

Taking Out the Grand Carriage: Imperial Spectacle and the Visual Culture of Northern Song Kaifeng

Parades and processions regularly enlivened the street life of Kaifeng, the capital of the Northern Song dynasty (960–1126).¹ In every neighborhood there would have been wedding and funeral processions, common events in a city with a population of about a million. Temples also from time to time organized processions that involved parading an image through the streets. But the processions we know the most about are the ones connected to the government. Many times a year officials, guards, and soldiers paraded out from the palace to such sites as temples and altars. Once in each season a procession to the Grand Ancestral Altar (Taimiao 太廟) took place, and on the anniversaries of the death of each of the previous emperors and empresses, the “hundred officials, military and civil” all collected at one of the palace gates to offer condolences to the imperial family, then proceeded to the Buddhist or Daoist temple with an enshrined image of the ancestor. In a year when an emperor died, there would be an exceptionally large number of processions, ranging from the funeral cortege, to the series of rites scheduled at the Grand Ancestral Temple, to the “seeing off” of the statues of the deceased emperor to be installed in temples outside the city. Every three years the sacrifice at the Suburban Altar required a major procession, as did less regularly scheduled visits by the emperor or his surrogates to imperially-sponsored temples inside and outside the city.²

The magnitude of official processions depended not only on the impor-

I would like to thank Hsingyuan Tsao for her help in obtaining photographs of the painting and both Stephen West and Maggie Bickford for comments and corrections on earlier drafts.

¹ On Kaifeng, see Edward A. Kracke, Jr., “Song K'ai-feng: Pragmatic Metropolis and Formalistic Capital,” John Winthrop Haeger, ed., *Crisis and Prosperity in Song China* (Tucson: U. of Arizona P., 1975); Ihara Hiroshi 伊原弘, *Chūgoku Kaifū no seikazu to saiji egakareta Sōdai no toshi seikazu* 中國開封の生活歳時描かれた宋代の都市生活 (Tokyo: Sansen, 1991); Zhou Baozhu 周寶珠, *Songdai Dongjing Kaifengfu* 宋代東京開封府 (Kaifeng: Henan shida xuebao chubanshe, 1984).

² Information about these processions is scattered through Song texts on ritual, such as Tuo Tuo 脱脱 et al., *Song shi* 宋史 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1977; hereafter cited as *SS*), and Zheng Juzhong 鄭居中等 et al., *Zhenghe wuli xinyi* 政和五禮新儀 (SKQS edn.; hereafter *ZHWLXY*). On the processions to Jingling gong and other temples with statues, including the major one in Luoyang, see Patricia Ebrey, “Portrait Sculptures in Imperial Ancestral Rites in Song China,” *TP* 83 (1997), pp. 42–92.

tance of the occasion, but also on whether or not the emperor participated. The emperor always traveled with a large retinue (unless, of course, he sneaked out of the palace incognito, something some were suspected of doing). In 1040, the size of the retinue for minor imperial outings, such as visits to the home of an official, was increased from 409 to 716 people.³ An entourage of this size would not have passed unnoticed on the streets, but was small by comparison to any of the formal processions. When the emperor traveled to participate in a ritual, the makeup and size of the retinue depended on the weight of the occasion, linked in turn to the carriage employed. For lower-level ritual occasions, such as the regularly scheduled visits to the imperial tombs, the Grand Ancestral Temple, and a few other specified temples, the emperor took the Bell Carriage (*luanjia* 鑾駕) and an honor guard of about 7,000 people. The Statutory Carriage (*fajia* 法駕), accompanied by about 12,000 people, was employed for more formal occasions such as imperial visits to the Bright Hall, the holy mountain Taishan, and on other provincial ritual journeys. The Grand Carriage (*dajia* 大駕) was used for major state occasions, above all the triennial suburban sacrifices, but also other major ceremonies, such as sacrifices at the imperially-sponsored Daoist Temple of Reflecting and Responding to the Realm of Jade Purity (Yuqing zhaoying gong 玉清昭應宮) or the Temple of Spectacular Numina (Jingling gong 景靈宮) with its statues of former emperors. It was also used when the emperor accompanied the statues of deceased emperors on their journey to temples outside the capital. Through most of the dynasty, the number of those who paraded with the Grand Carriage hovered around 20,000.⁴

The Grand Carriage procession, like processions in other societies, accomplished many things. Most sources of the period treat it as a stage in major rituals. From a ritual studies perspective, the procession can be viewed as the transition phase accomplishing the movement of the emperor from his normal location within the palace to a sacred spot.⁵ An analysis of the procession as a ritual might focus attention on its overall structure, the relation between au-

³ SS 144, pp. 3388–89.

⁴ Ma Duanlin 馬端臨, *Wenxian tongkao* 文獻通考 (SKQS edn.) 118, pp. 1a–2a. The size of the Grand carriage procession varied over time: sources record 19,198 in 995–98; 20,061 early in Renzong's reign; 18,256 in 1050; 22,221 in the 1080s; 20,061 in 1096; and 21,575 in 1101 (SS 145, pp. 3401, 3406); Xu Song 徐松 et al., *Song huiyao jigao* 宋會要輯稿 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1957; hereafter *SHY*), sect. "Yufu 御服" 1, p. 20a; sect. "Li 禮" 2, p. 35b; and Li Tao 李燾, *Xu zizhi tongjian changbian* 續資治通鑑長編 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985–; hereafter *CB*) 169, p. 4058.

⁵ For an analysis of the structure of the suburban sacrifice as a ritual, see Howard J. Wechsler, *Offerings of Jade and Silk: Ritual and Symbol in the Legitimation of the T'ang Dynasty* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1985), pp. 107–22, and Angela Zito, *Of Body and Brush: Grand Sacrifice as Text/Performance in Eighteenth-Century China* (Chicago: U. of Chicago P., 1998). Neither of them devotes much space to the procession, concentrating on the sacrifice itself.

thorizing texts and performance, and the deployment of decorative images and colors on carriages and flags to create auspicious outcomes.

Processions can also be analyzed as political theater – as attempts by political authorities to dazzle an audience, gain its support, and impress upon it a vision of the social and political order. Royal processions were common spectacles in medieval and renaissance Europe; and even today governments at many levels organize parades.⁶ To analyze the political dimensions of a parade or procession, one would want to consider when they were held, how groups were selected to participate as marchers, the order in which they marched, how the route was chosen, the verbal labels or slogans inscribed on flags and banners, as well as the less direct symbolism of floats, clothing or uniforms, and the like.

In this essay, although I touch on the ritual and political significance of the Grand Carriage procession, my primary concern is to analyze it as a feature of the visual culture of the Song capital.

Visual culture, a concept with great potential for cultural history, has been developed by art historians primarily to expand the context in which they place art. For instance, rather than analyze a given painting by reference to preceding ones, they bring in a much wider range of pictorial materials, such as prints, pictures on ceramics, and textile designs, on the grounds that ways of looking and seeing at any given time are shaped by much more than what has been classed as art. In the last decade, scholars employing the concept of visual culture have taken fresh looks at the visual practices intrinsic not only to painting and sculpture, but also to architecture, city planning, garden design, advertisements, and movies.⁷ The concept of visual culture can be extended to encompass everything that was intended to be seen. A full study of the visual culture of China, Craig Clunas has written, would deal with "clothes and buildings and with color as a category," with "the presentation of food and of self"; it would "engage fully with the visuality operative in the theatre and in street festivals, in ephemera such as lanterns and processional floats"; it would deal with "figures, maps, plans, charts and author portraits" found in books.⁸

⁶ On processions in Renaissance Italy, see Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1981).

⁷ See Norman Bryson, Michael A. Holly, and Keith Moxey, eds., *Visual Culture: Images and Interpretations* (Hanover, N.H.: U.P. of New England, 1994); "Visual Culture Questionnaire," *October* 77 (1996); John A. Walker and Sarah Chaplin, *Visual Culture: An Introduction* (Manchester: Manchester U.P., 1997).

⁸ Craig Clunas, *Pictures and Visuality in Early Modern China* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1997), pp. 16, 29.

For historians to make use of the concept of visual culture, they must think through its premises. If everything intended to be seen is an element of the visual culture of a society, the dimensions of the subject are truly daunting. How does one decide which facets to study first? Although art historians who tackle visual culture generally have art objects near the center of their studies, to a cultural historian it makes at least as much sense to start by asking what drew people's gaze most forcefully, or what drew the gaze of the most people. Surely many more people looked at clothes, festival performances, and shop signs than paintings in the imperial collection. If we think that visual images helped shape how people thought about the world, we cannot very well ignore the issue of who saw them.

A notion of visual culture large enough to encompass processions, illustrations, and fine art is comparable to a notion of religious culture that encompasses everything from ordinary acts of piety to new cults and the most abstruse treatises of the most learned clerics; or a concept of political culture that encompasses the habits for assigning authority, discharging responsibilities, and making decisions from the level of the village or voluntary organization up to the imperial court. More research has been done on Chinese religious and political culture than on Chinese visual culture. In the cases of religious and political cultures, we see certain habits and styles that recur in diverse contexts and among different social levels or groups, ones we recognize as distinctively Chinese. However, congruences are not all that we find. Distinctions are central to the dynamics of these cultural systems; certain behavior carries prestige, brings power, or asserts identities only to the degree that it departs from common practice. In other words, vulgarity and refinement have a systemic relationship to each other and continually create each other. Sometimes the differences between the vulgar and refined ways of doing things may be ones of degree, but at other times they differ in kind.

Is visual culture similarly constituted? Are there visual practices and strategies that cross domains and make Chinese visual culture distinctive? Do differences in visual habits and strategies serve to create, maintain, or reinforce social, political, or cultural distinctions?

Pursuing these questions requires struggling with imperfect sources. Much of the visual culture of the past is irretrievably lost. We do have some objects that were important elements of visual culture, such as clothes, furniture, and paintings, but to analyze them as elements in a visual culture, it is as important to know when, how, and where they were used as what they looked like in their settings. Thus historians or art historians who want to analyze the visual

culture of the past have little choice but to draw heavily on representations of it, both pictorial representations and textual ones. To art historians accustomed to engaging visually with the objects of their inquiry, the need to reconstruct visual culture from mediated sources may be disconcerting, but it is a familiar practice to historians used to piecing together events, institutions, and practices from diverse sources, each partial in its own ways.

The Grand Carriage procession, the element of Song visual culture that I examine in this essay, makes a good case both because of its central place in the visual culture of the capital and because the sources for analyzing it are relatively rich. The procession was deeply embedded in the visual culture of the time. Those who designed the procession had to draw on contemporary visual habits and conventions in order to make the procession speak to its audience. At the same time, because the procession was such a spectacle, it added to the visual culture of the city, associating particular images, symbols, and ways of making visual points with the throne and the city. The connections among the different elements in visual culture can be explored because the Grand Carriage procession employed a great many distinct modes of visual communication, ranging from flags with written characters or pictures on them, to carriages with images of dragons on them, to ranks of guards in distinctive uniforms on color-coded horses carrying weapons. Besides textual sources that describe the procession and list the people and items that made it up, we also have some visual evidence of what it looked like in the form of a painting. This allows me also to consider the need for visual aids to the procession.

Here I examine first the procession and the various visual strategies employed in it, then turn to the books and pictures made to capture its features visually.

RECONSTRUCTING THE PROCESSION

Not everyone in Northern Song Kaifeng experienced the Grand Carriage procession the same way. Those who watched from the sidelines saw it differently from those who marched in it or those who assembled it.

The best source for viewers' responses is Meng Yuanlao's *Dreams of the Splendor of the Eastern Capital* (*Dongjing menghua lu* 東京夢華錄), a memoir of Kaifeng written after its fall, when Meng was living in the south.⁹ Meng's memories were heavily visual and so give us a sense of how he responded to the sights of the city.

⁹ On this text, see Stephen H. West, "The Interpretation of a Dream: The Sources, Evaluation, and Influence of the *Dongjing Meng Hua Lu*," *TP* 71 (1983), pp. 63–108.

To Meng, the spectacle of the Grand Carriage procession began months in advance when the elephants were rehearsed.

In a year of the suburban sacrifice, the procession elephants are trained two months in advance. They make a round trip from the Gate of Virtue Revealed to the area outside of Southern Infusion Gate (that is, from the south gate of the palace to the south gate of the city). Five carriages are used to approximate the effect of the five kinds of imperial carriage. On each carriage are placed two flags and one drum. Four horses pull them. The guards on either side of the carriages wear hats and purple robes. Several people in front of the carriages snap whips. In front of the seven elephants are several dozen vermilion flags and more than ten bronze gongs and small drums.

First the gongs are struck twice. Then the drums respond three times in rapid succession. Those holding the flags wear hats and purple robes. On each elephant is a man in a cross-tailed scarf-cap and purple robe, straddling its neck, holding in one hand a short handled bronze mattock with a pointed blade. As soon as an elephant disobeys, he strikes it. When the elephants reach the front of Virtue Revealed Tower, the group circles a few times and then forms ranks. The [elephants] then are made to face north and bow. They are also able to trumpet their assent [on command]. Each day that they practice, the various imperial relatives, members of the royal family, and nobles summon [the elephant handlers] to their private residences and give them silver and silk.

On the Imperial Way passersby gather gaily together, and onlookers are as dense as threads in a cloth. People sell or give as gambling prizes small elephants made out of clay, wood, or plaster, or paper pictures of them. Onlookers take them home as souvenirs.¹⁰

In other words, even the rehearsals for the procession associated with the suburban sacrifice were spectacles, which people gathered to watch. Meng Yuanlao even remembered the color of the garments worn by those riding the elephants and carrying the banners. The visual nature of the rehearsals was underlined by entrepreneurs who sold pictures or models of the elephants as keepsakes.

In his description of what happened on the days of the suburban sacri-

¹⁰ Meng Yuanlao 孟元老, *Dongjing menghua lu zhu* 東京夢華錄注, Deng Zhicheng 鄧之誠, ed. (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1959, hereafter *DJMHLZ*) 10, pp. 242–43. It is possible that the elephant souvenirs were sold because the word for elephant, *xiang*₄ 象, is a near cognate of *xiang*₂ 祥, auspiciousness or good luck, and “to ride an elephant” (*qi*₂ *xiang*₄ 騎象) is close to “make luck start” (*qi*₃ *xiang*₂ 起祥).

fice itself, Meng Yuanlao paid close attention to the garments participants wore, to the sounds, to the weapons and banners, and to the general commotion. He described at some length the scene at the palace before the procession actually began. As thousands of participants lined up in the huge courtyard of the Grand Celebration Hall (said to hold tens of thousands of people), a man from the Astronomical Bureau stood on top of the drum tower, tending the water clock and announcing the time to keep the preparations on schedule. While they were waiting, the soldiers kept shouting to each other, perhaps to keep each other alert. One would say “yes or no,” and the others would all shout “yes.” Or one would say, “Who is the man?” and the others would respond, “Gao Qiu, the commander in chief of the palace command.”

Meng remembered vividly the costumes of the various participants. He described the differences in high-ranking people’s hats, which varied in the number of gold ribs in their crowns, from nine down to two.¹¹ The garments were crimson or dark red, some with black trim, some with the “square-heart, round collar.” The eunuch palace attendants wore various sorts of garments with yellow or dark red emblems on them. The soldiers also wore diverse sorts of clothing and carried various objects in their hands, mostly weapons of one sort or another. Their clothing was particularly colorful and varied, perhaps so that each unit could be distinguished. One group, for instance, wore “small caps with yellow embroidered brims, yellow embroidered wide robes over narrow blue-green inner garments.”¹² Meng did not attempt to describe the various vehicles, telling his readers to consult the *Illustrations of the Three Ritual Classics* (*San li tu* 三禮圖) instead.¹³

In his description of the actual procession, Meng Yuanlao seems to have been struck more by the status markers in the dress of participants (such as the numbers of ribs in a hat) than by their order in the sequence.

From the third watch on, the procession departs, one group after the other. Each of the seven elephants is covered by a patterned damask cloth, and a golden lotus seat rests on its back.¹⁴ A golden bridle laces over the top of [each elephant’s] head and a person in silk brocade straddles its neck. Next in order are the tall flags and great fans, the decorated hal-

¹¹ Meng apparently made a mistake here as all other sources reserve the nine-ribbed hat for the emperor.

¹² *DJMHLZ* 10, p. 244.

¹³ Unfortunately, the versions of this 11th-c. work that survive do not have illustrations of the carriages; see Nie Chongyi 聶崇義, *Sanli tu jizhu* 三禮圖集注 (SKQS edn.).

¹⁴ Both *SS* and *ZHWLXY* list six elephants. I do not know whether Meng’s memory was faulty or whether an additional elephant had been incorporated by the end of the Northern Song.

berds and long spears, and the mounted officers in multi-colored jerkins. Some wear small hats over brocade or embroidered scarves, some black-lacquer round top scarf-caps. Some wear leather-like helmets, some hats of lacquered leather shaped like water dippers covered with towels. Some wear garments of red and yellow fishnet-design brocades and embroideries. Some dress entirely in green or black, down to their shoes and socks, and wear cross-tailed scarf-caps. Some decorate themselves with silken cords wound like snakes around their bodies. Sometimes teams of several tens lead the way carrying a large flag. Some men grasp great axes, wear swords on their thighs, and hold red ceremonial shields and ceremonial lantern poles; some hold poles from which hang leopard tails; others hold short batons. The halberds and spears are all trimmed with colorful ribbons and bronze bells. The flags and fans are all painted with images of dragons or tigers, clouds, mountains, or rivers. There are also some flags [on poles] fifty feet high that are called “next yellow dragon.”¹⁵

Although Meng Yuanlao clearly relished the visual stimuli and commotion of the Grand Carriage procession, officials who commented on these processions usually did so to lament the lack of solemnity. For instance, in 1092 Su Shi 蘇軾 (1046–1101) held the post of commissioner of the imperial insignia, which meant that he was responsible for the Grand Carriage procession to the suburban sacrifice that year. In the middle of the ceremony he submitted a memorial reporting that more than ten red covered carriages, carrying women from the palace, followed the procession, competing for space on the road with the imperial procession. In his view women had no part to play in these sorts of ceremonies. It was bad enough that it had become the custom for the empresses to go out to welcome the return of the imperial carriage, but for them to arrive before the sacrifices were complete and get caught up among the various pennants and flags was unacceptable. We are told that when the emperor read the memorial, he sent a messenger to convey it to the grand empress dowager, the real power at the time, after which greater solemnity was achieved.¹⁶ Su Shi, in other words, like several scholar-officials before him, was troubled by the popularity of the procession, by the tendency for it to become street theater – something the palace women did not want to miss.

Men like Su Shi, charged with orchestrating the procession, have left most of the documents about the Grand Carriage procession, since they are the ones who cared most about getting each person, object, and animal in the

right place. These documents include long lists of the men and material employed in the procession, plus the memorials and edicts concerning proposed revisions or innovations.¹⁷

In addition to these textual sources, an extraordinarily rich visual source also survives. A long handscroll illustrating the procession has recently been published in part under the title *Illustration of the Imperial Guard of Honor* (*Lubu tu* 鹵簿圖, which I refer to for short as *Honor Guard*).¹⁸ The painting is in color on silk, 14.8 m long and 51.4 cm tall. It is prefaced by a list of the men and equipment needed, which specifies 5,481 men (of whom 3,369 are soldiers, 494 in armor), 58 vehicles, 2,873 horses, 36 oxen, 6 elephants, 1,701 musical instruments, 1,548 weapons, plus 90 flags, streamers, and related paraphernalia. Numerous cartouches have been inserted, labeling the figures and recounting the historical origins of different items.¹⁹

The dating of this painting has perplexed scholars because of contradictions between the inscription on the list and the cartouches on the painting. The cartouches cite early Song precedents and quote the high official Song Shou 宋綬 (991–1040), who submitted an illustrated book on the Grand Carriage procession in 1028. After a thorough study of the issues involved in the dating of the painting, the modern scholar Chen Pengcheng came to the

¹⁷ The principal sources on the imperial carriage procession are *SS* 144–148; *SHY*, sect. “Yufu” 1–3; *ZHWLXY* 13–15; Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 et al., *Taichang jingeli* 太常因革禮 (CSJC edn.) 27–28; *Wenxian tongkao* 116–118.

¹⁸ Different parts of the handscroll have been published in different places. The first section was published in a poor black-and-white photo on the back cover of *Lishi jiaoxue* 歷史教學 in 1984 (Lü Shuzhi 呂樹芝 [pseudonym], “Songren hui ‘Dajia lubu tu juan’ [bufen]” 宋人繪大駕鹵簿圖卷 [部分], *Lishi jiaoxue* 歷史教學 [1984.5], p. 64, plus back cover). Quite good color photos of two sections, perhaps about a meter each, were published in National Museum of Chinese History, *A Journey into China’s Antiquity* (Beijing: Morning Glory Publishers, 1997) 4, pp. 238–43. A smaller-scale color photo (too small to read the text without a good magnifying glass) was published in National Museum of Chinese History, *Exhibition of Chinese History* (Beijing: Morning Glory Publishers, 1998), pp. 134–35. The painting is in the collection of the National Museum of History in Beijing, but because of its poor condition cannot be viewed. When I visited the museum in June, 1999, a full-scale photo-reproduction was mounted high on the wall, too high to read the texts, but allowing a general view of the composition of the painting. I was however able to order photographs of some sections to supplement what is available in publications, as well as photograph what was on the wall. The photographs from the wall, however, are not sharp enough for me to read all of the text.

¹⁹ Although this is the only surviving illustration of the procession dating from the Northern Song, there is a painting believed to show the considerably scaled-back procession of the Southern Song. In the collection of the Liaoning Provincial Museum, it has been published in Fu Xinian 傅喜年, ed., *Zhongguo meishu quanji* 中國美術全集 (Beijing: Wenwu, 1988), sect. “Huihua bian 繪畫編” 4, pp. 176–77. This Southern Song painting is much smaller, 26.6 by 209.6 cm., and done in a much sketchier, almost cartoon-like manner. The procession is certainly much less grand, with many fewer horses and carriages. The painting lacks the detailed cartouches of the Northern Song painting.

¹⁵ *DJMHLZ* 10, p. 247.

¹⁶ Su Shi 蘇軾, *Su Shi wenji* 蘇軾文集 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986) 35, pp. 992–93.

conclusion that the handscroll must have been painted in 1053. The inscription, which he concludes was forged, was added in the Yuan period so that the painting could be presented to the Yuan court as part of a proposal for reinstating the procession.²⁰

The lists of those in the procession preserved in the *Song History* and elsewhere do not correspond exactly to *Honor Guard* because *Honor Guard* has adopted various ways to abbreviate.²¹ Often the cartouches report that there would be dozens of men from particular units, but only a few are depicted. For instance, one cartouche calls for 156 bird-tail fans, but the painting shows only six, each carried by one man. Visual abbreviation of this sort probably explains why the painting depicts many fewer participants than historical sources say took part.²² Nevertheless, the overall structure and sequence of the lists and the painting correspond closely enough to use the

²⁰ Chen Pengcheng 陳鵬程 “Jiu ti ‘Dajia lubutu shu’ Zhongdao yanjiu ‘Yanyou lubu’ niandai kao” 舊題大駕鹵簿圖書中道研究延佑鹵簿年代考, *Gugong bowu yuan yuankan* 故宮博物院院刊 (1996.2), pp. 76–85. To summarize Chen, at the end of the list of men and material needed is an inscription reading “compiled and presented on the ___ [left blank in the original] day of the eighth month of the fifth year of Yanyou [1318] by the compiler in the Hanlin National History Bureau, Zeng Sunshen 曾巽申.” Naturally, this led people to assume Zeng had painted it and to call it the Yanyou imperial procession painting (e.g., *Shiqu baoji* 石渠寶笈 [SKQS edn.] 35, pp. 24a–b). Added to this, the funerary biography of Zeng reports that Zeng wrote a five-juan “illustration of the honor guard” that he submitted along with other books to the provincial government, which passed it on to the central government. It finally reached the emperor, who in 1309 summoned Zeng and told him that the painting showed not only how ritual and music honor the ruler but also the usefulness of Confucian scholars. Zeng received a post in the central government and in his leisure did paintings of the procession, both en route and after arrival. The succeeding emperor saw these paintings, and was just as appreciative as his predecessor.

Chen does not doubt that *Honor Guard* is one of the two paintings Zeng submitted the second time, but he is convinced that he did not paint them himself. Chen compares what is depicted or inscribed on *Honor Guard* to what is recorded in other sources. Certain features, like the Five Oxen conveyance, had already been eliminated by the end of the eleventh century. Others, like the type of South Pointing Carriage, had not been introduced until well into Renzong’s reign. From analysis of this sort, he concludes that the painting depicts the procession of 1053.

Chen does not think Zeng could have painted a view of the 1053 procession for several reasons, in part because textual sources did not provide enough information, but, more crucially, the painting is clearly the work of court artists, not an amateur painting in his spare time. Chen notes that Zeng was, according to his biography, a passionate collector of old paintings and calligraphies, and proposes that Zeng had had the painting in his own collection. Zeng could quite sincerely have wanted to convince the Mongol rulers to institute court rituals conforming more closely to Chinese precedent and thought this painting would make a good case for the impact of well-choreographed processions if he could dissociate it from the discredited Sung dynasty. To achieve this purpose, he had to cut off the front of the scroll to eliminate the prefect of Kaifeng and perhaps a title or seals showing its Northern Song origins. The end of the painting also appears trimmed, probably to remove an inscription.

²¹ The *Song History* list is found in *SS* 145, pp. 3408–17. Other Northern Song lists are for the Zhenghe period (1111–13), preserved in *SS* 146; *SHY*, sect. “Yufu” 2, pp. 16–22b; and in *ZHWLXY* 13–15. There is also a list for the Southern Song in *SS* 147. These depart even further from *Honor Guard*.

²² Another possibility is that the painting shows what the procession actually looked like and

painting to interpret the lists. Here I summarize the procession, drawing on both the *Song History* and *Honor Guard*.

The overall structure of the procession can be thought of as a long series of uneven rows of men. Each row was marked by symmetry along a central axis (left and right of each row being mirror images of each other; figure 1). At points in the procession a row was tightly packed with twelve or more horsemen, precisely lined up. At other times a row had only a few

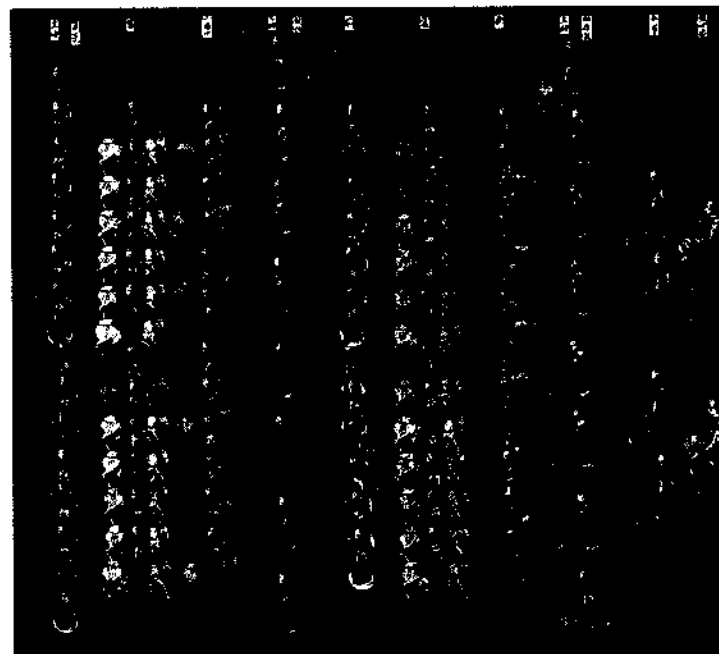


Figure 1. Illustration of the Honor Guard

Courtesy of the Museum of Chinese History, Beijing. Detail showing symmetry.

evenly spaced men on foot or on horse. Sometimes only a single object or person made up a row. The *raison d'être* of the procession, the imperial conveyance, did not appear until more than half the procession had passed.

that the textual sources give ritualized numbers, not actual ones. The argument against that interpretation is that the sources listed in n. 5 show considerable variation in the number of participants. If ritual officials preserved for generations out-of-date numbers for the participants in various categories, one would expect greater consistency in the nominal sizes listed in different sources.

Both before and after the conveyance, the rows of men on horse or foot were broken up by series of eye-catching vehicles and flags.

The procession began with the six elephants that had so impressed Meng Yuanlao. Then came what were termed the Six Leaders: the prefect and the governor of Kaifeng, the minister of the court of imperial sacrifices, the minister of education, the censor-in-chief, and the minister of war.

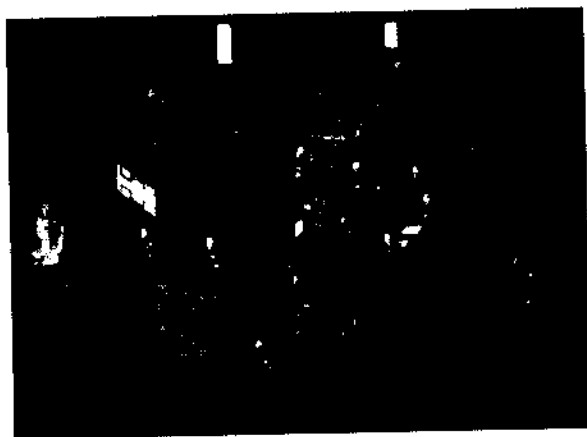


Figure 2. Honor Guard (detail)

One of the Six Leaders and his entourage.

Honor Guard begins with the last three of the Six Leaders.²³ The carriages of the Six Leaders announced their rank and position. According to the *History*, the prefect of Kaifeng, who held lower rank, rode in a black carriage pulled by two red horses and accompanied by eighteen horsemen. The others had red carriages, pulled by four red horses, accompanied by twenty-five horsemen. The designs on each of these carriages differed: tiger for the minister of war, phoenix for the minister of the court of imperial sacrifices, unicorn for the censor in chief, and hawk for the governor of the capital.²⁴ From *Honor Guard*, however, it seems unlikely that these designs would have been visible from any distance (figure 2, above). Rank was, however, made more visible by the size of the retinues, which according to the *History* could reach 200 or more. In *Honor Guard* no one has over fifty in his entourage, but the retinues are still visually impressive.

After the Six Leaders came a military unit. Two of its armored horsemen carried flags of the White Marsh god (Baize *qi* 白澤旗).²⁵ After several more rows of soldiers came two very colorful rows with flags (figure 3). The first row had flags with images of heavenly phenomena: wind, rain, thunder, lightning,

and the north pole; the second row had images of the five elements as star deities. The north pole was represented by a star map, the other phenomena by deities in human or animal form. The flags mostly had red borders and streamers, with blue grounds, except for the north star flag in solid black and two flags with red grounds.

The six float-like vehicles that came next were all bright red, and all pulled by four horses decorated with feathered hats. Eight men in long-sleeved red robes helped guide each carriage by holding onto guide ropes. The first vehicle was the "south pointing carriage," with a wooden figure at the top that constantly points south (figure 4).²⁶ The second one, slightly taller, was also a mechanical device, this time one with automaton

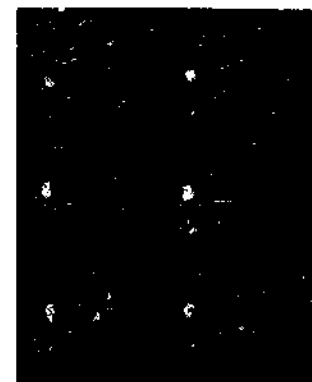


Figure 3. Honor Guard (detail)

Flags of heavenly phenomena.

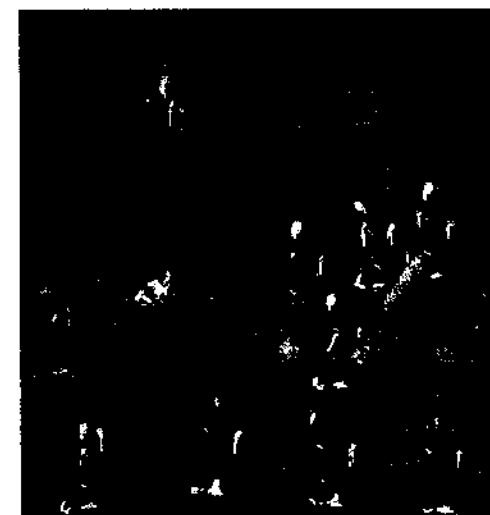


Figure 4. Honor Guard (detail)

South-pointing carriage.

that strike a drum at each *li* and a gong at every ten *li*. The following four carts, called the white swan, phoenix, abundant virtue, and leather carts, were if anything more striking visually, with bold designs on their bodies or flags (figures 5–6, following page).

After these floats came rows of musicians, none, apparently, playing an instrument. According to the *Song History*, however, there should have been over 900 musicians, predominantly drummers, but also many with flutes, stringed instruments, gongs, and other instruments.

The float-like objects that

²³ Chen Pengcheng believes that the first three were cut off so that the Northern Song origins of the painting would not be obvious; see n. 20, above.

²⁴ *SS* 150, pp. 3505–6.

²⁵ Well illustrated in National History Museum, *Journey into China's Antiquity* 4, p. 241.

²⁶ This might be the earliest Chinese illustration of this mechanical compass. See Joseph Needham, with the collaboration of Wang Ling, *Physics and Physical Technology, Part II, Mechanical Engineering*, vol. 4 of *Science and Civilisation in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1965), pp. 286–303, which shows only later illustrations.

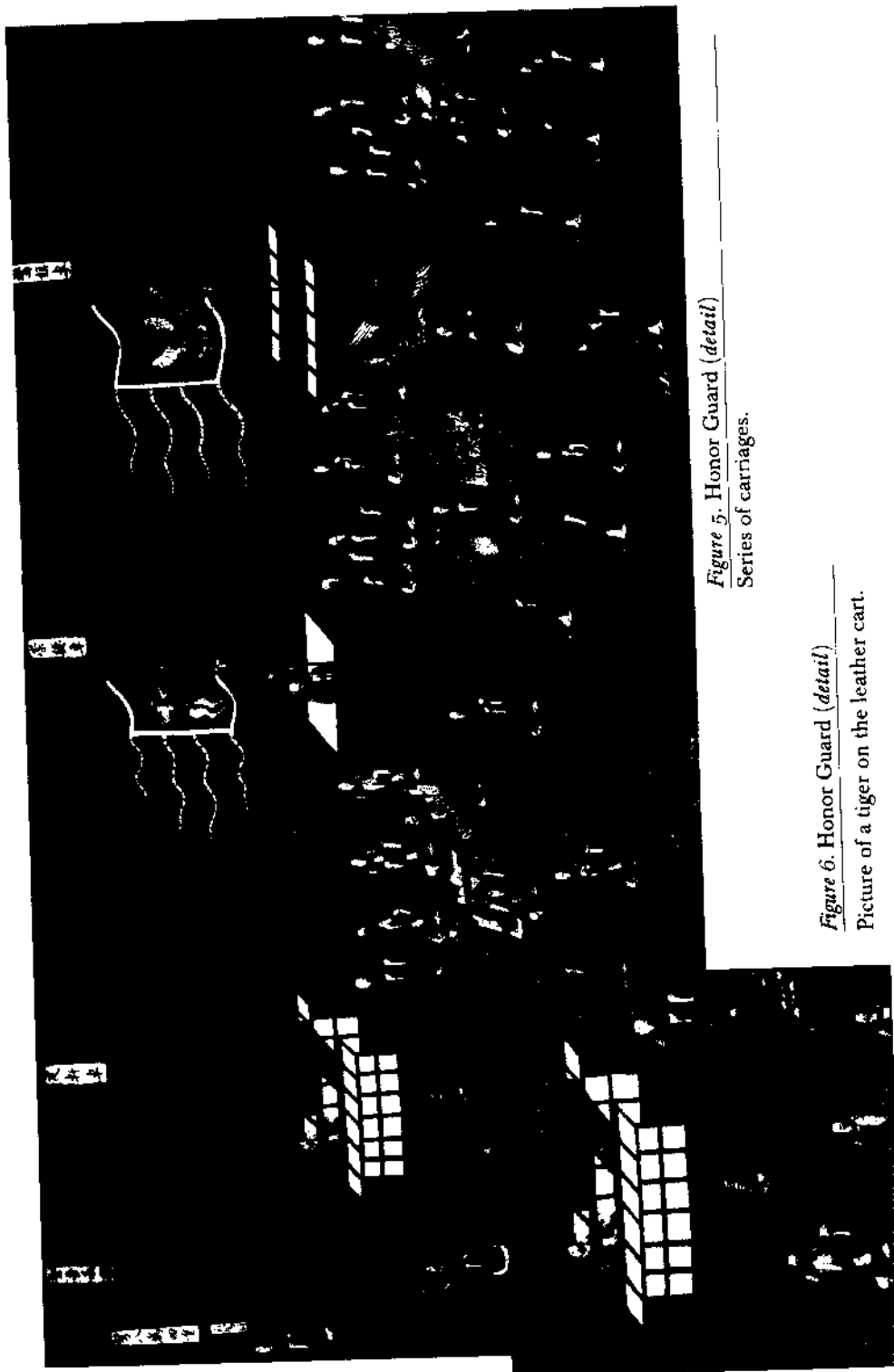


Figure 5. Honor Guard (detail)
Series of carriages.

Figure 6. Honor Guard (detail)
Picture of a tiger on the leather cart.

came next included a water clock and a wind vane. They were followed by a long section with most of the participants on foot. Some held flags, such as two Heavenly Horse flags and two flags identifying their military units (the left and right Dragon Martial Armies). These last two flags were held by one man in a white robe, assisted by four others holding tie lines, each man dressed in a different color (blue, red, green, and white) (figure 7).

Behind this unit came a group of imperial horses. Both the *Song History* and the cartouche on *Honor Guard* call for twenty-four horses, but *Honor Guard* depicts only six, pure white, each with a gold embellished red saddle but no rider, led by two men on foot (figure 8). The imperial horses were followed by a group of archers surrounding a set of flags. From the *Song History*, we know that flags of the sun and moon came next. From *Honor Guard*, we can see how these heavenly bodies were depicted. The sun was

represented by a golden circle with a three-legged crow in it, above a cloud, against a red background (figure 9); the moon by a white circle with a figure in it, also on a cloud, but against a blue background. Flags



Figure 7. Honor Guard (detail)
Flags held by footmen with ropes.



Figure 9. Honor Guard (detail)
Sun flag.



Figure 8. Honor Guard (detail)
Imperial horses.

of the green dragon, white tiger, and an auspicious plant followed.

From *Honor Guard*, we can see that the Grand Carriage was made grand not so much by size – many of the other carriages in the procession were comparable – but by the way it was surrounded on all four sides. For someone watching from the sidelines, its approach was signaled by the appearance of two “gate” flags, each depicting a soldier (probably thought of as gate gods). From this point until well past the imperial conveyance, all the way to the two “end gate” flags, was a space marked off by three files of horsemen on the two outer edges, protecting the emperor from spectators. The outermost of the three files was made up of armored riders on armored horses (figure 10).

The inner imperial space, marked off by the front and rear gate flags and the three files of body guards, was densely packed with attendants. The gate

flags were followed not merely by the usual soldiers, but also by two giants in military dress plus two rows of attendants on foot holding canopies and fans. Then came several rows of horsemen from the Imperial Insignia Light Guard holding flags. The first row of flags show the gods of the five holy mountains as civil officials, each distinctively dressed. The horsemen in the second row hold flags of similar size and shape

that depict generals, identified as the gods of the five directions. The next group is composed of the dragons of the five directions, followed by four flags of the four rivers, depicted as civil officials. *Honor Guard* alters the



Figure 10. *Honor Guard* (detail)
Gate flag, two giants, and canopy bearers.

order found in the *Song History*, putting the four rivers in the middle; in addition it shows only five, not twenty-five, flags for the dragons and phoenixes, another example of visual abbreviation.

Immediately after these flags came a table with a covered “treasure of receiving the mandate,” attended on all sides by men on foot. The cartouche explains that the treasure is an imperial seal and traces the origin of the men assigned to accompany it back to the *Ritual of Zhou*. By this point in the procession, civil officials are becoming more prominent. Officials who worked closely with the emperor in the palace rode here, ranging from relative lowly secretarial receptionists 通事舍人 (rank 7b) and attendant censors 侍御史 (6b), to imperial diarists in the Chancellery 起居郎 (6b), palace stewards 給事中 (4a), drafters in the Secretariat 中書舍人 (4a), vice directors of the Secretariat 中書侍郎 (3b), vice directors of the Chancellery 門下侍郎 (1a), directors of the Chancellery 侍中 (1a), and directors of the Secretariat 中書令 (1a). Also preceding the Grand Carriage was a table covered in gold-decorated red cloth, carried by four men. On the table was an incense burner flanked by two candle sticks. The cartouche does not explain why an incense table is carried, but does cite a Tang source on the type of cloth used to cover the table.

According to the *Song History*, the emperor could ride either in the “jade carriage” or the “grand sedan chair.” *Honor Guard* depicts both, though both are unoccupied. Had the emperor been seated in either, spectators would have been able to see him, as both had open sides. Each conveyance was decorated, but the designs were not large or prominent enough to make a major impression, given all the other visual stimulation. According to the *Song History*, the jade carriage was decorated with designs of cosmological significance (the green dragon on the left, the white tiger on the right), as well as dragons and phoenixes in gold, silver, and jade. On the left of the carriage was a green flag with twelve streamers, all embroidered with rising dragons. On the right, to balance them, were spears and halberds. The *Song History* reports that the carriage was pulled by six black horses with gold masks and other decorations, with sixty-four horsemen accompanying it. In *Honor Guard* this is, as usual, abbreviated (figure 11).²⁷ The grand sedan chair in *Honor Guard* seems a simpler vehicle than the elaborate one described in the *Song History*.²⁸ It is set off, however, by men holding decorative fans and shades (figure 12).

After the imperial carriage and sedan chair came more military units, then the final, long series of vehicles, some shaped like the imperial carriage

²⁷ SS 149, pp. 3479–80.

²⁸ SS 149, p. 3486.

but in other colors, others of very different design. Some were pulled by oxen rather than horses. The most unusual of these vehicles was a set of



Figure 13. Honor Guard (detail)
Five oxen vehicles.

five platforms for colored oxen (white, red, black, yellow, and blue), each with a seated ox of the designated color plus a flag with a picture of it. The oxen, the cartouche on *Honor Guard* informs us, were made of wood (figure 13).

This highly abbreviated summary shows many ways the Grand Carriage procession would have kept the attention of its audience. There was both balance and variety, with something new continually coming. Even when there were long stretches of marchers or horsemen, visual interest was created through contrasts in the colors of their garments or horses or by the way they were arrayed. Some horsemen rode in groups, others alone or with one or two attendants on foot. Even the horses were made to look distinct, as differences in their colors were exploited to good effect and they were

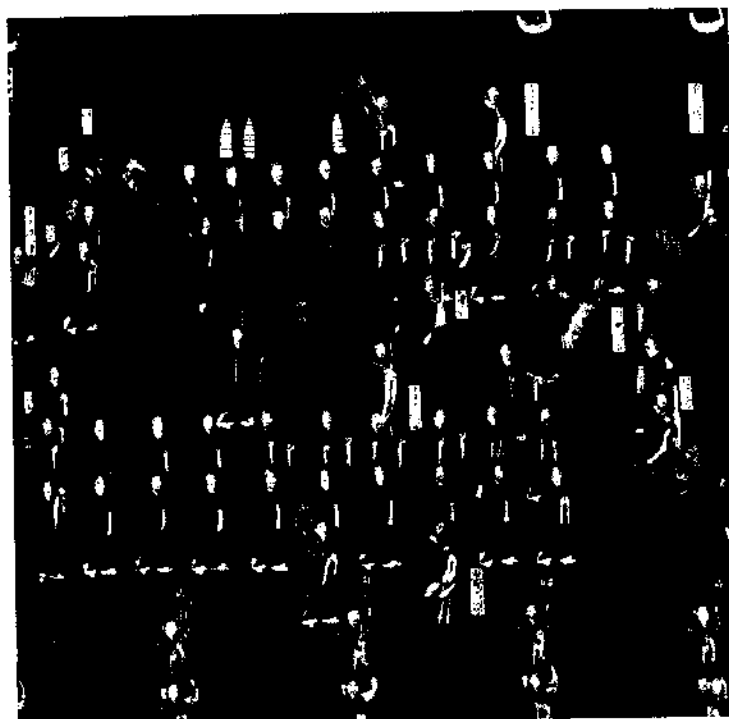


Figure 11. Honor Guard (detail)
Grand carriage.

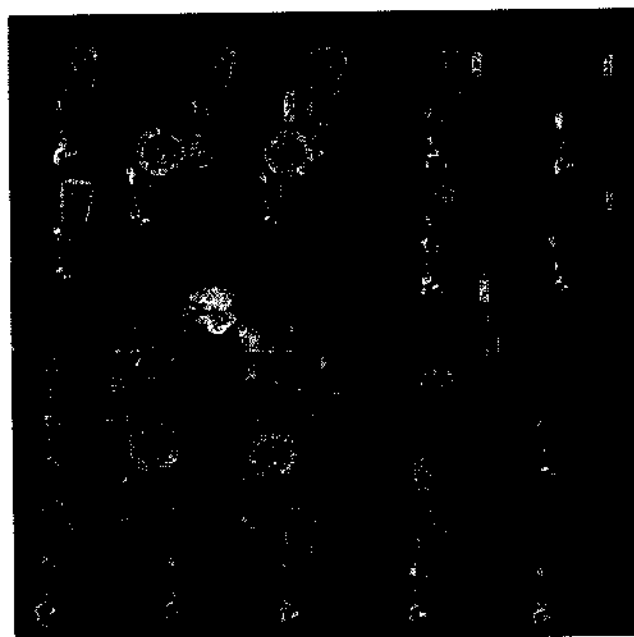


Figure 12. Honor Guard (detail)
Grand sedan chair.

decorated in distinctive ways. Some even had mask-like headgear (figure 14).

Viewers of a procession, like viewers of a ritual, did not necessarily comprehend the full significance of each element. They did not have the cartouches explaining such things as the origins of the Five Oxen vehicle. Moreover, the procession was moving and making noise; viewers no doubt shouted and jostled each other to get a better look. The overall experience would depend on where one stood, how long one watched, whether one had ever seen it before, how much one knew of the historical and symbolic associations of particular items, and many other factors. But certainly some rather general messages were conveyed to most of the audience.



Figure 14. Honor Guard (detail)

Horse with mask.

A political reading of the Grand Carriage procession would insist that the throne used it to represent itself to the general public. All those in the procession, from the guardsmen, musicians, astronomers, and eunuchs to the officials and the supernatural forces depicted on flags were being represented as elements in the retinue to the emperor, as part of the forces at his command. Some priority was given

to high-ranking civil officials, who came immediately after the elephants, but there were many more guardsmen in the procession than officials. There was a liminal quality to the procession, an inversion of ordinary spatial hierarchies: what was normally kept inside was brought outside. Ordinary people were not allowed into the huge palace compound, which for them was concealed space, but during the Grand Carriage procession (and the lesser processions to lesser degrees) the palace compound emptied out onto the streets. Scholars today commonly view the emperor and the bureaucracy as comprising almost equal partners at the top of the Song power structure. When the emperor took to the streets, however, that was not the vision of the power structure he conveyed.

THE GRAND CARRIAGE PROCESSION AS A COMPONENT OF SONG VISUAL CULTURE

Those who designed and produced the Grand Carriage procession had to draw on the visual practices familiar to the residents of Kaifeng. At the same time, the procession added to the visual culture of the city, providing new images, symbols, and ways of making visual points. To show how deeply the

procession was implicated in Song visual culture, here I will look more closely at the three main visual strategies employed: the use of pictorial representations, the deployment of actual objects, and the coding of costume.

Pictures were used in the Grand Carriage procession to decorate the garments of the soldiers and the carriages of the Six Leaders and the emperor, but judging from *Honor Guard*, the objects that carried pictorial content most forcefully were the flags. Not only were they held high so that everyone could see them, but they had bold colorful images, set off by bright, eye-catching borders and streamers.

The flags had a dual existence, as they were carried not only outside the palace during processions, but were in many instances also displayed inside the palace during major ceremonies. The link between flags and rulers goes far back in Chinese history (not to mention the history of other countries), as flags probably originated as battle standards. But by Song times the flags carried in the Grand Carriage procession did not represent the army; the might of the throne was represented concretely through its armed soldiers. Rather, the flags were used to represent elements of the emperor's retinue that could not join the parade any other way – above all gods, celestial bodies, and auspicious forces.

The choice of what to depict on the flags was not fixed by custom but was open to new ideas. Early in the dynasty, Tao Gu 陶穀 (903–970) designed flags depicting the stars and constellations as well as the gods of the five directions, five mountains, four rivers, and so on. The Song founder, Taizu (r. 960–975), commissioned twenty-one other flags, for instance of the sun and moon, of lions, dragons, and phoenixes, as well as two inscribed with the words “Ten thousand years for the rulers 君王萬歲” and “great peace throughout the realm 天下太平.”²⁹

The arrival of propitious gifts or discovery of auspicious omens could lead to the creation of new flags. In the early years of the dynasty, flags were made to commemorate the presentation to the court of a yellow parrot, white rabbit, and trained elephant. In 1010 flags were added to commemorate auspicious omens such as red light emanating from an image of Laozi and immortal cranes appearing at a temple. At the end of the Northern Song, during Huizong's reign, the appearance of multi-headed grain and of cranes landing in the palace led to the introduction of yet more flags.³⁰

From *Honor Guard* we know that celestial bodies and terrestrial forces were represented on the flags by human and animal imagery (see figure 3). Forces like wind and lightning, and also astral bodies like stars and constella-

²⁹ *SS* 145, p. 3400. ³⁰ *SS* 145, p. 3400; 148, pp. 3461–62; *SHY*, sect. “Yufu” 3, pp. 1a–4a.

tions, were represented as deities, and these deities were represented in human form, as civil or military officials. Here the designers of the flags were participating in the popular visual culture of temples, which had statues and paintings of many of these deities.³¹ These links to popular religion may be what led to Confucian scholars' objections to the design of the flags. In 1080 ritual specialists objected to the fact that the flags representing the twenty-eight constellations had depictions of the gods of each constellation on them, which they saw as based on the theories of "magicians" (*fang-shi*).³² These objections eventually carried the day. The Ming-era illustrated encyclopedia *Sancai tuihui* 三才圖會 not only shows the constellations as

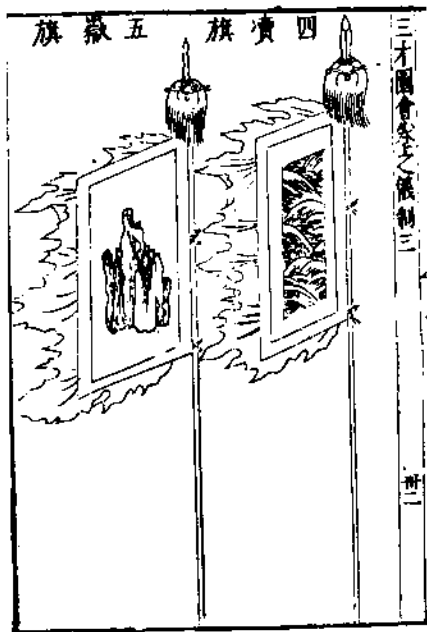


Figure 15. Flag of the Five Peaks and Four Rivers

From *Sancai tuihui*, "Yizhi" 3, p. 32b.

star maps, but the five peaks and four rivers are represented by rocks and water, not gods in human form (figure 15).³³

Representation was not invariably pictorial: it also could take the form of three-dimensional sculpture, such as the wooden oxen (see figure 13). However, the pictorial certainly predominated.

On the other hand, visual communication was not primarily through replicas or representations (things that stand for things other than themselves). Actual objects were deployed even more frequently. The idea of the army, the civil service, the Astronomical Bureau, and the Music Service was conveyed by actual physical people, animals, vehicles, weapons, and musical instruments. The crossbows (figure 16), halberds, and spears held by soldiers were real ones. The water clocks,

weather vanes, and other instruments indicative of imperial mastery of the heavens presumably all worked. The elephants, horses, and oxen used for transportation were all living animals.

The Chinese monarchy often used size and scale to convey the idea of its majesty – for example, by building large palaces and filling them with huge numbers of palace ladies. The use of actual objects in the procession can be thought of as a dimension of this urge to overwhelm. Nevertheless, it should also be kept in mind that actual objects can be at least as symbolically resonant as images. Certainly the elephants were as effective as the dozens of images of dragons in conveying imperial majesty. True, dragons had long been associat-

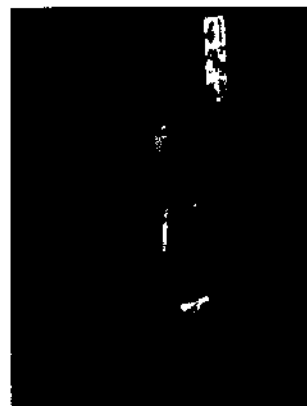


Figure 16. Honor Guard (detail) Crossbow.

ed with the potency of the throne. Elephants, however, had on their side both their size and their foreignness; coming from distant regions, they demonstrated the universality of the rule of the "Son of Heaven" who receives tribute from exotic southeast Asian lands. But even if both elephants and dragons were potent images, to those on the sidelines the pictorial image of the dragon was lost in the welter of visual information, but the elephants, with their bulk and noise, made a strong impression (one reinforced by the replicas for sale by vendors). Meng, eloquent on the elephants, said nothing about the images on the carriages and lumped together most of the flags and banners in a single sentence.

The third form of visual communication that played a major role in the procession was the coding of costume. What announced that a man was an official, a soldier, a clerk, or a musician was the cut and color of the garments he wore. After all, the audience did not have labels identifying the different men on horseback; it was their dress and what they held in their hands that supplied meaning.

From *Honor Guard* it is evident that much of the visual interest of the procession came from the patterns created by men wearing costumes of different cut and color. It shows guards in tan armor, on armored horses. There are men labeled generals who did not wear battle dress, but red, brown, or white long-sleeved robes. Sometimes two men seem to be wearing identical clothes, but their hats are quite distinct. Among nonmilitary figures, there is similar variety. Some clerks are shown in red garments, with nothing in their hands.

³¹ For paintings of such deities on the walls of a Song temple, see Anning Jing, "Buddhist-Daoist Struggle and a Pair of 'Daoist' Murals," *BMFEA* 66 (1994), pp. 119–81.

³² *SS* 148, p. 3462.

³³ Wang Qi 王圻, *Sancai tuihui* 三才圖會 (rpt. of Wanli edn.; Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe), sect. "Yizhi 儀制" 3, p. 32b; 4, pp. 2a–8b.

Some officials are shown in green garments, holding the tablet of office, long-tailed caps on their heads. Others holding tablets have grey robes and ribbed hats. Some officials are accompanied by attendants in round-collared robes with red borders. Walking attendants near the imperial carriage are, by contrast, dressed in blue robes and hats.

The garments of guards and soldiers varied primarily by unit.³⁴ For officials, costume encoded distinctions of rank.³⁵ Officials wore three different types of dress, varying in level of formality: “official 公” or “ordinary 常” dress, worn by officials in the everyday course of their business and for routine court ceremonies like audiences; the more formal court 朝 dress, issued from palace storehouses when it was required for occasions like the New Year’s audience, when foreign envoys were entertained; and sacrificial 祭 dress worn by those making sacrifices. *Honor Guard* depicts officials in both official dress and court dress (figure 17).



Figure 17. Honor Guard (detail)

Two kinds of official dress.

³⁴ *SS* 148, pp. 3471–74.

³⁵ The rank that determined dress was “personal rank.” In Song times, a distinction was made between the post that an official held and his personal rank (*pin*). The distinction between the rank of the man and the rank of his post made it possible to assign an official wherever he was needed, even if the post was classed much higher or lower than he deserved, because he would still be advancing at a reasonable rate in the personal-rank hierarchy. What makes the system complicated is that personal rank was indicated by giving each official a concurrent post in the defunct Tang bureaucracy. Thus there was more than one titular post that indicated rank three, and these posts could not merely be divided by rank, but put in sequence, leading to an even more finely tuned hierarchy. Not only that, there were two parallel hierarchies, one of civil titles and one of military titles (though those holding military titles were part of the civil service, not the army). Officials made their way up one hierarchy or the other, depending largely on how they entered the civil service. For a brief description, see Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 1985), pp. 48–49. For a fuller account, see Winston W. Lo, *An Introduction to the Civil Service of Song China, with an Emphasis on Its Personnel Administration* (Honolulu: U. of Hawaii P., 1987), pp. 141–71.

ished, and the brackets were widened so that the top four grades wore purple, five and six red, and seven, eight, and nine green. In 985 it was ruled that at the suburban sacrifice, any court official who had been wearing red or green garments for twenty years could wear the next higher color.³⁶

Court dress encoded rank in ways different from those used in official dress. Neither the cut nor color of court robes varied by rank; all officials wore red robes with a white-trimmed “square-heart” collar. Differentiation by rank was expressed through variations in their hats, sashes, and pendants.³⁷ From *Honor Guard*, it seems unlikely that those at the sidelines would be aware of these more subtle signs of distinction, even if the participants were all too conscious of them.

The existence of long-standing dress codes (some going back even to the classics) naturally curbed the freedom of those designing the procession to create visual effects. It would have been visually more interesting to have officials all parade in their color-coded official dress (as they did on the death-day anniversaries of former emperors and empresses), but the more uniform court dress was required by precedent and the theories of ritualists who approved of its allusions to antiquity. But since military men outnumbered civil service officials in the procession, and their costumes were less restricted by tradition, those designing the procession still had considerable leeway to create visually compelling patterns.

Taking all features of the Grand Carriage procession together, we can see many elements in the visual culture of the time that it strengthened. The procession associated bold patterns and bright colors, especially red, with celebration and the throne. It reinforced the use of human forms to represent deities. Its preference for strict left-right symmetry and for rows and lines that were as straight as possible elevated such strict patterning to an ideal of order and hierarchy.

³⁶ *SS* 153, pp. 3561–62.

³⁷ The hats worn by the highest officials, termed the “advancing worthies” hat, had five ribs, with gold and silver decorated bands, rhinoceros horn and tortoise shell hairpins, and an erect writing brush used as a hairpin. As a special distinction, those officials in the secretariat and chancellery added the “basket-cloth sable cicada 籠布蟬貂.” Along with the five-rib hat, the highest rank officials had a jade sword, a silver and leather belt, a sash of halo-design brocade, and two jade disks. The next highest level wore a similar hat, but with only three ribs, and the hairpin was of rhinoceros horn alone. Their swords and disks were of silver rather than jade, their sashes were of a brocade of a different design (“lion cub”). Fourth and fifth grade officials wearing a two-rib hat had bronze swords and disks and yet another design in the brocade of their sashes (“trained magpies”). For sixth grade officials, the sword, pendant, and sash were eliminated. Anyone of lower rank participating in the ceremony would dress the way the sixth grade officials dressed; *SS* 152, pp. 3550–52. See also *Taichang yingzi* 26, pp. 162–64, which dates the first set of rules to 1041.

The elements I have just described are, of course, in marked contrast to what we usually think of as the aesthetic preferences of the Song elite. This procession was not in the muted colors of Song ceramics, nor did its aesthetic principles have much to do with those of Song monochrome paintings of landscapes or bamboo. Literati like Su Shi, who appreciated simple monochrome paintings, did not live in a monochrome world. They were making aesthetic choices that departed from the visibility operative in many other facets of the culture around them, including the culture of the court and the street.

VISUAL AIDS TO THE PROCESSION

Up to this point, I have examined the Grand Carriage procession as a spectacle, an event that took place on the streets of Kaifeng and made an impression on participants and spectators alike. I have tried to show the ways the procession drew from and added to the stock of ways to convey information visually through pictures, color, and the patterns created by the positioning of people and objects.

Now let me turn from how the procession communicated visually to how people communicated visually *about* the procession. The Grand Carriage procession was too complex a phenomenon to be described using words alone. If ritual experts wanted the performance to conform to a pre-designed plan, they had to be able to communicate their plan to the people preparing the men and materials, and for this diagrams or pictures of some sort were needed. The strategies used to create such illustrations were also a part of Song visual culture.

Pictures and diagrams, ranging from maps and floor plans to illustrations in reference books, differ from paintings intended as art, but there is a large middle ground, a continuum from the most aesthetically ambitious paintings, to paintings that narrate historical events, to diagrams with few if any aesthetic goals. To think of illustrations as a part of visual culture, we must see them in the context of this continuum.

We know from textual sources that three types of visual aids were created to help clarify what these processions ought to look like, which we can loosely classify as diagrams, illustrated books, and paintings. What the Chinese called "word-pictures 字圖" seem to have been diagrams. At the very beginning of the dynasty, in 963, the three officials charged with organizing the procession consulted an *Annotated Picture of the Procession to the Suburban Sacrifice* (*Nanjiao lubu zitu* 南郊鹵簿字圖), dated to the Tiansheng reign (926–933) of the Later Tang. Because the drawing was crude and contained many contradic-

tions, a new diagram was commissioned.³⁸ In 1050 the commissioner of professional regalia (*lubu shi*) reported that the Ministry of War had lost its old copy of the annotated picture for the Statutory Carriage procession, and the ritual officials were ordered to work with them to make a new one.³⁹ In 1074 the minister of the Court of Imperial Sacrifices was ordered to examine in detail the Ministry of War's diagram of the Grand Carriage procession regalia.⁴⁰ These diagrams, it would seem, were consulted by the Ministry to help them assemble the uniforms, weapons, horses, armor, and personnel they had to provide for the procession and get everyone lined up properly on the final day.

Nothing labeled a word-picture has survived, so I can only speculate about what they would have looked like. By Song times the Chinese had long been using ground plans and maps to show distribution in space viewed from above.⁴¹ To make it easier to recognize objects like buildings, normally seen from the side, they could be shown as though they had been knocked flat. But



Figure 18. Diagram of Military Encampment

From *Wujing zongyao*, *qian* 7, p. 277.

it was not necessary to represent people or objects by pictures. Various sorts of symbols could also be used. The eleventh-century military manual titled *Essentials of the Military Arts* (*Wujing zongyao* 武經總要) has many diagrams illustrating the way an army should arrange itself when marching, setting up camp, or lining up for battle.⁴² These diagrams usually represent individual people by circles, but also make frequent use of written words to represent names of groups or of places like gates (figure 18). This solution conveys only their position, not their appearance.

³⁸ *CB* 4, p. 108. *SS* 145, pp. 3399–3400, refers to this as a Tang-dynasty rather than Later Tang-dynasty work, probably in error.

³⁹ *CB* 169, pp. 4057–58; *SS* 145, pp. 3403–4.

⁴⁰ *SS* 145, p. 3404.

⁴¹ See Nancy Shatzman Steinhardt, "Chinese Cartography and Calligraphy," *Oriental Art* 43 (1997), pp. 10–20.

⁴² E.g., Zeng Gongliang 曾公亮, *Wujing zongyao* 武經總要 (Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe, 1988), *qian* 前 6, pp. 229–32, 235–36; 7, pp. 277–78, 285–86, 289–90, 293–94, 297–98, 301–2, 305–6, 309–10; 8, pp. 327–28, 329–30, 341, 345, 347–48, 351–52, 355, 357–58, 361–62, 365.

In the case of the Grand Carriage procession, the need to illustrate the appearance of individual items was met through illustrated books (literally, “picture-records” 圖記). Renzong, who came to the throne in 1023 as a boy of thirteen, once asked one of his high officials, Song Shou, about the origins of the items used in the procession, and as a result Song Shou prepared a ten-juan book, which he submitted in 1028.⁴³ Court painters, including Gao Keming 高克明 (fl. 1008–1053), were assigned the task of illustrating it. The resulting book, printed in the palace, had illustrations on the right and explanations on the left. The palace women who spent time with the young emperor were instructed to open it up every day and explain the items to him. The book remained in use for decades. When another child came to the throne in 1085

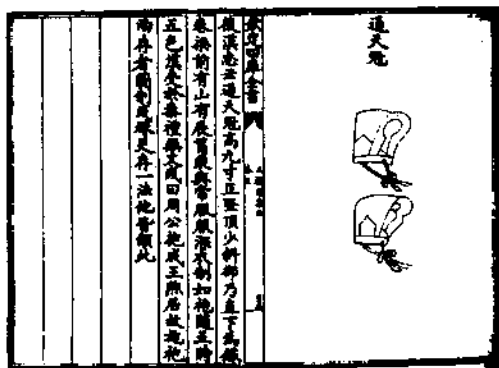


Figure 19. Page Describing “Penetrating to Heaven” Hat

From *Sanli tu* 3, pp. 25a–b.

its history. This is the format used by other illustrated books published in the Northern Song, such as *Sanli tu* (figure 19).

In addition to these diagrams and illustrated books, at least two paintings were made to illustrate the procession. In 996 Taizong commissioned one, which was finished under his successor over two years later in 998. It was painted by Song Bo 宋白 and other court painters and consisted of three sections. (The reference to sections suggests that it was a handscroll.) A separate

picture showed how the marchers lined up after the procession arrived at the site of the ceremonies. The court was so pleased that Song Bo was rewarded with 30,000 cash and other gifts, and the other painters received comparably generous compensation. These paintings were then stored in the Imperial Library.⁴⁶

Honor Guard, which might have been created in a similar way, is the only visual aid to the Grand Carriage procession to survive, but we should keep in mind that it was not the only one in existence at the time, and therefore that it did not have to serve all the purposes for which illustrations were needed.

Honor Guard is painted in a fine style, with rich pigments and painstaking



Figure 20. Honor Guard (detail)

Note the fineness of style.

draftsmanship, suggesting court production. The artist provided no background, no indication of where the procession is being observed – whether, for instance, it is inside the city or outside it. This indifference to place and time rules out the possibility that *Honor Guard* was commissioned to commemorate a particular performance. Nor did the artist try to capture the experience of the spectators, the noise, commotion, and excitement that Meng Yuanlao tried

⁴³ SS 145, p. 3401; 291, p. 9735; 204, p. 5132; CB 122, p. 2885.

⁴⁴ Wang Mingqing 王明清, *Huizhu lu* 揮麈錄 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1961), *houlu* 後錄 1, p. 53.

⁴⁵ SS 145, pp. 3406–7.

⁴⁶ SS 145, p. 3401, and the passage from *SHY* cited in Chen, “Jiu ti ‘Dajia lubutu shu,’” p. 82.

to convey. Rather the artist documented how the procession was to look according to the directives of the court. The captions were written in the style of a reference work, but *Honor Guard* is not a mere diagram, like the diagrams in *Essentials of the Military Arts*. The artist did much more than show the placement of the various figures; he put a face on each man and horse and added enough variety to postures and expressions to make studying the picture visually interesting (see figure 20, previous page). In the densest sections of the procession, closer rows partly obscure the view of rows behind them, but they have been spaced generously enough that a viewer can still see the distinctive features of clothes, horses, flags, and weapons.

Why was *Honor Guard* done in such a fine, detailed style? Why was one or more court artists assigned to spend so much time on it? We can probably assume that the painting conforms to the wishes of those who commissioned it. The emperor (presumably Renzong) could have asked for it himself, but even if the emperor initiated the project, an official may have instructed the painters how to paint it. What we do know is that it was cast as a painting more than a diagram or illustration, so that its function of illustrating something difficult to convey in words alone was partially masked. Perhaps the officials in charge thought it wise to obscure the fact that the adult Renzong could still benefit from a visual aid. Or perhaps they thought a fine painting would please the emperor by showing the magnificence of his court.

It may seem a stretch to think of the Grand Carriage procession and the surviving illustrations of it as parts of one larger visual culture. The visual practices seen in the procession itself on the surface have little to do with the visual practices found in pictures of the procession or its component parts. Conveying information visually when one can draw on people, animals, weapons, carriages, clothes, and almost anything else reasonably portable is rather different from conveying information using ink and color on a flat surface. Words are much easier to add to a diagram or picture than to a moving procession. Great disparities in size enhance the impact of a procession, but work less well in the small format of the page or sheet.

Connections between the visual strategies of the procession and its illustrations thus do not exist as congruences. But that does not mean they are unrelated. The confusion, movement, and over-stimulation of the procession generated the need for visual ways to capture it, quiet it, and make it still. Frozen depictions of the procession were essential to those orchestrating another performance. They also could satisfy the desire to hold on to or possess what is inherently fleeting.

VISUAL CULTURE REVISITED

Thinking in terms of the concept of visual culture led me to investigate a feature of Song cultural history that historians had ignored, despite the availability of a great deal of documentary evidence and an elaborate painting. Laying out the basic features of this imperial procession has, I think, offered insights into several important features of the cultural dynamics of the period, from the way the court communicated with the urban populace, to how people would have experienced the geography of the city, to the status games of officials and the practical business of maintaining records of complex court productions.

As discussed earlier, through the Grand Carriage procession the imperial institution represented itself to the general public. We usually think of the “public” of the court as the political elite, the educated class who took some interest in the comings and goings of high officials and the policies debated at court. Those were certainly the ones addressed in the written texts issued by the court in great quantities: the edicts, appointment papers, histories, and other official publications. But the throne did not neglect other constituencies or other means of communicating with them. Ordinary residents of the capital, from day laborers to wealthy merchants, were the audience for processions. Positive feelings toward the throne, perhaps even verging on affection, were encouraged by the comradeship of the occasion. The emperor, who normally stayed hidden from the view of his ordinary subjects, came out into the open, showing his face to the people. The procession moved slowly enough that an emperor who spotted someone had time to send greetings to him and have him bow in response.⁴⁷ In this sense the emperor was making himself more accessible to his subjects. But he certainly was not abasing himself, as he surrounded himself with his minions – the guardsmen, musicians, astronomers, eunuchs, and officials who did his bidding. The emperor who made himself a part of the life of his subjects was a magnificent monarch.

From Meng Yuanlao's *Dreams of Splendor of the Eastern Capital* we can also see how the movements of imperial processions shaped urban residents' experiences of the passage of time and the geography of their city. High on the list of seasonal events central to life in the capital were the regularly scheduled visits of the emperor to various temples or parks. As these naturally took dif-

⁴⁷ Cai Tao 蔡條, *Tiewei shan cong tan* 鐵圍山叢談 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983) 5, p. 87, mentions Huizong sending a eunuch to carry his greetings when he saw a man he knew on the sidelines, and the man prostrating himself in response.

ferent routes, ordinary residents would associate different roads or sections of the city with particular occasions when the imperial carriage and imperial retinue passed that way. The throne, we might say, stamped itself on the city by traveling through it in attention-grabbing ways.

For officials, imperial processions carried other associations. Those required to participate by marching were put on view. Officials, of course, were never kept out of sight to the degree the emperor was, and they moved about the city in the ordinary course of their official and personal business. Yet to many residents, officials must have been remote figures. To onlookers, it may have been almost as exciting to catch sight of a famous official as to see the emperor's face. For the officials themselves, this was not an unmixed blessing. Many, it would appear, were conscious of how the clothing they wore announced their rank in the civil service hierarchy, since to assuage their feelings, those who had been wearing red or green garments for twenty years or more were allowed to wear a higher color for this occasion.

Art historians have used the concept of visual culture to reexamine objects elevated to the stature of art by putting them in larger visual contexts. Although I cannot speak for how art historians would integrate the material presented in this article into their understanding of Song visual culture, let me mention one case where it has colored my own responses.

The best-known depiction of a Song city, "Pure and Bright along the River" ("Qingming shanghe tu"), is, like *Honor Guard*, a long handscroll depicting numerous people, animals, and vehicles, done by an excellent draftsman of the Song court's painting establishment. Would Zhang Zeduan, the painter of "Pure and Bright along the River," ever have been required to do an exacting illustration of court activities in the manner of *Honor Guard*? Assuming that he was at least familiar with such paintings, we would also have to conclude that he made every effort to paint in a radically different way when he painted "Pure and Bright." When he depicted vehicles and riders, he showed them from many angles, never lined up. Rather than eschewing reference to time and place, he indicated the seasons with the light green of the willow trees and the place with the gate, bridge, and distinctive shops. Although he gave the impression of wanting to convey as much of the scene as he could, he did not use the full colors of *Honor Guard*, but only occasional touches of light washes, conveying most of the appearance of boats, shops, and people in ink alone. In other words, these two paintings seem to represent two quite distinct ways painters could convey messages the court wished to see circulated. One style was chosen when the goal was to capture the imperial creation of order and hierarchy.

The other style was chosen when the aim was to show the results of perfect imperial institutions: a happy, prosperous population, able to regulate itself with minimal interference from the government. In texts, officials could make the argument that the court's ritual productions served to establish the correct human relations that made possible good order without much use of coercive force. When the means of communicating was paintings, however, artists could most effectively convey the beauty of hierarchical order if they did not simultaneously have to convey the exuberance of a prosperous populace, and vice versa.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CB	<i>Xu zizhi tongjian changbian</i> 續資治通鑑長編
DJMHLZ	<i>Dongjing menghua lu zhu</i> 東京夢華錄注
SHY	<i>Song huiyao jigao</i> 宋會要輯稿
SS	<i>Song shi</i> 宋史
ZHWLXY	<i>Zhenghe wuli xinyi</i> 政和五禮新儀