertheless essentially confirms a pattern of broad, vertical, circular movements, with the birds hesitating at the top of their arcs before suddenly swooping down again:

It begins with the continuous beating of wings, like the prancing phoenix,  
And ends with the ceaseless turnings of bounding dragons.  
Lingering movements, hesitations,  
Then swiftly, a sudden rushing collapse.<sup>102</sup>

The poem goes on to describe an intricate pattern that seems alternately to expand and contract, as the birds start to fly off only to wheel back around and converge once more upon the center. Even more strikingly, however, the figure-eight pattern suggested by the painting's configuration of cranes comes remarkably close to a Western observer's careful description of the dance of European cranes:

A bird dancing alone opens his wings, traces the figure eight with fast steps, turns around and runs back, retracing the eight, stops, bows low several times, jumps about a meter high to the right and to the left while his long legs dangle down in the opposite direction; then he picks up a piece of bark or reed grass, or any other object in reach, throws it high up, catches it, then, with a last jerk, stands erect very quietly, shakes his plumage, and the whole performance is over.<sup>103</sup>

These two independent descriptions would seem to confirm that the painter of "Auspicious Cranes," in the best of Song traditions, was a keen observer of the actual flying patterns of cranes. Nevertheless, the perfection of their configuration, with relatively even spacing between the birds and no overlapping, and the precise uniformity of their description are clear indications of human interpretation. This, in other words, is not so much the way cranes appear, but the way cranes should appear, especially when dancing. Bao Zhao's rhapsody, again, may have provided inspiration. In one line their ranks are likened to the orderly patterns of a net, and in another they "Approach the 'crossroads' in ordered flight, / Near the 'forks' with measured paces."<sup>104</sup> In short, these are cranes engaged in an elegant, formally choreographed dance. I suspect that in the human sphere, probably at the court, there was actually a crane dance that was at once patterned after the birds' natural movements but also structured and formalized in a manner consistent with the elegance one associates with Huizong. If so, in all likelihood this would have provided the pattern for "Auspicious Cranes." Unfortunately, whether or not the painting does reflect an actual dance of Huizong's court will probably remain forever unknown. With the fall of the Northern Song in 1126 almost all of the achievements in music during his reign were destroyed—the instruments, the music, the manuals, and the dancing charts.<sup>105</sup>

On this holiday evening so rich in symbolic meaning, twenty cranes descend on the main palace gate to confirm Heaven's blessing, dancing to the sounds derived from that most perfect of instruments, the imperial body itself. Their pattern mirrors that perfection. As the contemporary observer Liu Bing explained:

It is said, if one does not see the form, one should investigate its shadow. Those who understand music are indeed few, but through the blessing of the birds one can establish the harmony of the sounds. . . . Sounds that are cacophonous and agitated absolutely cannot be used in a reign of glory and splendor.<sup>106</sup>

### *An Auspicious Patina*

There is a final point to be made about Huizong's reformation of the music that has important ramifications for "Auspicious Cranes." The fact that it was Huizong's here-and-now body that was used to determine the proper lengths and proportions of the pitch pipes tends to obscure the fact that Wei Hanjin and the emperor considered this to be the method of high antiquity. From Huizong's perspective, for well over a thousand years the ways of antiquity had been lost. Specifically, the proper forms of the music and rites had become buried under the litter of successive



generations and grossly distorted by later attempts to recover them. It was Huizong's great ambition to bridge the chasm that separated his reign from the times of perfect rule under the sage emperors Yao and Shun.

In ancient times Yao had [his music, called] Dazhang and Shun had Dashao.<sup>107</sup> The kings of the Three Ancient Dynasties [Xia, Shang, and Zhou] each gave their music a different name. Today we chase back a thousand years to create the standards for our dynasty. Thus, it is appropriate that it be named Dasheng, "The Great Brightness." I will make sacrifices at the suburban temples, make offerings to the ghosts and spirits, harmonize the ten thousand lands, and share it with all under Heaven. Will that not be beautiful?<sup>108</sup>

What gave Huizong the confidence to make such a lofty proclamation was not only the discovery of "Li Liang's pupil, who emerged from the lowly files of the soldiery," but also "the instruments of 'Brilliance' and 'Stalks' where the Mandate was first received."<sup>109</sup> What Huizong alludes to in his "Record of the Dasheng Music" are six ancient bronze bells that were discovered in the tenth lunar month of 1104 during excavations of a palace at the southern capital of Yingtianfu (near Shangqiu, Henan) (Fig. 13). On each of the bells was the inscription *Song gong cheng zhi jing zhong*, which was interpreted as reading, "The *jing* [Stalk] bells of Gongcheng of Song" (Fig. 14).<sup>110</sup> The unearthing of any ancient bronze relic was considered auspicious, but this particular find was extraordinary. The area near Yingtianfu, the old capital region of the state of Song during the Spring and Autumn Period, was where Song Taizu (r. 960–76) assumed the mandate to found the Song dynasty. The ancient state of Song was itself established by descendants of the Shang dynasty, who traced their origins back to Zhuan Xu, grandson of the Yellow Emperor and one of the legendary emperors of high antiquity. Zhuan Xu's music was called Wujing, "Five Stalks"; the music of his successor, Di Ku, was entitled Liuying, "Six Brilliances."<sup>111</sup> Thus, it was believed that these bells preserved the orthodox line of transmission of Zhuan Xu's music into the Zhou dynasty. It was a coincidence of such monumental proportions that even the most skeptical of minds must have recognized this as a blessing from Heaven. Here were bells whose inscriptions, at least according to the Song epigraphers,<sup>112</sup> pronounced the music of high antiquity, discovered near the very spot Taizu founded the Song dynasty. And as if this were not enough to nudge Huizong to action, one could also interpret the inscription as reading, "The *jing* bells created by the lord of Song." A glyph rock could hardly put it more suggestively.

The discovery of the six ancient bells provided Huizong's initial inspiration to recover the true pitches

and establish his own music. Shortly after the Nine Tripods were cast, Huizong and Wei Hanjin began to forge the new instruments, of which a new set of bells closely modeled after the six ancient bells of the ancient state of Song were a first priority. As Richard Rudolph, Li Wenxin, Chen Mengjia, and James Watt have already shown, extraordinary objects sometimes earn a rare piece of immortality—a number of Huizong's bells have miraculously survived to the present day (Fig. 15).<sup>113</sup>

The six bells found at Yingtianfu, in fact, were only one example of ancient relics finding their way into Huizong's court to affect profoundly the shape and form of its ritual operations. Mysterious jades emerged, such as the dark primal *gui(a)*,<sup>114</sup> and most notably, ritual bronzes of Shang and Zhou dynasty date. Such bronzes had become an ever-increasing focus of scholarly attention since the first true pioneering steps of archaeology were taken by Ouyang Xiu (1007–72) and Liu Chang (1019–68) in the mid-eleventh century, and the important advances of their study by Li Gonglin closer to the time of Huizong's accession. They were hardly, however, simply objects for dry academic inquiry. Like the bells, the ritual bronzes were perceived as providing a direct line of communication with the utopian age of the sage kings, and the opportunity to put them to good use was not lost on the emperor.<sup>115</sup>

In a proclamation delivered in the seventh month, 1113, Huizong announced his intention to undertake a broad reformation of the rites. The impetus had come from the more than five hundred vessels of the "three ancient dynasties" that now graced his imperial collection. In the process of having the vessels sketched, catalogued, and exhaustively studied, it had become embarrassingly obvious that there was little resemblance between these venerable objects and the vessels used in the current court rituals. "We are far, far away from antiquity," Huizong lamented, "and the rites have not been passed down to us. . . . I have instructed the Institute of Rites to discuss the unfolding of [the rites'] history and to submit a plan. I will examine its recommendations and decide what changes must be wrought in correcting the base errors of our dynasty. I hope that [in this manner] the laws of our ancestor kings will be passed down to future generations."<sup>116</sup> Three months later, in the tenth month, 1113, he and an entourage led by one hundred Daoist priests embarked for the suburbs of the capital to perform the ritual worship to Heaven. Mirroring the procession on earth, an apparition of figures, chariots, and horses appeared atop the clouds towering high in the sky, and all said Heaven and man were in mutual accord.<sup>117</sup>

Over the next few years Huizong culminated his reformation with the casting of new ritual vessels for



Song. These vessels were meant to be immortal manifestations of the glory of Song, to survive for ten thousand generations, just as those now filling Huizong's palaces had survived. To fulfill this ambition Huizong established the Ritual Regulations Service (*lizhi ju*) and appointed Zhai Ruwen (1072–1141) consultant.

The next year [1114] Heaven bestowed a *gui(b)* ceremonial vessel on the emperor, who thus received the beauty of Heaven's Dao. He issued a decree ordering the officials of the rites to rectify the base guesswork of the scholars of Han and Tang, to maintain the methods and laws of the Three Ancient Dynasties, to investigate the images of antiquity, and to illuminate virtue in the ritual vessels. [This applied to] all the various vessels used in the worships to Heaven, Earth, and the ancestors. Lord Zhai [Ruwen] was specifically ordered by the emperor to examine and determine the standards and rules of the Three Ancient Dynasties. Thus, the vessels were regulated and the merit engraved for the gods of Heaven, Earth, the ancestors, and the deceased father of the emperor. Thereupon the vessels of Song were brought to completion and the splendor of Shang and Zhou matched.<sup>118</sup>

In its relentless pursuit of confirmation of the present, Huizong's court was hopelessly immersed in the distant past. Of all the auspicious phenomena prominently displayed, there was none quite so compelling as the archaic bronzes; nothing could more concretely symbolize the emperor's presumed attunement to the righteous ways of high antiquity. Huizong, on occasion, would proudly lead his officials on a tour of these treasures in the Hall of Revered Governance (*Chongzhengdian*) and other repositories.<sup>119</sup> Towards the end of his reign such tours may well have been exhausting affairs: from the five hundred or so vessels mentioned in Huizong's decree of 1113, the imperial collection of ancient bronzes, according to Cai Tao, swelled to more than six thousand during the Zhenghe reign and ten thousand during the Xuanhe (1119–25).<sup>120</sup> Ye Mengde (1077–1148) provides a vivid account of the situation at the very end of the Northern Song:

During the Xuanhe reign the palace valued highly ancient vessels. Scholars whose collections contained the remnants of the Three Ancient Dynasties, Qin and Han, daring not to hide them, presented them to the emperor. Dealers actively began to seek them, and prices became incomparably high. One vessel would sell for one thousand strings of cash. As profits soared, people began to scrape the mountains, dredge the swamps, and desecrate old tombs. No place was left untouched.<sup>121</sup>

The full significance of "Auspicious Cranes" eludes us if we fail to see it in the glowing light of Huizong's infatuation with the ways of antiquity. Among the hundreds, perhaps thousands, of ancient tombs unearthed in the search for archaic ritual bronzes during Huizong's reign, a high proportion must have been

those of the Han dynasty. And if recent archaeological excavations are any guide, then it is extremely likely that Huizong's court was very familiar with the kinds of relief carvings of Eastern Han date so beautifully represented by the large limestone slab of figures feasting in a palace in the Metropolitan Museum collection (Fig. 16). This particular example, dated A.D. 114, is said to have been found near Jinbingxian, Shandong province,<sup>122</sup> though the scene it presents is repeated, with variations, in numerous second-century tombs uncovered within a radius of less than two hundred miles from the capital at Kaifeng.<sup>123</sup> A related image is also found among the pictorial designs of the Wu Liang Shrine, which, as Wu Hung has demonstrated, was known in the eleventh century.<sup>124</sup> Exactly how this or a related image would have been read by a Song antiquarian is unclear—there are unresolved questions concerning the specifics of its iconography even today.<sup>125</sup> Nevertheless, it is certain that the scene is one that celebrates an auspicious occasion of universal proportions. The presence of the white tiger of the west and blue dragon of the east in the two *que* towers establishes the all-encompassing cosmic nature of the gathering, while a prancing winged immortal and the male *feng* and female *huang* phoenixes atop the roof certify its auspiciousness. Almost exactly one thousand years after this design was used to bless the tombs of the Han nobility, a similar scene is acted out at the main palace gate in the Northern Song capital of Kaifeng, where two cranes in particular, "imitating the blue *luan* that roosted atop the jeweled halls," rest their thousand-year-old forms on a roof's ridge that had been caressed by multi-hued rainbows. Was there a related pictorial model for the painter of "Auspicious Cranes"? Very likely, though in the heady atmosphere of Huizong's court it would simply have been said that the distant past is once more confirming the authenticity of Heaven's blessing.

### *Images of Reality*

The not so subtly disguised presumption of this study is that the painting lies. Of course, one may choose to believe the image as it is presented, to trust that magical clouds suddenly gathered about Xuande Gate the evening of February 26, 1112, soon to be followed by twenty cranes whose aerial dance took place just as it appears in the painting. One might even speculate that court artists were hurriedly called to make careful sketches, just as Yan Liben (d. A.D. 673), the "Painting Master," was rudely summoned to sketch the strange bird bobbing in Tang Taizong's pond.<sup>126</sup> The accumulated evidence, however, points to anything but the spontaneous event that Huizong's rather

ingenuous inscription suggests. This painting has been shown to belong to an elaborately structured program of self-indoctrination; thus, the burden of proof rests with those who insist on its veracity. Nevertheless, "Auspicious Cranes" does not, in my opinion, intentionally lie, and herein is found the true fascination of the painting. Somewhere between the purported event and the fashioning of the image, like so many other *ruiying*, the arrival of the cranes became as certain a fact as the propriety of Huizong's music, the orthodoxy of his rites. The painting's style imbibes deeply of such confidence, and a new reality is born.

The genesis of this reality is presumption. Presumed reality might be construed as those higher truths that need not be seen to be understood. On occasion, however, they are made manifest in the phenomenal world, and when visible, they are distinctive enough in form to earn the designation *xiang*, which is roughly translatable as "Image" with a capital "I." The *xiang* image is basic, elemental, and powerful, like the original hexagrams discovered by Fuxi, the Ox-tamer of legendary times. *Xiang* is what is revealed when outer layers are stripped away. The mutability of clouds made them a particularly useful medium for revealing *xiang*, such as when the massive Imperial Tripod was moved to the palace in 1116: "Again there was the auspiciousness of flying cranes; the clouds were like the *xiang* of drawn hexagrams."<sup>127</sup> Cai Tao does not mean that the literal images of the hexagrams appeared, but rather the primitive pictographic forms of clouds from a time when painting and writing were thought to be undifferentiated. Nature, too, at its most auspicious and elemental, proves decidedly archaic.

Antiquity, as we have seen, was equated with orthodoxy. Thus, it is little wonder that so much attention was lavished on the *xiang* of the archaic ritual bronzes (Fig. 17). Li Gonglin, that most devoted of antiquarians, explains with absolute conviction:

The sages established the vessels and exalted the Images to carry forth the Dao and pass down their admonitions. The subtleties that could not be transmitted [orally or through writing] were lodged in the function of the vessels and [thus] bequeathed to later generations. Learned men have come to approach the vessels and seek out the Images, approach the Images and seek out the concept. The heart awakens and the eye sees for itself the purport of the ordering of things. One becomes enlightened with respect to the laws of the music and rites, and viewing day and night those secrets not explicated, one does not transgress virtue. . . . How could these merely be toys of dazzling material made to please the eye?<sup>128</sup>

Li Gonglin's and others' insistence that there was significance to the imagery of the vessels led to a number of interesting iconographical interpretations, interpretations that tend to inform us more of Song values than of ancient China. The *taotie* animal mask,

for example, was interpreted as an admonition against greed and gluttony; tigers represented righteousness (*yi*), the *wei* monkey intelligence. The *kui* dragon was the image of transformations that cannot be predicted.<sup>129</sup> "Look at the decor," says Dong You (act. 1126), "and you will know the concept."<sup>130</sup> But what one *knew* was founded on the cultural assumption that the age of high antiquity was thoroughly infused with ideal Confucian values. Incorporated into the sphere of presumed reality, the images of these vessels were made to mesh with the postulates of what was considered inviolable knowledge. The configuration of birds in "Auspicious Cranes" might be likened to the *xiang* of a vessel such as the Freer *ding*. From a Northern Song perspective, both are images of a higher truth. From our perspective, the creation of one and the interpretation of the other simply represent an intrinsically subjective way of viewing the world.

Huizong's use of painting to present images of what I have labeled presumed reality may in the context of Northern Song art seem idiosyncratic, but when viewed from a broad perspective, it in fact proves to be fundamentally traditional. One merely has to leap back over the great experiment with naturalism in painting, which more or less coincided with the tenth and eleventh centuries, to find an approach that is in perfect accordance with Huizong's art. The very first chapter of Zhang Yanyuan's *Lidai mingshua ji* (A.D. 847), which narrates the origins of painting, makes continuous reference to those first images (*xiang*) sent down by Heaven as auspicious responses and ill omens, and the role of painting and calligraphy, yet to be differentiated, in recording their fact:

While the systematization of Images had been established, it was still cursory. There was nothing by which their meanings could be transmitted, hence writing emerged; there was nothing by which their forms could be seen, hence painting came to be.<sup>131</sup>

In Zhang Yanyuan's time painting remained a system of representation defined in large part by a codification of brush-modes ("Gu, Lu, Zhang, and Wu").<sup>132</sup> It was a system that drew attention to itself, and the viewer thus remained aware of the role painting played as an idealized substitute for its subject. Developments in the way paintings were made over the two hundred years following Zhang Yanyuan, however, promoted a subtle change in the way they were understood. From an art of divine origins that describes things the way they should be, painting increasingly became an art founded on empirical study that describes images the way they are. Presumed reality and discovered reality—one describes the "principle" (*li*) that is known; the other uncovers the principle from an investigation of the nature of the object. Su Shi's well-known comment on Huang Quan's mistaken rendition of birds with

necks and legs both outstretched during flight well reflects this new attitude towards empirical study and naturalism.<sup>133</sup> As for pictorial evidence, while it would be a serious mistake to presume that any Song painting was as reliant on *plein air* observation as Su Shi's comment might suggest, Wen Tong's (1019–79) and Cui Bo's respective masterpieces, "Bamboo" (Fig. 18) and "Magpies and Hare" (dated A.D. 1061) (Fig. 19), at least capture the spirit of "discovered reality."

Northern Song naturalism, which has commonly been acclaimed as a classical norm in the history of Chinese painting, should in fact be recognized as something of a divergence. With the maturity of Su Shi's generation towards the end of the eleventh century, the divergence was suddenly readjusted. One indication of this rapid change is the contradictions inherent in Su Shi's writings on painting,<sup>134</sup> but even more telling is Su Shi's own painting (Fig. 20), which, despite professed allegiance to Wen Tong's school of painting, appears a world apart. Wen Tong's painting was intended to draw attention to the bamboo; Su Shi's painting only draws attention to itself. One might also consider the excoriating assessment of Cui Bo's work ("capable only of dirtying one's walls . . . suitable for teahouses and wineshops") by Mi Fu (1052–1107), one of the leading literati arbiters of taste.<sup>135</sup> It may at first seem paradoxical that a critic such as Mi Fu, who valued the real and the genuine as the highest criteria for art, would react so condescendingly towards Cui Bo, an artist whose work today appears to epitomize Northern Song realism. But what Mi Fu and Su Shi are saying is that a realistic style of painting by itself does not necessarily produce what is real. If Mi Fu were to critique "Magpies and Hare," I suspect that he would have mildly derided the staged quality of its scene.

What is certain is that its vulgarity (if one can be so presumptuous!) would have been attributed by Mi Fu to the character of Cui Bo himself. The Song literati, intent on bringing painting into the fold of their self-expressive activities, shifted attention from the objective to the subjective. The result was yet another form of reality, internalized within the individual and represented by *xiang* images of a decidedly personal nature, like Su Shi's old tree, rock, and bamboo. Wen Tong's painting can be said to bridge these two forms of reality, at least according to his admirers. His realism, in contrast to Cui Bo's, earns full praise because in his unique case no distinction is made between inner and outer reality: according to Su Shi, he is the bamboo.<sup>136</sup>

In certain respects, paintings such as "Auspicious Cranes," "The Five Colored Parakeet," and "Auspicious Dragon Rock" reflect a parallel development to the literati transformation of painting. They, too, represent a readjustment, though one that might be labeled regressive in the sense that it returns to earlier sensibilities. In its public role at the court, painting is infinitely more compelling when it defines universal as opposed to personal truths, and to give form to these universal truths the Huang Quan style appeared eminently well suited. What differentiates Huizong's scrolls from earlier paintings of a similar goal is that by utilizing the fine academic style derived from Huang Quan, they maintain the idiom of Song naturalism, thereby blurring the distinction between one form of reality and another, factualizing the fiction of what was presumed real. The dangers of this are all too clear in retrospect. Almost two thousand years earlier Lord Yi of Wei preferred cranes to people and lost his state. Huizong, sojourning in ancient times, would have done well to ruminate on his fate.

## Notes

Preliminary research for this study was presented in a paper entitled "The Auspicious Image, From Huizong to Gaozong and Mi Youren" in Professor John Hay's panel "Art and Environment at the Court of Huizong," The College Art Association, Boston, 1987.

1. In the collection of the Liaoning Provincial Museum. The painting is of ink and colors on silk and measures 51 x 138.2 cm. It is reproduced in color in *Yiyuan duoying*, no. 3, 1978, p. 2. Dong Yanming provides a brief introduction to the scroll on p. 29. See also Li Huishu, ed., *Song hua pian*, v. 2, in the series *Zhonghua wuqiannian wenwu jikan*, Taipei, 1985, v. 2, no. 2, pp. 136–38, and Fu Xinian, ed., *Liang Song huihua*, v. 1, in the series *Zhongguo mǎshu quanji*, Beijing, 1988, no. 47, p. 27. The painting is recorded in *Shiqu baoji xubian*, reprint ed., Taipei, 1971, p. 1915.
2. *Shangyuan* is the fifteenth day of the first month of the lunar calendar. It is also the second day of the Lantern Festival.
3. The term for "roof's ridge," *gule* in Chinese, is derived from Ban Gu's (A.D. 32–92) "Rhapsody on the Western Capital," where it is used to describe the Phoenix Watchtower of the Jade Gate. Xiao Tong, *Wen xuan* (photo reprint of Wen-yuange sikuquanshu ed., Taipei, 1983), fascicle 1, p. 16a. See David Knechtges, *Wen Xuan, or Selections of Refined Literature*, v. 1, Princeton, 1982, pp. 130–31. The allusion is significant for the gilt bronze phoenix set on a rotating axle (functioning like a weathervane) placed atop the roof ridge of the Han dynasty structure. As we will see, the legend of the phoenix that arrives in response to great virtue, usually perching atop the roof ridge, figures prominently in Huizong's iconography for the cranes. It is alluded to again in the second and fifth lines of Huizong's poem.
4. *Laiyi*, what I have very loosely translated as "arrive in favorable response," appears in the *Shu jing* to describe the expected arrival and stately deportment of the male and female phoenixes who come in response to the harmonious sounds of proper court music. See James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, reprint ed., Taipei, 1983, v. 3, "The Shoo King or The Book of Historical Documents," pp. 88–89.
5. The three immortal isles are Penglai, Fangzhang, and Yingzhou, which, according to legend, were carried atop the heads of giant *Ao* tortoises in the Eastern Sea. These magical places are well described by Wolfgang Bauer in *China and the Search for Happiness*, tr. Michael Shaw, New York, 1976, pp. 96–98.
6. Cranes were believed to live well over one thousand years. This is discussed in more detail at a later point of this paper.
7. Refer to nn. 3 and 4. The *luan* is a subspecies of phoenix (some sources say its chick). Although it is usually described as mostly of red plumage, at least one source reports that, when the phoenix has many blue feathers, it is called *luan*.
8. Heaven's Pond refers to the Eastern Sea, where in 94 B.C. Han Wudi caught six red geese during an expedition. The geese were considered an auspicious omen. Ban Gu, *Han shu*, reprint ed., Beijing, 1970, f. 22, p. 1069.
9. In addition to "Auspicious Cranes," a conservative list of such paintings would include "The Five Colored Parakeet" (Boston Museum of Fine Arts), "Auspicious Dragon Rock" (Palace Museum, Beijing), "Gold-glittering Birds of Autumn" (collection unknown, reproduced in Xie Zhiliu, *Tang Wudai Song Yuan mingji*, Shanghai, 1957, pl. 35–39), "White Eagle" (collection unknown, reproduced in Xie Zhiliu, *Tang*, pl. 34), "Pheasant on a Flowering Hibiscus" (Palace Museum, Beijing), "Bubuls and Flowering Plum" (National Palace Museum, Taipei), "Dove on a Flowering Pear" (Setsu Gatodo collection, formerly Inoue collection), and "Finches on Bamboo" (Metropolitan Museum of Art, formerly John Crawford collection). For a more complete list of Huizong attributions and discussions of their documentation and style see Xu Bangda, "Song Huizong Zhao Ji qinbi hua yu daibi de kaobian" (Paintings from the hand of Huizong and the issue of his substitute painters), *Gugong bowuyuan yuankan*, no. 1, 1979, pp. 62–68, and Xu Bangda, *Gu shuhua weixue kaobian*, Jiangsu, 1984, pp. 217–33. See also Betty Tseng Yu-ho Ecke, "Emperor Hui Tsung, The Artist 1082–1135," Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1972, and Li Huishu, "Song yuanti huaniao hua zhi yanjiu" ("A study of the Song academy style of bird-and-flower painting"), M. A. thesis, National Taiwan University, 1984.
10. Cai Tao, the son of Huizong's prime minister Cai Jing (A.D. 1046–1126), mentions that all of the famous painters of the time entered into the service of the court and sacrificed their own personal artistic identities to become the emperor's *daibi*, or substitute painters. Cai Tao, *Tieweishan congkan*, Beijing, 1983, f. 6, p. 108. The fourteenth-century critic Tang Hou elaborated by directly claiming that Huizong's famed and numerically staggering set of paintings of rare and auspicious creatures entitled "Xuanhe ruilan ji" (discussed at a later point in this study) could not possibly have been painted by one as busy as an emperor. Rather, the paintings were done by academy painters "imitating Huizong's own work." Huizong would then add his seals and inscriptions. "As for Huizong's own paintings—it only takes one look to recognize them." Tang Hou, *Huajian*, in Liu Haisu, ed., *Huapin congshu*, Shanghai, 1982, p. 420. The ink-on-paper paintings include "Willows and Magpies" (Shanghai Museum; Xu Bangda considers the painting of geese and reeds attached to it spurious), "Pond in Autumn Evening" (National Palace Museum, Taipei), "Four Birds" (Cheng Chi collection), and "Fighting Magpies" (Nanjing Museum). Some of these paintings are discussed in Xu Bangda, "Song Huizong Zhao Ji qinbi hua yu daibi de kaobian" and *Gu shuhua weixue kaobian*. For reasons I do not fully understand, Xu Bangda includes the Metropolitan Museum's "Finches and Bamboo" in this second category of "clumsy paintings."
11. This same group of paintings was earlier rejected as incompatible with the more readily acceptable corpus of "fine style" Huizong attributions by Benjamin Rowland in his article "The Problem of Hui Tsung," *Archives of the Chinese Art Society of America*, v. 5, 1951, pp. 5–22.
12. For the respective styles of Xu Xi and Huang Quan see Guo Ruoxu's discussion entitled "On the Differences between the Styles of Huang and of Xu," in *Tuhua jianwen zhi*, *Huashi congshu* ed., Shanghai, 1982, pp. 12–13; Alexander Soper, *Kuo*

- Jo-Hsu's Experiences in Painting*, Washington, 1951, pp. 20–21. See also Deng Bai, *Xu Xi yu Huang Quang*, Beijing, 1958, and the biographies by Richard Barnhart in Herbert Franke, ed., *Sung Biographies*, Wiesbaden, 1976, "Painters," pp. 41–45, 50–55. A short discussion of Huizong and Huang Quan is provided in Benjamin Rowland, "Hui-tsung and Huang Ch'uan," *Artibus Asiae*, v. 17, no. 2, 1964, pp. 130–34.
13. Besides Tang Hou's assertion that a true Huizong painting is immediately recognizable as such (suggesting something significantly different from the academic-style paintings; see n. 10), the primary evidence is Deng Ji's 1193 colophon to Huizong's "Lotus, Heron and Startled Fish" (the present-day "Pond in Autumn Evening") recorded in Sun Feng's *Shuhua chao*. In it Deng claims that this ink painting, "done in the Jiangnan style," was personally painted by Huizong and presented to his great-grandfather Deng Xunwu (1055–1119). See Xu Bangda, *Gu shuhua weixue kaobian*, pp. 229–31.
  14. Benjamin Rowland, "The Problem of Hui Tsung," p. 20, with romanization changed to the Pinyin system.
  15. Xu Song, *Song huiyao jigao*, reprint ed., Taipei, 1964, v. 52, p. 2073. The five planets, called the five stars in Chinese and corresponding to the Five Agents, are Jupiter (wood), Mars (fire), Saturn (earth), Venus (metal), and Mercury (water). The *Song huiyao jigao* cites a passage from the *Han shu* confirming that this phenomenon signifies an era of great peace.
  16. Xu Song, *Song*, v. 52, p. 2073. There are reportings for almost every year that follows until 1120. See also Tuotuo, *Song shi*, Beijing, 1977, f. 20–22, pp. 379, 383, 385 (for a report of the ocean water clearing), 397, 399, and 405.
  17. Xu Song, *Song*, v. 52, pp. 2073–74. Sweet dew is reported as early as 1107 in the *Song shi* (f. 20, p. 377). It appears again around palace buildings on May 17, 1115, and a number of times thereafter. Xu Song, pp. 2075–76.
  18. Xu Song, *Song*, v. 52., p. 2074. Discoveries of auspicious grains became extremely common.
  19. Xu Song, *Song*, v. 52, p. 2074. The auspicious *lingzhi* fungus is also reported growing together with auspicious grain from a single stalk in Henan in 1106. *Song shi*, f. 20, p. 377. The degree of auspiciousness of the *lingzhi*, which became another commonly sighted phenomenon, was apparently dependent on the rarity and intensity of its color.
  20. Xu Song, *Song*, v. 52, p. 2074. See also *Song shi quan wen zizhi tongjian*, reprint ed., Taipei, 1969, f. 14, p. 896.
  21. Xu Song, *Song*, v. 52, p. 2075. *Daiqi* are the auras above the sun, *chengqi* are those below it. See also *Song shi quan wen xu zizhi tongjian*, f. 14, p. 898.
  22. This particular rock was found during construction of the Mingtang, or "Bright Hall" (naturally) in 1115. Xu Song, *Song*, v. 52, p. 2075.
  23. Xu Song, *Song*, v. 52, p. 2075.
  24. The gold nugget was reported on January 31, 1116. Xu Song, *Song*, v. 52, p. 2076. The clouds shaped like dragons and phoenixes appeared on March 3, 1115. Xu Song, p. 2075. The "phoenix" reported in the third lunar month of 1116, however, proved to be something much more common upon professional examination. *Song shi quan wen xu zizhi tongjian*, f. 14, p. 905. "Unicorns" were reported twice, once in the seventh lunar month of 1115 and once in the fourth month of 1122. *Song shi quan wen xu zizhi tongjian*, f. 14, pp. 902–3, and *Song shi*, f. 22, p. 408. The first of these strange beasts is described as being white, with the head of a cow, the body of a deer, long claws, and scales all over. Upon hearing of it, Huizong immediately issued a decree ordering that all such strange and rare beasts, if and when they appeared, were to be carefully nurtured.
  25. In certain instances auspicious phenomena do act as portents, as in the case of Liu Bang, who witnessed extraordinary cloudlike emanations at the Mang and Tang wastes prior to assuming the mantle of emperor. According to Wang Chong's *Lun heng*, "When the Mandate of Heaven is about to be launched, and a Sage-King is on the point of emerging, the material forces [qi], before and after the event, give proofs which will be radiantly manifest." Cited from Hsiao Kung-chuan, *A History of Chinese Political Thought*, tr. F. W. Mote, Princeton, 1979, v. 1, p. 594.
  26. Auspicious omens are referred to in "The Great Declaration" of Zhou Wuwang in the *Shu jing*. See Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, v. 3, p. 291. Confucius bemoaned the fact that in his day the phoenix would not come and the diagrams would not emerge from the river, both auspicious phenomena thought to have occurred in antiquity. Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, v. 1, "Confucian Analects," p. 219.
  27. Hsiao Kung-chuan, *A History*, pp. 582–601, especially pp. 594–98. Correctly interpreting communication between the mundane and celestial worlds, of course, is one of the oldest cultural patterns of China, presumably even predating the oracle bone inscriptions of the Shang dynasty, which are the earliest concrete examples known today. Jack Dull refers to this body of thought as it developed in the Western Han as "Yin-yang Confucianism." See Jack Dull, "A Historical Introduction to the Apocryphal (Ch'an-wei) Texts of the Han Dynasty," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Washington, 1966, p. 4. For an important earlier study see Hans Bielenstein, "An Interpretation of Portents in the Ts'ien Han Shu," *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities*, v. 22, 1950, pp. 127–43. In both Bielenstein's and Dull's analysis of the historical development of the usage of *ruiying* and related signs from Heaven during the Han dynasty, it is shown how early in the dynasty the negative cousins to *ruiying*—anomalies and catastrophes (which do count as omens)—were used by high officials at the court to check the powers of the emperor. In time, however, Han emperors only encouraged favorable signs. As Homer Dubs has written, during Han Xuandi's reign (74–49 B.C.) "phoenixes, supernatural birds, sweet dew, dragons and other marvels appeared. Upon each such report, Emperor Xuan distributed favors—amnesties, noble ranks, oxen and wine, silk." *The History of the Former Han Dynasty*, reprint ed., American Council of Learned Societies, 1954, v. 2, p. 190. This important change in the court's dealing with heavenly signs points to two common patterns for later times: emperors could manipulate *ruiying* to bolster their claims to political legitimacy, and they could actively encourage their discovery

- with material rewards. Thus, Emperor Wang Mang of the short-lived Xin dynasty (A.D. 8–23), in his first year on the throne, promulgated a composition in forty-two fascicles entitled “The Mandate of Heaven Made Known by Tallies” that described the various portents foretelling the rise of the new dynasty, justifying Wang’s usurpation of the throne, and legitimizing his rule. His officials, seeing how influential omens were, and how those who submitted them to the throne were sometimes enfeoffed as marquises, all quickly rushed to join the crowd. Dull, pp. 160–65; Dubs, v. 3, pp. 288–307.
28. Eduard Chavannes in *Mission Archeologique dans la Chine Septentrionale*, 2 v., Paris, 1909, and Bertold Laufer in *Chinese Grave Sculptures of the Han Period*, New York, 1911, published and commented upon Han *xiang* (auspicious) imagery early in this century. More recent studies include Martin Powers, “Hybrid Omens and Public Issues in Early Imperial China,” *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities*, no. 55, 1983, pp. 1–55; Wu Hung, “A Sanpan Shan Chariot Ornament and the Xiangrui Design in Western Han Art,” *Archives of Asian Art*, no. 37, 1984, pp. 38–59; and Wu Hung, *The Wuliang Shrine—The Ideology of Early Chinese Pictorial Art*, Stanford, 1989, especially ch. 3, “The Ceiling: Heavenly Omens,” pp. 73–107. For a different interpretation of the imagery on the chariot ornament and a mild challenge to Wu Hung’s argument that the imagery is purely of an auspicious nature, see my own “Wild Beasts and Winged Immortals, Early Portrayals of Landscape in Chinese Art,” *National Palace Museum Bulletin*, v. 20, no. 2, May–June 1985, p. 3.
  29. Sun Rouzhi’s *Ruiying tu* is found in Ma Guohan’s *Yuhan shanfang ji yishu*, reprint ed., Taipei, 1967, v. 5, pp. 2835–48. For an annotated catalogue of the auspicious images found in the pictorial program at the Wuliangci see Wu Hung, *The Wuliang Shrine*, pp. 234–44.
  30. Xu Song, *Song*, v. 52, p. 2073.
  31. Xu Song, *Song*, v. 52, p. 2074.
  32. “Auspicious Grain” is an impressively large and colorful painting, measuring 190.2 x 67.9 cm. Although it has been labeled a Yuan dynasty painting by the connoisseurs of Qianlong’s court, it is of undetermined date. *Shiqu baoji xubian*, p. 1008.
  33. Xu Song, *Song*, v. 52, p. 2075. *Song shi quanwen xu zizhi tongjian*, f. 14, p. 903.
  34. Cai Jing’s participation is constantly referred to in the *Song huiyao*. Wang Anzhong’s collected works is *Chuliao ji*, reprint ed., Taipei, 1971. In his official biography included in the *Song shi* is found the following comment: “During the Zhenghe period, all under Heaven competed in the telling of *ruiying*. The court officials all submitted congratulatory memorials, and when Huizong saw [Wang Anzhong’s] compositions, he remarked upon his extraordinary talent.” Tuotuo, *Song shi*, f. 352, p. 11124. For an unfavorable view of Wang as a sycophant to the eunuch Liang Shicheng see Cai Tao, *Tieweishan congkan*, f. 6, pp. 110–11.
  35. See n. 27. For Tang Taizong’s use of portents refer to Howard J. Weschler, *Offerings of Jade and Silk: Ritual and Symbol in the Legitimation of the T’ang Dynasty*, New Haven, 1985, especially the chapter “Plum Trees and Flood Waters: The Management and Manipulation of Portents,” pp. 55–77.
  36. See Fang Hao, *Song shi*, Taipei, 1979, pp. 86–88, 138–39.
  37. Cai Tao, *Tieweishan congkan*, f. 2, pp. 32–33.
  38. Cai Tao, *Tieweishan congkan*, f. 1, p. 12.
  39. According to the *Song shi quanwen xu zizhi tongjian*, f. 14, p. 897, the auspicious toad offered to the court in 1112 was presented by an official named Li Hui. Huizong questioned how a plant could grow from an animal and ordered the creature placed in water overnight. Some hidden bamboo nails loosened and Li Hui’s *ruiying* was exposed as a fraud. For his deception he was demoted to a minor post for three years. See also Li Hui’s biography in the *Song shi*, f. 355, pp. 11191–92, and the official document announcing Li’s punishment in Liu Anshang, *Liu Jishi ji*, reprint ed., Taipei, 1971, f. 2, p. 11b.
  40. Wang Anzhong, *Chuliao ji*, f. 5, pp. 18b–19a. The toad that Wang Anzhong’s memorial describes was from Hezhong, modern-day Yongqixian in Shanxi Province. The one presented in 1112 came from Xin’anxian in Henan. Actually, there may have been three such toads; despite the suggestion in the commentary to *Song shi quanwen xu zizhi tongjian* that the toad of 1112 was presented by Li Hui, other sources make it clear that Li was serving in Yongxing Commandery (Chang’an, Shaanxi) when his fraud was revealed.
  41. “For appreciating the fragrance and perfume of great deeds the setting up of reds and blues may be compared to the writing of a panegyric: for making things widely known nothing is greater than speech, but for preserving the appearance [of these things] there is nothing better than painting.” Zhang Yanyuan citing Lu Ji (261–303) in his *Lidai minghua ji*, f. 1, p. 2. Translation by William Reynolds Beal Acker, *Some T’ang and Pre-T’ang Texts on Chinese Painting*, Leiden, 1954, p. 73.
  42. Appearance of the auspicious red crow announces the presence of a ruler who values the people and does not harbor imperialist designs. Sun Rouzhi, *Ruiying tu*, p. 2843.
  43. An unusual breed of bird (albino?) with white plumage and red beak. It is occasionally mentioned in Tang dynasty texts, where it is described as an auspicious bird whose appearance signals the relief of anxieties. It is also found in Sun Rouzhi’s *Ruiying tu*, p. 2843.
  44. The beast of “pure numinosity,” long-tailed and possessing a single antler. Sun Rouzhi, *Ruiying tu*, p. 2845.
  45. Trees and plants whose trunks or stems are split, or whose branches are intertwined with those of another (like a tree with two trunks) are deemed particularly auspicious. See the entry on *mulianli* in Sun Rouzhi’s *Ruiying tu*, p. 2841, and Wu Hung, *The Wuliang Shrine*, p. 240. Such plants are mentioned a number of times in this passage.
  46. Yueshang is the region of present-day southern Vietnam. The white pheasant of Yueshang was a celebrated offering of

tribute to the court in early times.

47. A divine bird of the phoenix genus. Some sources describe it as like a wild duck with red eyes. Others simply call it a small phoenix.
48. Deng Chun, *Hua ji, Huashi congshu* ed., Shanghai, 1982, f. 1, p. 2. See also Ecke, "Emperor Hui-Tsung the Artist: 1082–1135," p. 99.
49. See n. 10.
50. The argument has been put forth most strongly by Xu Bangda in his "Song Huizong Zhao Ji qinbi hua yu daibi de kaobian" and *Gu shuhua weixue kaobian*. It has been repeated since in a number of places, including the notes to the reproductions of "Auspicious Cranes" and "Auspicious Dragon Rock" in Fu Xinian, ed., *Liang Song huihua (shang)*. See also Li Huishu, "Song yuanti huaniao hua zhi yanjiu," p. 123.
51. "The Five Colored Parakeet" measures 53.3 x 125.1 cm., "Auspicious Dragon Rock" 54 x 130 cm., and "Auspicious Cranes" 51 x 138.2 cm. The slight discrepancies, particularly in length, are probably due to trimming that took place when the paintings were remounted. The format of Huizong's inscription, the signatures, ciphers, and seals (*Xuanhedian bao*) all match. The only significant difference among the three scrolls is that the inscription on "The Five Colored Parakeet" is to the right rather than the left of the painting. This, again, however, is probably due to a later remounting. Both "The Five Colored Parakeet" and "Auspicious Dragon Rock" possess the *Tianli zhi bao* seal of the fourteenth century, suggesting that these two paintings were together at this time. "The Five Colored Parakeet" also possesses the seals of Dai Mingshuo (act. ca. 1660) and Song Luo (1634–1713), as well as those of the Qing imperial court. It is recorded in *Shiqu baoji chubian*, reprint ed., Taipei, 1971, p. 770. See Tomita Kojiro, "The Five Colored Parakeet by Hui Tsung (1082–1135)," *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts*, v. 31, 1933, pp. 75–79. "Auspicious Dragon Rock" possesses the seals of Prince Zhu Gang (d. 1398) and Xiang Dushou (*jinshi* 1562), elder brother of Xiang Yuanbian. It is recorded in Wu Rongguang's *Xinchou xiaoxia lu*, reprint ed., Taipei, 1971. "Auspicious Cranes" has a long inscription and poem attached by the fourteenth-century monk Laifu (1319–91), as well as his seals. It is recorded in *Shiqu baoji xubian*, p. 1915.
52. Fangzhou is the name of one of the immortal isles of the Eastern Sea. An alternate translation for *shengying* is "surpassing Ying," in which case Ying would also refer to one of the immortal isles, Yingzhou. It is possible that the Shengying of Huizong's inscription refers to a re-creation of one of the immortal isles in a body of water, rather than the water itself.
53. A recent viewing of this scroll revealed some more plants, apparently narcissi, growing from a crevice at the lower right center of the rock.
54. Lingbiao is a generic term that refers to the regions beyond the five ranges, i. e., China proper. Here it specifically refers to the far south and southwest, roughly corresponding to modern-day Guangdong and Guangxi provinces. For more on the nomenclature, see Edward Schafer, *The Vermilion Bird*, Berkeley, 1967, pp. 5–7.
55. Tomita Kojiro's short article, "The Five Colored Parakeet by Hui Tsung (1082–1135)," includes a full translation of Huizong's inscription and poem. Talking parrots and parakeets are described by Cai Tao in *Tieweishan congkan*, f. 6, pp. 111–12. Those interested in pursuing this colorful subject further would do well to begin with Edward Schafer's "Parrots in Medieval China," published in *Studia Sinica Bernhard Karlgren Dedicata—Sinological Studies Dedicated to Bernhard Karlgren on his Seventieth Birthday, October 5, 1959*, Copenhagen, 1959, pp. 271–82. See also Schafer, *The Vermilion Bird*, especially pp. 239–40.
56. On "The Five Colored Parakeet": "He has his own particular manner. Casually watching him [his appearance] is thoroughly superior to [what] a picture [can capture]. Thus, I have composed this poem." On "Auspicious Dragon Rock": "His force is bounding and roiling, like that of a serpentine dragon emerging to give form to an auspicious response. Its rare comportment and ingenious manners cannot be adequately described with even the most exhaustive and marvelous of words. I have thus personally painted [its image on] this piece of silk and added this poem to record it." The last lines of Huizong's poem on the rock also express the emperor's sense of inadequacy concerning his descriptive powers: "The dark mists that it eternally carries I suspect are toying with its whiskers, / Each time it mounts the evening rains I fear it will soar into the empyrean. / For this reason I rely on my colored brush to personally sketch [its likeness], / But its deep merit, fused and assembled, is not easily exhausted."
57. Xu Song, *Song*, v. 52, pp. 2074–76.
58. "When the [heraldic] designs on pennants were made clear, then rules [of conduct] and regulations [of etiquette] were clarified, and the institutions of the [different] states were fully observed." Zhang Yanyuan, *Lidai minghua ji*, f. 1, p. 2. Translation by Acker, *Some T'ang*, p. 71.
59. Cai Tao, *Tieweishan congkan*, f. 2, pp. 27–28.
60. Lawrence Walkinshaw, *Cranes of the World*, New York, 1973, especially pp. 1–9, 144–61.
61. According to legend, the *Xiang he jing* was given by Lord Fouqiu (sometimes called Li Fouqiu, active, according to one source, during the reign of Zhou Lingwang [r. 571–545 B.C.]) to Wang Ziqiao, a Zhou prince who is said to have ascended to Heaven riding a crane (Wang Ziqiao later became an important Daoist figure). This took place on sacred Mount Song. Wang Ziqiao, in turn, passed the text on to Cui Wenzhi. It was stored in a cave on Mount Song, where it was later recovered by the Eight Lords of Huainan and consequently transmitted among men. See Edward Schafer, "The Cranes of Mao Shan," in *Mélanges Chinois et Bouddhiques*, v. 21, ed. Michel Strickmann, "Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honour of R. A. Stein," Bruxelles, 1983, pp. 372–93, and especially nn. 5 and 7 for information on Wang Ziqiao and the *Xiang he jing*. The text was known only from fragments in the eleventh century when Wang Anshi reconstructed it (in A.D. 1077). It remains extremely brief. Various versions of the *Xiang he jing* are known today, with minor differences among them. I have utilized the one recorded in *Shuo fu*, reprint ed., Shanghai, 1988, p. 4933, in conjunction with the version that appears in the Shan commentary to Bao Zhao's "Wu he fu" in Xiao Tong, *Wen xuan*, f. 14, pp. 9b–13a. It has been speculated that the actual date of the *Xiang he jing* is the third or fourth century. See Schafer, "The Cranes of Mao Shan," n. 7, who cites Beth

- Upton's paper, "The Medieval Animal Book in China and the West: A Comparative Study of Two Thirteenth Century Works," *Phi Theta Papers*, v. 14, 1977, p. 44.
62. This story is recorded in the *Zuo juan*. See Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, v. 5 [The Ch'un Ts'ew with the Tso Chuen], p. 129. The people of Wei were so resentful of the special attention accorded these birds that they refused to fight when Wei was invaded by the Di tribes. "Employ the cranes," they said.
  63. See in particular Su Shi's comical poem "He tan" ("A sigh [of admiration] for the crane"), ed. Wang Wen'gao, *Su Shi shi ji*, reprint ed., Beijing, 1982, f. 37, p. 2003, and his prose piece "Fangheting ji" ("Record of the Pavilion for Releasing the Cranes"), Su Shi, *Jingjin Dongpo wen ji shihue*, reprint ed., Beijing, 1957, f. 51, pp. 839–40. For information on Lin Bu see Maggie Bickford, *Bones of Jade, Soul of Ice: The Flowering Plum in Chinese Art*, New Haven, 1985, pp. 22–26.
  64. *Xuanhe hua pu*, *Huashi congshu* ed., Shanghai, 1982, f. 15, pp. 164–65. Mi Fu was especially fond of Xue Ji. Note the poem that he wrote for one of Xue's paintings of cranes in the preface to his *Hua shi*, in Liu Haisu, *Huapin congshu*, Shanghai, 1982, p. 187.
  65. *Shina nanga taisei*, Tokyo, n. d., v. 6, pl. 15–17. The scroll is briefly discussed by Benjamin Rowland in "Hui Tsung and Huang Ch'uan." The original composition by Huang Quan is said to have been a mural painting done in the Five Dynasties state of Shu (Sichuan) in 944. Guo Ruoxu, *Tuhua jianwen zhi*, f. 5, p. 69; Soper, *Experiences in Painting*, p. 75. An album leaf attributed to Huizong depicting one of the six cranes accompanied by a poem is in the collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei. This, however, is a much later work.
  66. Deng Chun, *Hua ji*, f. 1, p. 1. The painting was entitled "Releasing the Cranes in the Bamboo Villa."
  67. Walkinshaw, *Cranes of the World*, especially pp. 157–58.
  68. Sun Rouzhi, *Ruiying tu*, p. 2842.
  69. Translation by W. K. Liao with slight modifications, *The Complete Works of Han Fa Tzu*, London, 1939, v. 1, p. 76.
  70. Published in Shōsōin Office ed., *Shōsōin no kinkō*, Tokyo, 1976, pl. 19.
  71. "Ti Li Boshi hua Zhao Jingren qinhe tu er shou," ed. Wang Wen'gao, *Su Shi shiji*, f. 30, pp. 1606–7.
  72. Sun Rouzhi, *Ruiying tu*, p. 2842.
  73. *Shang shu zhonghou*, in *Han Wei yishu chao*, reprint ed., Taipei, 1968, p. 7b.
  74. See n. 4.
  75. Sun Rouzhi, *Ruiying tu*, p. 2842. A phoenix prancing to the sounds being played on a pan-pipe appears opposite the dancing crane on the Tang mirror illustrated in Fig. 9, and for a scene that reminds us just how much the associations of these various sacred birds overlap see the Dengxian tile depicting Lord Fouqiu and Wang Ziqiao (of *Xiang he jing* fame) with a dancing phoenix. Annette Juliano, *Teng-hsien: An Important Six Dynasties Tomb*, Ascona, 1980, figs. 68, 69.
  76. The *Song huiyao jigao* records the following occasions: the eighth (lunar) month, 1099; the eleventh month, 1112; the tenth month, 1113; the ninth month, 1118; the intercalary ninth month, 1118; twice during the tenth month, 1118; and the tenth month, 1120. Xu Song, v. 52, pp. 2073–76. Li You's *Song chao shishi*, Taipei, 1958, f. 14, pp. 221–22, mentions two other occasions: the ninth month of 1105 and the winter of 1106, and Cai Tao's *Tieweishan conglan*, f. 1, pp. 11–12, records two consecutive days in the first month of 1104. A number of congratulatory memorials written by Wang Anzhong also describe the arrival of the cranes. None of these is dated, though at least two occurrences can be tallied with descriptions from other sources. Wang Anzhong, *Chukiao ji*, f. 5, pp. 13a, 15a, 16a, and 16b–17a. The first occasion listed above is something of an exception, as it occurred shortly before Huizong's accession and took place at the Daoist establishment on Maoshan in Jiangsu (all of the others took place in Kaifeng). I include it here because it is mentioned as one of the important occasions that led to the making of the cranes pennant in 1117.
  77. A good example is the grand banquet held at the Hall of Assembled Luminaries (Jiyinding) on November 4, 1120, when thousands of cranes are reported to have appeared in the sky. Xu Song, *Song*, v. 52, p. 2076. The prescribed rituals of drinking, music, and dancing practiced during this biannual grand feast (spring and autumn) are well described in Tuotuo, *Song shi*, f. 113, pp. 2688–91.
  78. Kenneth J. DeWoskin, *A Song for One or Two—Music and the Concept of Art in Early China*, Ann Arbor, 1982, especially pp. 29–39.
  79. This concept is best described in *Xunzi*: "Music enters deeply into men and transforms them rapidly. Therefore, the former kings were careful to give it the proper form. When music is moderate and tranquil, the people become harmonious and shun excess. When music is stern and majestic, the people become well behaved and shun disorder. . . . The fame of the state will become known abroad, its glory will shine forth greatly, and all people within the four seas will long to become its subjects. Then at last a true king may be said to have arisen. But if music is seductive and depraved, then the people will become abandoned and mean-mannered. Those who are abandoned will fall into disorder; those who are mean-mannered will fall to quarreling. . . . Hence, the turn away from the proper rites and music and to allow evil music to spread is the source of danger and disgrace." Translation by Burton Watson, *Hsun-tzu: Basic Writings*, New York, 1964, pp. 114–15.
  80. A detailed account of the various classifications of sound and the development of physical acoustics, as well as the search for accuracy in tuning, is provided in Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, Cambridge, 1962, v. 4, pt. 1, pp. 126–228. For a good introduction to the system of twelve pitches used in Chinese music and in particular the *huang-zhong*, "yellow bell" pitch, that was the basis for mathematically generating the other eleven see DeWoskin, *A Song for One or Two*, pp. 43–54. DeWoskin also recounts the myth found in *Lushi chunqiu* of the Yellow Emperor ordering his minister Ling Lun to establish the pitch standards. Ling Lun did so by cutting a section of bamboo between two nodes. The harmonious sound that resulted by blowing into this pipe of particular length was taken to be the *gong* tone (the first in the Chinese sequence of five sounds) at the yellow bell pitch



- level. DeWoskin, pp. 59–60.
81. From Liu Bing's "Record of the Dasheng Music," recorded in Li You, *Song chao shishi*, reprint ed., Taipei, 1958, f. 14, pp. 220–21. Music thus joins prose writing, poetry, and calligraphy as art forms that plunged to new depths of lowliness during the Five Dynasties Period, at least in the minds of the Northern Song literati.
  82. Xu Song, *Song*, v. 8, pp. 341–42. Tuotuo, *Songshi*, f. 81, p. 2998. See also the article by Ling Jingyan, "Song Wei Hanjin yue yu Dashengfu" ("The music of Wei Hanjin of Song and the Dashengfu"), *Yenching Journal of Chinese Studies*, v. 28, December 1940, pp. 105–32.
  83. James Watt, who has devoted some study to Huizong's music and to whom I am grateful for sharing some small measure of his broad knowledge, assures me that Wei's methods are totally absurd. The pentatonic scale of the *wuyin*, or five tones, should be fixed by mathematical proportions, not by the lengths of Huizong's or anyone else's fingers. Liu Bing's account, included in Li You's *Song chao shishi*, f. 14, p. 221, mentions nothing of the correspondence between individual fingers and tones; moreover, it suggests that the length of measure used to determine the *huangzhong* pitch was simply the three added sections of Huizong's middle finger multiplied by three.
  84. Both sets of multiples are mentioned in the *Song chao shishi*, though their exact significance is not specified. An interesting footnote to this question of finger length is provided by the *Song shi*, f. 81, pp. 2998–99, where it is recorded that some thirteen years later (1118) Huizong had a nightmare in which a man said to him, "The music has been completed, but still the phoenix does not come. It was not the emperor's finger!" Huizong realized that his finger length had been inaccurately measured due to the necessity of keeping it concealed from an "outsider" (i. e., Wei Hanjin).
  85. From Liu Bing's account. Li You, *Song chao shishi*, f. 14, p. 221.
  86. Abbreviated historical records frequently mention Wei Hanjin's forging of the Nine Tripods and his settling of the proper pitches in a single breath, and such lines as "The body is used as measurement and the tripods are cast to give rise to the tones" (from a Huizong decree of the eighth month, 1105, Li You, *Song chao shishi*, f. 14, p. 222) would seem to suggest some technological link between the casting of the tripods and the length of the measure used for the pitches. On the other hand, the fact that the tripods were cast approximately a year before Huizong's fingers were measured (if we trust the often contradictory dates of the historical records) obviously dampens this idea. James Watt has suggested that a large project such as the casting of the Nine Tripods would have provided important firsthand experience in preparation for the forging of the bells that followed the settling of the pitches.
  87. "Jiucheng" refers to the nine passages of Yu's music to which the phoenixes were attracted. See n. 4. Jiuchenggong was also the name of a well-known imperial retreat restored by Taizong early in the Tang dynasty, but given the association between the tripods and the court music, the story from the *Shangshu* must be the primary allusion underlying the name of Huizong's palace.
  88. Cai Tao, *Tieweishan congkan*, f. 1, pp. 11–12. Cai continues with an account of how one of the nine tripods, the *bao ding*, began to leak water during Huizong's ceremony, despite the fact that the metal was several inches thick and without any cracks. Liu Bing offered the explanation that the dirt and water held by the *bao ding* did not really come from the northern territories of You and Yan as would have been proper (this was the general region that the *bao ding* was supposed to represent), but from the border area still under Song control. At the time this was deemed a suitable explanation, though Cai then adds the rueful comment that in the end it was the recovery of these northern territories that led to the demise of the Northern Song. He goes on to describe the reappearance of the cranes in 1116 when the tripods were moved to new quarters within the imperial precincts. Specifically, this occurred during the moving of the "Imperial Tripod," *di nai*, which, though extremely large, seemed remarkably easy to transport.
  89. Tuotuo, *Song shi*, f. 20, p. 375.
  90. From Huizong's "Record of the Dasheng Music," in Li You, *Song chao shishi*, f. 14, p. 224. See also Tuotuo, *Song shi*, f. 129, p. 3001.
  91. Li You, *Song chao shishi*, f. 14, p. 224.
  92. Cai Tao, *Tieweishan congkan*, f. 1, p. 17.
  93. Hashima Kazuhiko, "Jogen kantō ni mieru Sōdai no toshi fuzoku" ("Customs of the capital during the Song dynasty as seen in the viewing of lanterns during the Shangyuan festival"), *Ajia shi kenkyū*, v. 9, 1985, pp. 16–31. Patricia Angela Sieber, "Highlighting Competing Discourses: The Lantern Festival in the Northern and Southern Song Dynasties," M. A. thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1988. I am particularly indebted to Sieber for the wealth of information provided in her fine paper.
  94. The color and pageantry of the Lantern Festival during the late years of the Northern Song are particularly well described in Meng Yuanlao's *Dongjing menghua lu*, reprint ed., Taipei, 1980, f. 6, pp. 34–38. The Lantern Festival originally lasted only three nights, but according to Cai Tao, *Tieweishan congkan*, f. 1, p. 17, it was expanded to five by Emperor Song Taizu in A.D. 967. See Sieber, "Competing Discourses," pp. 10–13, for a detailed discussion.
  95. Meng Yuanlao, *Dongjing menghua lu*, f. 1, p. 9. See also Wu Tao, *Bei Song ducheng Dongjing*, Henan, 1984, p. 3.
  96. Meng Yuanlao, *Dongjing menghua lu*, f. 6, p. 34.
  97. Cai Tao, *Tieweishan congkan*, f. 1, p. 17. The custom of setting the plaque began in 1107, the first year of the Daguan reign, when Song Qiaonian (1047–1113) was magistrate of Kaifeng. It was repeated every year until the fall of the Northern Song. See also Sieber, "Competing Discourses," pp. 35–36.
  98. Meng Yuanlao, *Dongjing menghua lu*, f. 6, p. 35.
  99. From a *ci* poem by Huizong entitled "Chun jie," to the tune "Sheng sheng man." Translation by Ecke, "Emperor Hui Tsung the Artist: 1082–1136," p. 40.

100. There is the additional evidence of the *yuan he* cranes that arrived in two groups of eight to hear Master Kuang's performance of the *qin*. See n. 69.
101. Xiao Tong, *Wen xuan*, f. 14, pp. 9b–13a. I would like to acknowledge my great appreciation to Professor Hans Frankel of Yale University for leading me to and through Erwin von Zach's German translation of Zhao Bao's *fu* in Erwin von Zach, *Die Chinesische Anthologie*, ed. Ilse Martin Fang and James Hightower, Cambridge, 1958, pp. 208–10.
102. Xiao Tong, *Wen xuan*, f. 14, p. 11b.
103. By a gentleman named Sieber in 1932, recorded in Walkinshaw, *Cranes of the World*, p. 22.
104. Xiao Tong, *Wen xuan*, f. 14, p. 11b.
105. Tuotuo, *Song shi*, f. 129, p. 3027.
106. From Liu Bing's "Discussion of the Dasheng Music," Li You, *Song chao shishi*, f. 14, p. 222.
107. Cited from the "Tian xia" chapter of *Zhuangzi*, reprint ed., Taipei, 1968, f. 10, p. 570. Dazhang can be translated as "The Great Illumination." Dashao, which means "The Great Continuation," was so named because of Shun's perceived role as a follower of Yao.
108. This is from a proclamation issued by Huizong in the eighth month of 1105. Li You, *Song chao shishi*, f. 14, p. 222.
109. Li You, *Song chao shishi*, f. 14, p. 223.
110. Original records of the bells are found in Huizong's sponsored catalogue of objects from antiquity, *Xuanhe bogu tuhu*, reprint ed., Taipei, 1969, f. 22, where it is explicitly stated that the identity of Song Gongcheng is not known. The bells are also mentioned in Dong You's *Guangchuan shu ba*, photo-reprint of the Wenyuange siku quanshu ed., Taipei, 1983, f. 3, pp. 4b–7a. In more recent times the bells have been the subject of studies by Richard Rudolph and Chen Mengjia: Richard Rudolph, "Dynastic Booty: An Altered Chinese Bronze," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, v. 11, 1948, pp. 174–83; Chen Mengjia, "Song Dasheng bianzhong kaoshu" ("A study of the Song Dasheng bells"), *Wenwu*, no. 2, 1964, pp. 51–53. See as well Li Wenxin, "Shangjing kuan Dasheng nanlu bianzhong," *Wenwu*, no. 5, 1963, pp. 42–44. They were also the subject of a paper presented by James Watt at the College Art Association in Boston, 1987. A small portion of Watt's findings are found in his recent catalogue *Chinese Jades from the Collection of the Seattle Art Museum*, Seattle, 1990.
111. From Jia Gongyan's commentary to the *Zhou li*, photo-reprint of Wenyuange siku quanshu ed., Taipei, 1983, f. 22, p. 6b.
112. According to Chen Mengjia, the fifth character of the inscription, read *jing* (a variant of the character *jing*, meaning "stalk") in the early twelfth century, is now understood as *ge* (a variant for the character *ge*, meaning "song"). Chen Mengjia, "Song Dasheng," p. 51.
113. See n. 110. According to Chen Mengjia, "Song Dasheng," p. 52, surviving bells are now found in the Royal Ontario Museum (1), the Liaoning Provincial Museum (1), the Palace Museum in Beijing (3), and a Japanese collection (1).
114. There is an extensive description of the discovery of this jade in Cai Tao, *Tieweishan congkan*, f. 1, pp. 9–11. See also Sun Rouzhi, *Ruiying tu*, p. 2839.
115. "[Huizong] wished to establish and codify the ways of the beginnings of antiquity. Distantly he chased after the thoughts of Yao and Shun, and for this reason [ancient ritual vessels] were greatly honored and prized." Cai Tao, *Tieweishan congkan*, f. 4, p. 79. Refer to E. H. Kracke, Jr., "Sung K'ai-feng: Pragmatic Metropolis and Formalistic Capital," in *Crisis and Prosperity in Sung China*, ed. John Winthrop Haeger, Phoenix, 1975, pp. 49–77, for some general comments on aspects of the Northern Sung court's expression of antique ideals through formalistic means.
116. Yang Zhongliang, *Zizhi tongjian changbian jishi benmo*, reprint ed., Taipei, 1968, f. 134, pp. 1a–1b.
117. From the tomb inscription to Zhai Ruwen, in Zhai Ruwen, *Zhonghui ji*, reprint ed., Taipei, 1971, addendum, p. 5a. This occurrence is also noted in the *Xuanhe yishi*. See William O. Hennessey, *Proclaiming Harmony*, Ann Arbor, 1981, p. 29.
118. Zhai Ruwen, *Zhonghui ji*, addendum, pp. 6a–b.
119. Described in Cai Tao, *Tieweishan congkan*, f. 4, p. 80. There is a record of this taking place in the tenth month, 1113. Tuotuo, *Song shi*, f. 21, p. 392. See also Wang Anzhong's poem, "Jin he yuzhi xing Taixue Bishusheng shi," written on the occasion of an imperial tour of the various treasures kept in the Palace Library, including ancient bronzes. Wang Anzhong, *Chutiao ji*, f. 1, pp. 17b–18a.
120. Cai Tao, *Tieweishan congkan*, f. 4, pp. 79–80. And this did not count Qin and Han pieces, which were kept only if deemed particularly unusual.
121. Ye Mengde, *Bishu luhua*, reprint ed., ed. Ye Tingguan, 1845, xia, pp. 15b–16a.
122. See Osvald Siren, *Kinas Konst under tre Artusen åren*, Stockholm, 1942, v. 1, p. 289; Alan Priest, "Chinese Sculpture in the Metropolitan Museum of Art," 1944, cat. no. 5; Chow Fong, "Chinese Buddhist Sculpture," *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, n.s., v. 23, May 1965, pt. 1, pp. 302, 305.
123. Prominent discoveries have been made in particular at Nanyang, Henan province, and near Xuzhou, in northern Jiangsu. See "Jiangsu Tongshan Dong Han mu qingli jianbao" ("Preliminary report on the Eastern Han tombs found at Tongshan, Jiangsu"), *Kaogu tongxun*, no. 4, 1957; "Jiangsu Xuzhou Tongshan wu zuo Han mu qingli jianbao" ("Preliminary report on the five Eastern Han tombs found at Tongshan, Xuzhou, Jiangsu"), *Kaogu*, no. 10, 1964; "Jiangsu Xuzhou Shilipu Han huaxiang shi mu" ("The Han tombs with stone carvings found at Shilipu, Xuzhou, Jiangsu"), *Kaogu*, no. 2, 1966; "Jiangsu Pixian Baishan Guzi liang zuo Dong Han huaxiang shi mu" ("Two Eastern Han tombs with stone carvings found at Baishan, Pixian, Jiangsu"), *Wenwu*, no. 5, 1985; "Nanyang Han huaxiang shi gaishu" ("Overview of the Han stone carvings of Nanyang"), *Wenwu*, no. 6, 1973.

124. The carvings are first mentioned in Zhao Mingcheng's *Jinshi lu* of 1117, though the inscriptions on two tablets of the shrine are recorded in Ouyang Xiu's *Jing lu* of half a century earlier. Wu Hung, *The Wu Liang Shrine*, pp. 3–4.
125. Various interpretations of the related “homage scene” are presented in Wu Hung's *The Wu Liang Shrine*, pp. 193–213. Wu Hung's conclusion that the scene represents homage being paid to the emperor accords extremely well with my argument for the relationship of such images to “Auspicious Cranes,” which in a manner of speaking is a scene of homage being paid to Huizong by the cranes and the residents of the capital during the Lantern Festival. Of course, this would only be significant if such Han images were understood the same way in the Song dynasty.
126. Zhang Yanyuan, *Lidai minghua ji*, f. 9, pp. 104–5.
127. Cai Tao, *Tieweishan congkan*, f. 1, p. 12.
128. Cited from Zhai Qinian, *Zhou shi*, in *Shoushang congshu*, ed. Qian Xizuo, Shanghai, 1862, v. 74, pp. 16a–b.
129. For the *taotie*, *wei* monkey, and *kui* dragon see *Xuanhe bogu tulu*, f. 1, pp. 3a–b. For the tiger's association with righteousness see f. 1, pp. 18a–b. See also Dong You, *Guangchuan shuba*, f. 1, p. 1b, and Ye Guoliang, “Song dai jinshixue yanjiu” (“Researches on *jinshi* studies of the Song dynasty”), Ph.D. thesis, National Taiwan University, 1982, p. 161ff.
130. Dong You, *Guangchuan shuba*, f. 1, p. 1b.
131. Zhang Yanyuan, *Lidai minghua ji*, f. 1, p. 1. See also Acker, *Some T'ang*, p. 61ff.
132. Gu Kaizhi, Lu Tanwei, Zhang Sengyou, and Wu Daozi. See Zhang Yanyuan, *Lidai minghua ji*, f. 2, pp. 21–23, and Acker, *Some T'ang*, p. 177ff.
133. “When Huang Quan painted flying birds, their necks and legs were both stretched out. Someone said: ‘If flying birds draw in their neck then they stretch out their legs; if they draw in their legs, they extend their neck. They don't have both stretched out.’ When I investigated the matter, it was indeed so.” Su Shi, “Shu Huang Quan hua que,” *Dongpo tiba*, reprint ed., Taipei, 1973, f. 5, p. 7a. Translation by Susan Bush, *The Chinese Literati on Painting*, Cambridge, 1971, p. 33, with romanization changed.
134. This is most evident by contrasting Su Shi's comment on the Huang Quan painting with his famous pronouncement that “Those who discuss painting in terms of formal likeness, / Have a level of understanding akin to that of a child.” From the poem, “Shu Yanling Wang Zhuo suo hua zhezhi ershou,” *Su Dongpo quanji*, Taipei, 1975, f. 16, p. 230.
135. Paraphrased from Mi Fu, *Hua shi*, in *Huapin congshu*, ed. Liu Haisu, Shanghai, 1982, p. 202. Mi Fu is actually addressing the paintings of a number of contemporary and near-contemporary painters, including Cui Bo, most of whom he considered “not worthy of deep discussion.”
136. Susan Bush presents a number of the relevant texts in *The Chinese Literati on Painting*, pp. 34–43.

## Glossary

Bao Zhao	鮑照
Cai Jing	蔡京
Cai Tao	蔡條
Chen Ruyan	陳汝言
chengqi	承氣
chi	尺
Chongzhengdian	崇政殿
Chuxianggong	儲祥宮
Cui Bo	崔白
cun	寸
Daqingdian	大慶殿
daji	大吉
daiqi	戴氣
Dashao	大韶
Dasheng	大晟
Dazhang	大章
Deng Chun	鄧椿
Di Ku	帝譽
ding	鼎
dingnai	鼎鼐
Dong You	董道
duanmen	端門
Fangzhouqiao	芳洲橋
feng	鳳
Fouqiugong	浮丘公
gong	宮
Gu Lu Zhang Wu	顧陸張吳
gui(a)	圭
gui(b)	簋
Gujin huajian	古今畫鑒
Han Feizi	韓非子

<i>Hua ji</i>	畫繼	Ruimodian	睿謨殿
Huanbichi	環碧池	<i>ruiyiing</i>	瑞應
<i>huang</i>	凰	<i>Ruiying tu</i>	瑞應圖
Huang Jucai	黃居采	<i>shang</i>	商
Huang Quan	黃筌	<i>shangyuan</i>	上元
<i>huangzhong</i>	黃鍾	Shengying	勝瀛
Huizong	徽宗	Shun	舜
<i>jiao</i>	角	<i>Song gong cheng zhi jing zhong</i>	宋公成之莖鍾
Jin Pinggong	晉平公	Song Taizu	宋太祖
<i>jing</i>	莖	Su Shi	蘇軾
Jiuchenggong	九成宮	<i>suxin</i>	素馨
<i>juan</i>	篆	Sun Rouzhi	孫柔之
<i>kai</i>	楷	<i>taiji</i>	太極
Kuang shi	廣師	Tang Hou	湯屋
<i>kui</i>	褰	Tang Taizong	唐太宗
Kui shi	褰師	<i>taotie</i>	饕餮
<i>li</i>	理	<i>wan Song niansui</i>	萬宋年歲
Li Gonglin	李公麟	Wang Anzhong	王安中
Li Liang	李良	Wang Chong	王充
<i>Lidai minghua ji</i>	歷代名畫記	Wang Mang	王莽
Lin Bu	林逋	Wang Pu	王朴
<i>lingzhi</i>	靈芝	<i>wei</i>	蜚
Liu Bing	劉昴	Wei Hanjin	魏漢津
Liu Chang	劉敞	Wei Yigong	衛懿公
Liuying	六英	Wen Tong	文同
<i>luan</i>	鸞	<i>wenren</i>	文人
Mi Fu	米芾	Wujing	五莖
<i>ming</i>	明	<i>xiang</i>	象
<i>moli</i>	末利	<i>Xiang he jing</i>	相鶴經
Ouyang Xiu	歐陽修	<i>xiang long</i>	祥龍
<i>qilin</i>	麒麟	Xiangfugong Shengzudian	祥符宮聖祖殿
<i>ren</i>	仁	Xu Xi	徐熙

Xuandemen	宣德門	<i>yu</i>	羽
"Xuanhe ruilan ce"	宣和睿覽冊	<i>Yü</i>	禹
Xue Ji	薛稷	<i>yuan he</i>	元鶴
Yan Liben	閻立本	<i>yuzu</i>	鷺鷥
Yanfugong	延福宮	Zhang Yanyuan	張彥遠
<i>yang</i>	陽	Zhai Ruwen	翟汝文
Yao	堯	Zhao Bian	趙抃
Ye Mengde	葉夢得	Zhao Wu	趙嘏
<i>yi</i>	義	<i>zheng</i>	徵
<i>yin</i>	陰	<i>zhi yin zhe</i>	知音者
<i>yiren</i>	異人	Zhuan Xu	顓頊

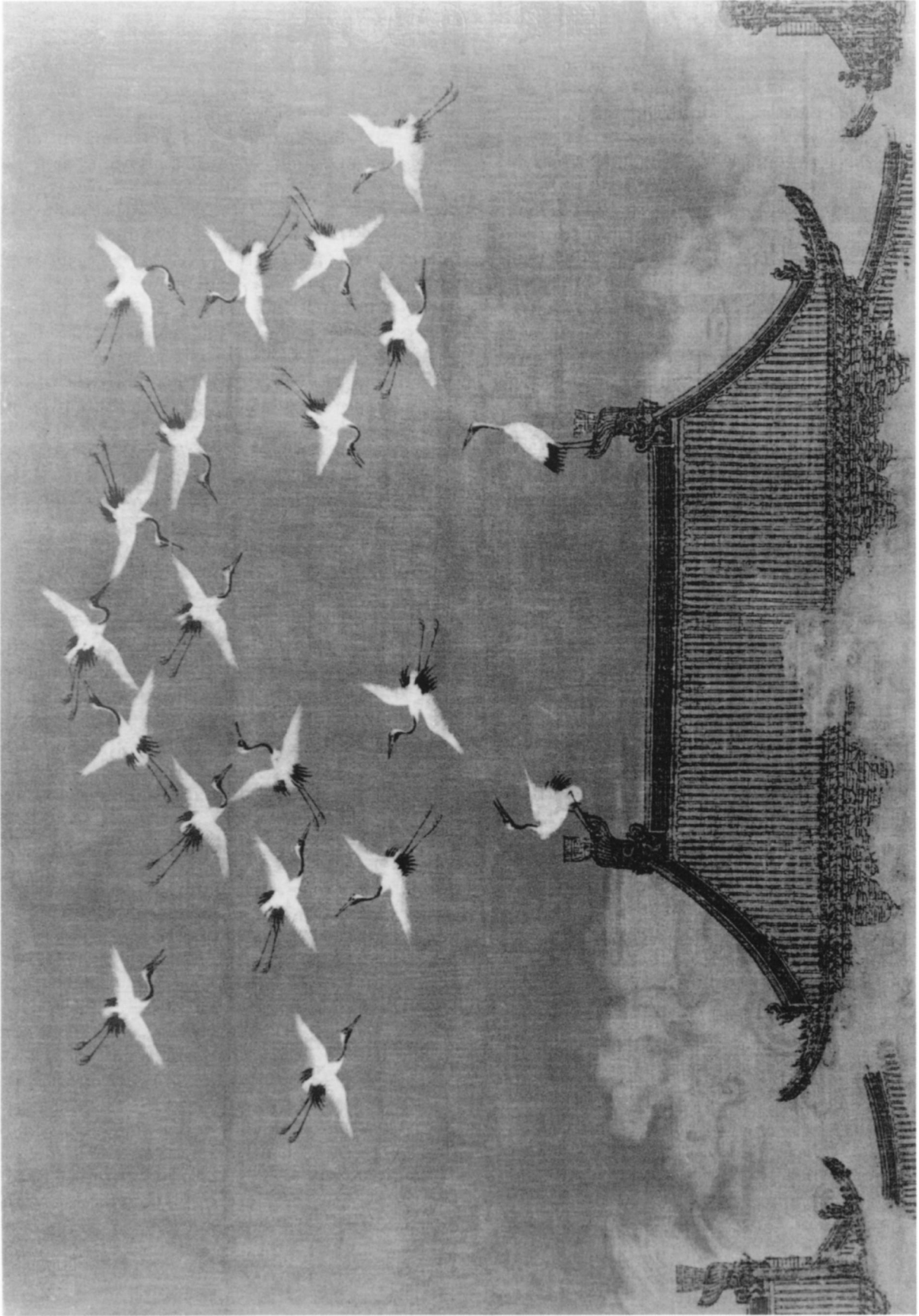


FIG. 1. Huizong. "Auspicious Cranes." Ca. A.D. 1112-26. Handscroll, ink and colors on silk, 51 x 138.2 cm. (with inscription). Liaoning Provincial Museum.

政和壬辰上元之夜，忽有祥雲拂檻，  
 低映端門，衆皆仰而視之，倏有群鶴  
 飛鳴於雲中，仍有一鶴對上於鵠尾  
 之端，頗甚閑適，餘皆翱翔如應奏節。  
 往來都民，無不稽首瞻望，冀以之  
 經時不散，遂還歸飛西北隅，散感茲  
 祥瑞，故作詩以紀其實。  
 清曉輒披拂，乘霓仙禽生端忽，來儀飄，  
 元是三山侶，兩，還呈千歲姿，似擬碧鶴  
 棲寶閣，豈同赤雁集天池，徘徊嘹唳當丹  
 闕，故使童，庶俗知。  
 御製御書并書一 下

FIG. 2. Huizong, Inscription to "Auspicious Cranes."



FIG. 3. Anonymous, "Auspicious Grain." Fourteenth century (?). Hanging scroll, ink and colors on paper, 190.3 x 67.9 cm. Collection of the National Palace Museum, Taiwan, Republic of China.

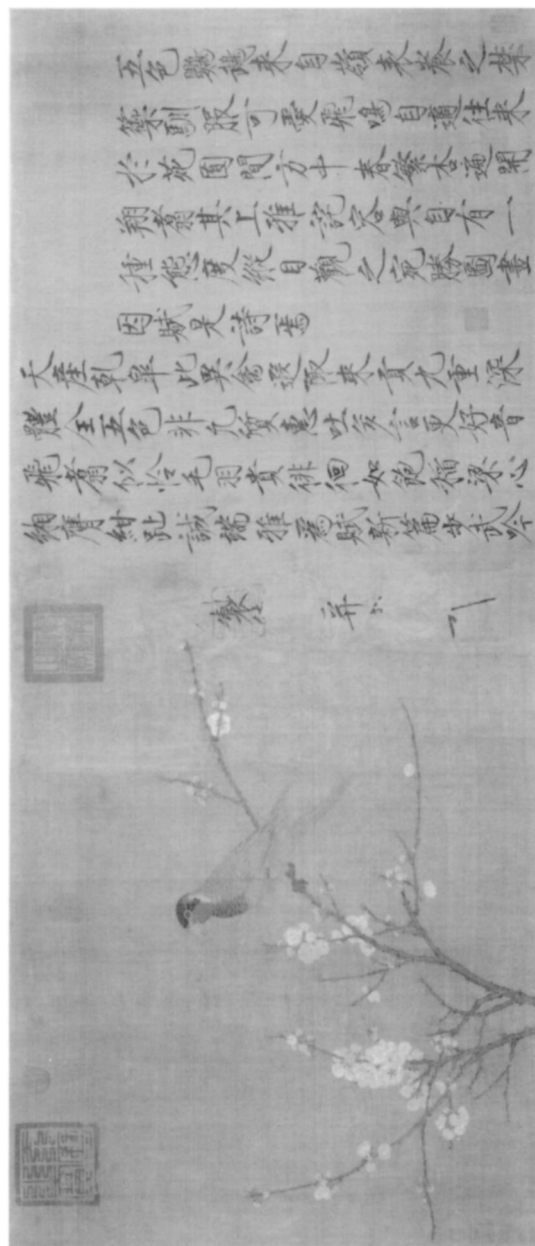


FIG. 4. Huizong, "The Five Colored Parakeet." Ca. A.D. 1112-26. Handscroll, ink and colors on silk, 53.3 x 125.1 cm. Maria Antoinette Evans Fund. Courtesy, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



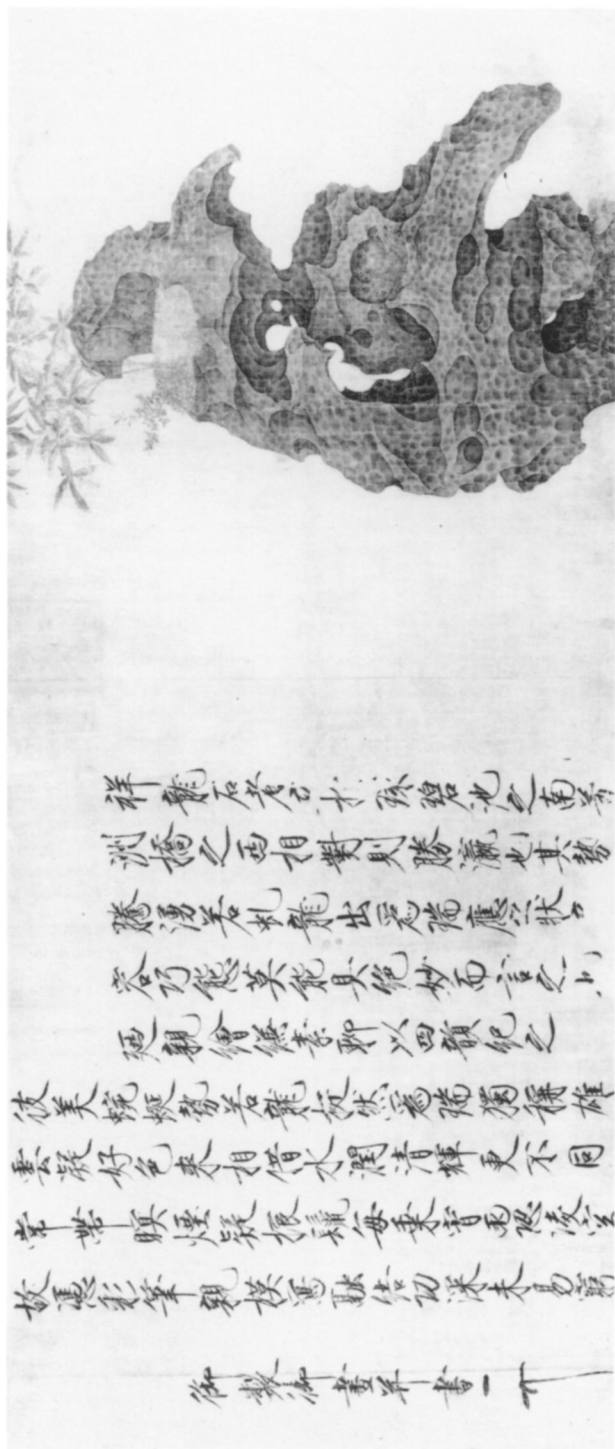


FIG. 5. Huizong, "Auspicious Dragon Rock." Ca. A.D. 1112-26. Handscroll, ink and colors on silk, 54 x 130 cm. Palace Museum, Beijing.

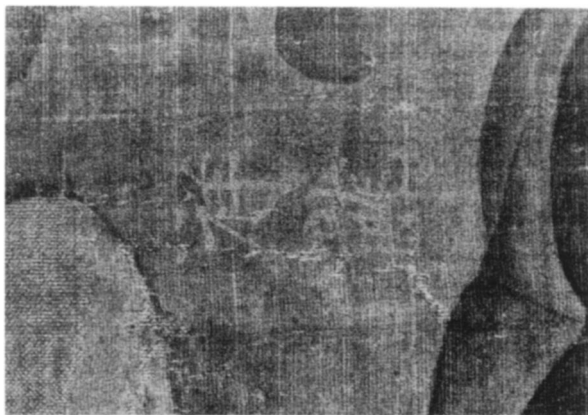


FIG. 6. Detail of "Auspicious Dragon Rock."



FIG. 7. Chen Ruyan, "The Land of Immortals." Before A.D. 1371. Detail of a handscroll, ink and colors on silk.  
Intended gift to the Cleveland Museum of Art, Mr. and Mrs. A. Dean Perry.



FIG. 8. Detail of a Tang dynasty mirror. Eighth century. Shōsōin, Nara.



FIG. 9. Anonymous, "The Pleasures of the Lute in a Deep Hall." Ca. A.D. 1200.  
Fan, ink and colors on silk, 24.2 x 24.9 cm. Palace Museum, Beijing.

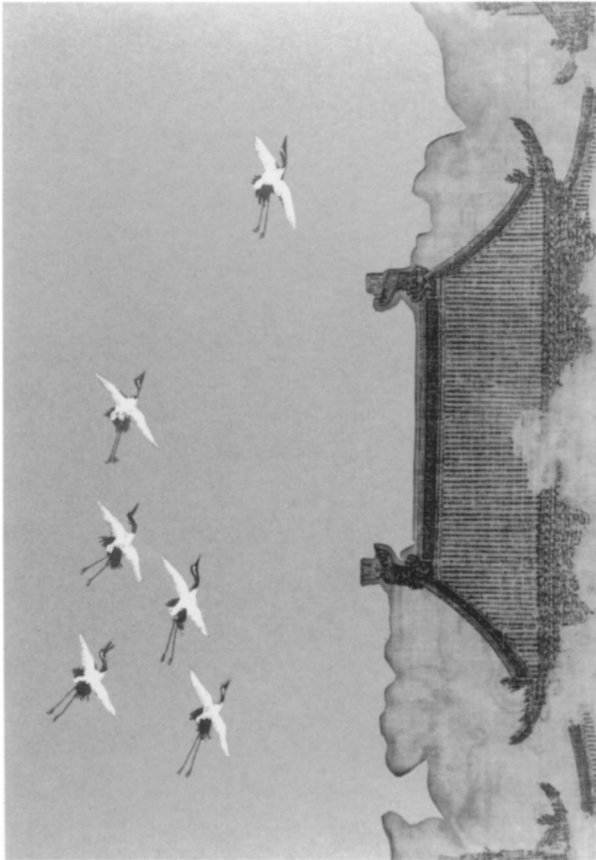


FIG. 10. Redrawing of "Auspicious Cranes": the first group of cranes.

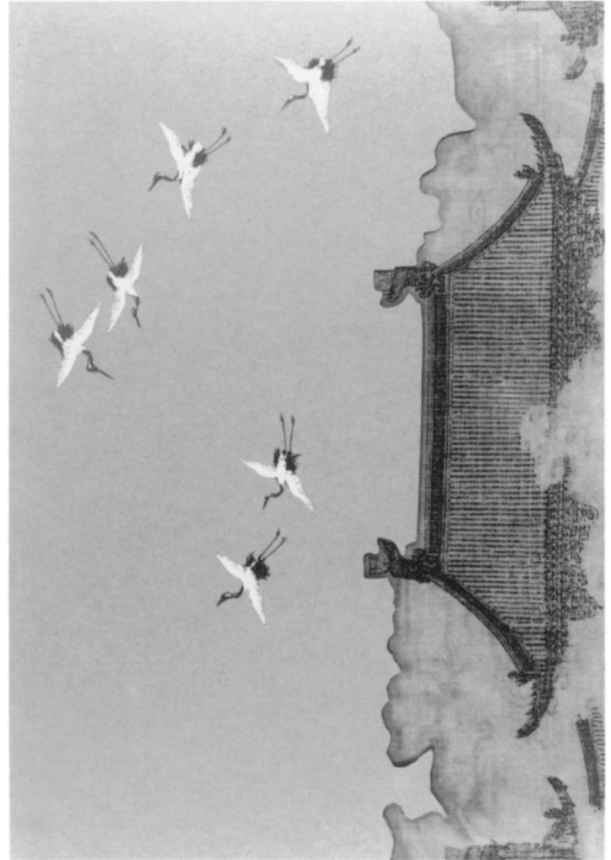


FIG. 11. Redrawing of "Auspicious Cranes": the second group of cranes.

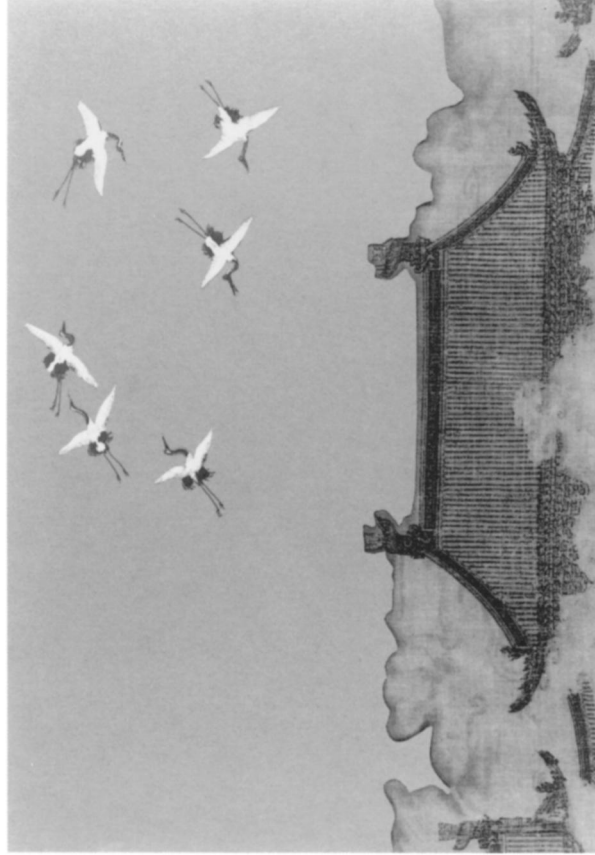


FIG. 12. Redrawing of "Auspicious Cranes": the third group of cranes.

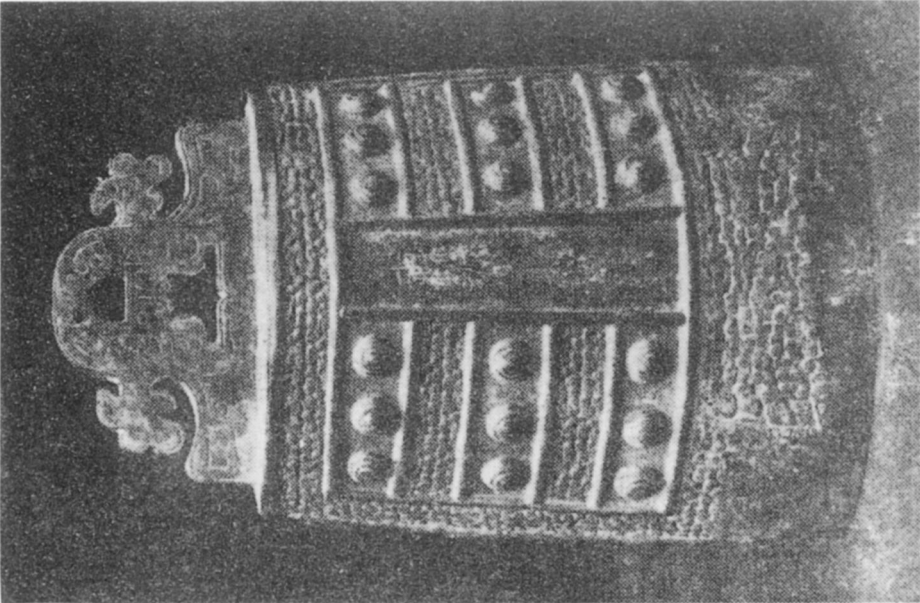


FIG. 15. One of the Dasheng Bells. Ca. A.D. 1105. Palace Museum, Beijing. From *Wenwu*, 1964, no. 2, p. 53.

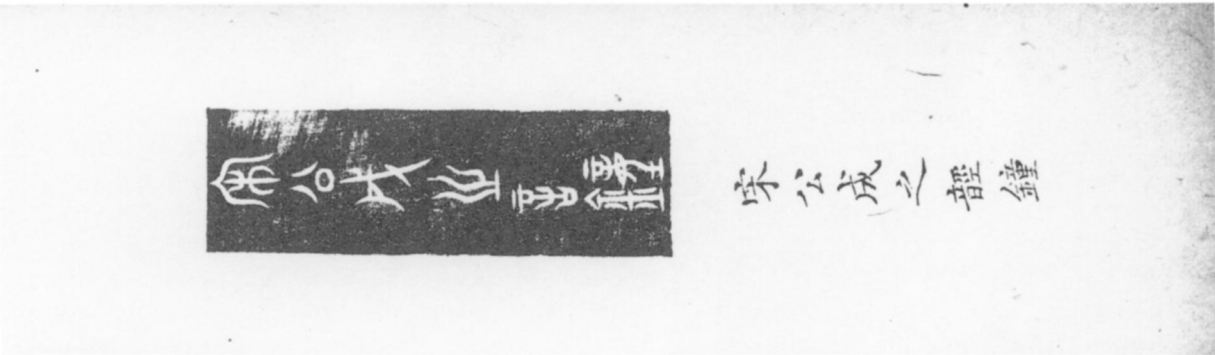


FIG. 14. Rubbing of the Inscription on the "Jing Bell" from the State of Song. From the *Xuanhe bogu tulu*, fascicle 22.

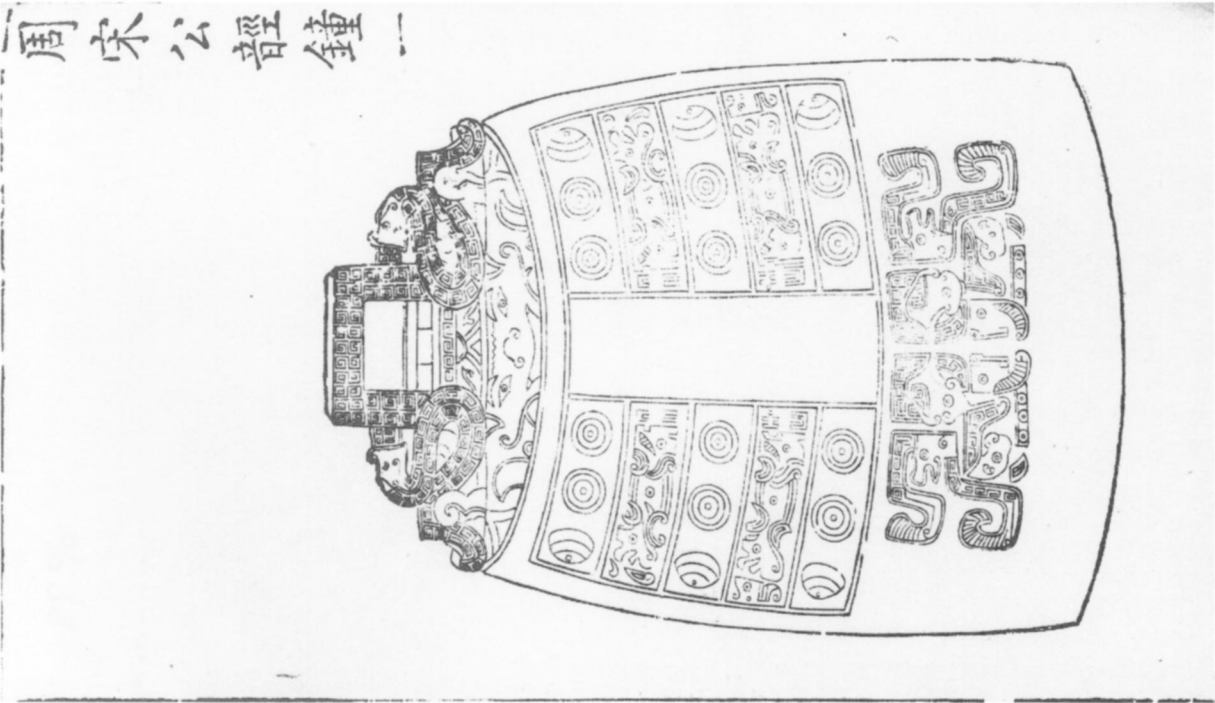


FIG. 13. "Jing Bell" from the State of Song. Drawing from the *Xuanhe bogu tulu*, fascicle 22.



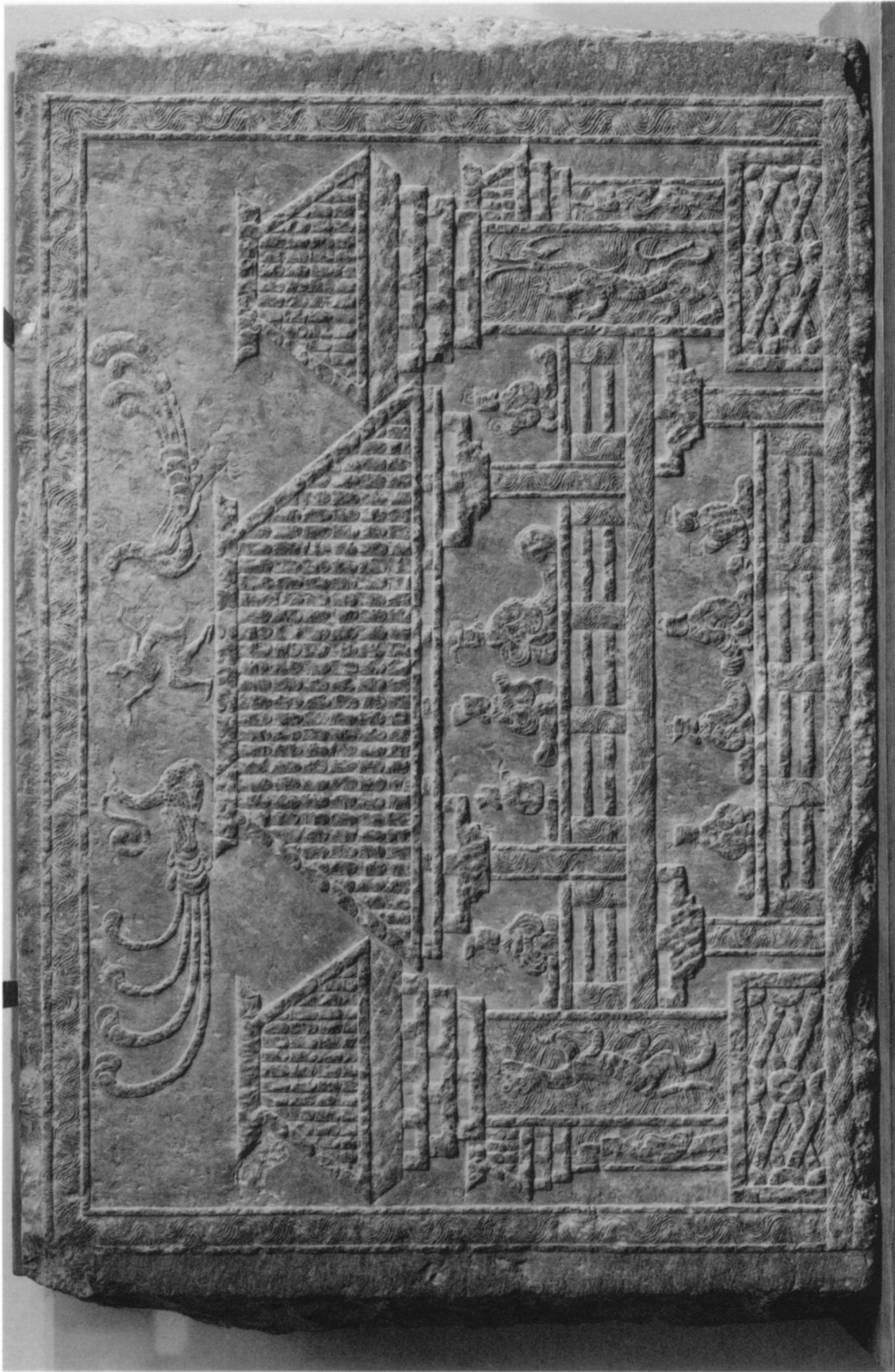


Fig. 16. Tomb Tablet A.D. 114. Limestone. Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1920 (20.99).



FIG. 17. *Ding* Tripod. Ca. 1300-1100 B.C. Courtesy of the Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. 60.18.

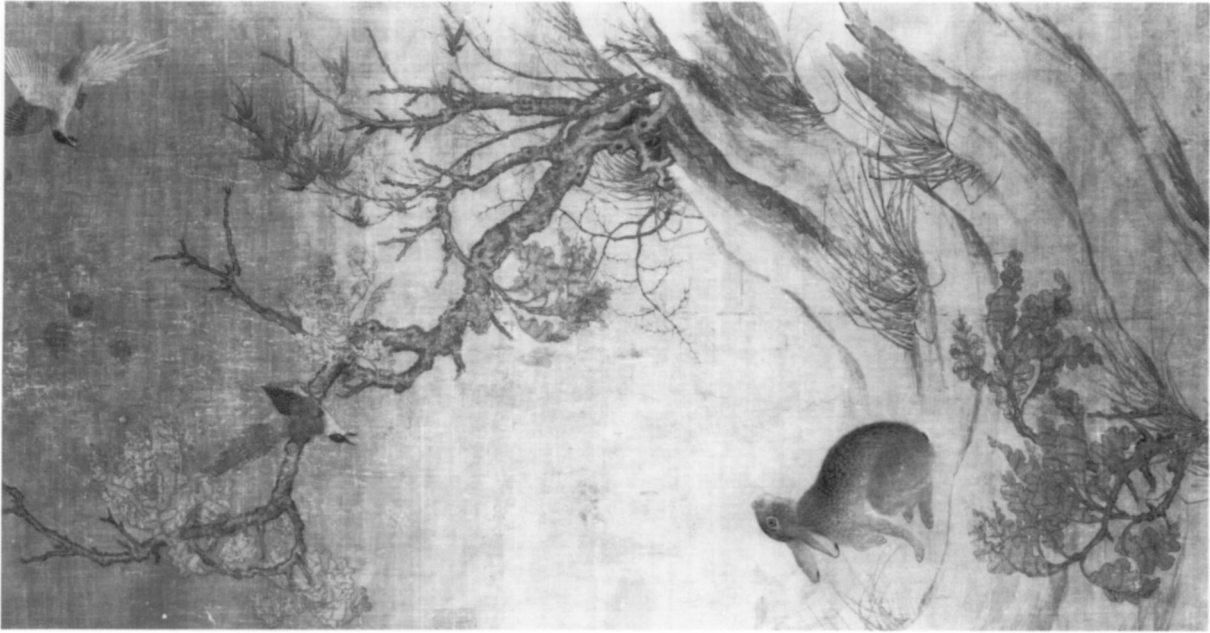


FIG. 19. Cui Bo, "Magpies and Hare." AD. 1061. Hanging scroll, ink and colors on silk, 193.7 x 103.4 cm. National Palace Museum, Taiwan, Republic of China.



FIG. 18. Wen Tong, "Ink Bamboo." Ca. A.D. 1070. Hanging scroll, ink on silk, 131.6 x 105.4 cm. National Palace Museum, Taiwan, Republic of China.



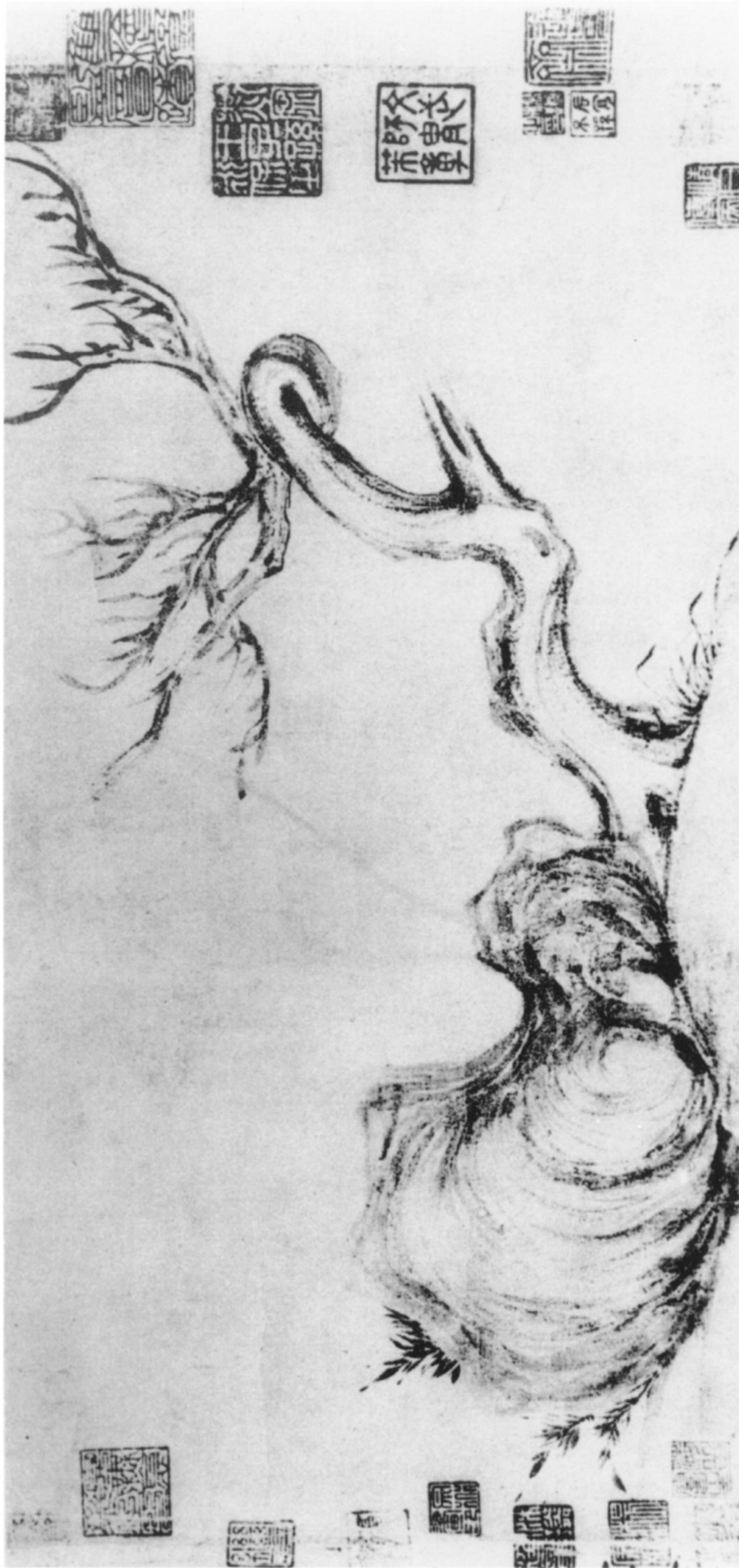


FIG. 20. Su Shi, "Old Tree, Rock and Bamboo." Ca. A.D. 1090. Handscroll, ink on paper. Collection unknown.