

Document and Portrait: the Southern Tour Paintings of Kangxi and Qianlong

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The series of monumental handscrolls that illustrate the Southern Inspection Tours of the Kangxi and Qianlong Emperors are among the grandest and most important court-sponsored paintings of the Qing dynasty. Immense in scale – the Kangxi set measures over 700 feet in length, the Qianlong set, over 470 – and taking more than five years each to complete, the finished paintings, together with several draft scrolls for the Kangxi set, provide important evidence about the working methods of artists employed by the court as well as recording a wealth of detail about imperial paraphernalia, official ceremonies, and daily life; as imperially-sponsored pictorial documents, the paintings not only record historical events, they portray the tastes and reveal the different characters of two of China's most famous monarchs.

The Tours and their Representation

The Southern Tours of Xuanye (1654-1722), the Kangxi Emperor (r. 1662-1722), were an impressive manifestation of his personal rulership. During his 61-year reign, Kangxi made numerous inspection tours to the north, west and east as well as six tours to the South (Table 1).¹ In the early part of his reign these tours had the very practical objective of encouraging the loyalty of Han Chinese to their Manchu overlords. The rebellion of Wu Sangui (1612-1678) and the Three Feudatories, which took Qing armies eight years to suppress (1673-1681), forcefully demonstrated how tenuously Manchu control extended across the vast Qing empire.²

Kangxi's first tour of the South in 1684, made just three years after the defeat of the rebel armies in Yunnan, was more like a scouting party than a triumphal procession. He was accompanied by more than 1,000 soldiers and courtiers, and his trip from Beijing to Suzhou, Nanjing and back to

Tour	Year	Reign Year	Age (<i>sui</i>)	Inclusive dates	Lunar calendar	Days
I	1684	23rd	31	05 Nov-03 Jan	09/27-11/29	60
II	1689	28th	36	28 Jan-08 Apr	01/08-03/19	70
III	1699	38th	46	04 Mar-14 Jun	02/03-05/17	102
IVa	1702	41st	49	14 Nov-	09/25-	aborted
IVb	1703	42nd	50	03 Mar-29 Apr	01/16-03/14	58
V	1705	44th	52	03 Mar-19 Jun	02/03-05/23	108
VI	1707	46th	54	24 Feb-21 Jun	01/22-05/22	117

Table 1: Southern Tours of the Kangxi Emperor (r. 1662-1722)

the capital lasted only 60 days. Although his stated reasons for the tour were to inspect river conservation work and inquire after the well-being of the people, Kangxi's most important objectives must have been to gauge the feelings of Southern gentry, to gain their acceptance and enlist their support. Throughout his tour Kangxi made every effort to play the role of a traditional Confucian monarch and as a gesture of reconciliation, he personally offered sacrifices at the tomb of the first Ming emperor in Nanjing. Even so, he was extremely cautious in planning his itinerary, avoiding both Yangzhou and Hangzhou where Manchus had brutally suppressed Ming loyalist resistance forty years earlier.

Kangxi's second tour of 1689 established the basic pattern for all subsequent Southern Tours (see Map 1). On each day of travel the emperor covered about 15 miles (25 km) on land or 30 miles (50 km) on water; his entire journey encompassed a distance of roughly 2,000 miles (3,300 km).³ Traversing the entire length of the Grand Canal as well as the overland courier route connecting the Manchu capital to the South, this tour enabled the emperor to inspect the most vital economic and communications arteries of the empire. More importantly, the various functions and ritual ceremonies which Kangxi enacted as well as his very presence among the populace served to confirm his legitimacy and demonstrated his intention to rule his Chinese subjects as a Chinese-style monarch. All along the route Kangxi enjoyed lavish demonstrations of hospitality in return for which he granted remissions of taxes and grain tribute, made donations to temples and local schools, promoted worthy officials and held audiences with both dignitaries and commoners. In addition, he conducted a ritual to honor the deity of Mt Tai,

and made a special excursion from Hangzhou to Shaoxing and the Temple of Yu, the legendary tamer of the flood and the founder of the Xia dynasty.⁴

Kangxi's subsequent four tours varied little from the second tour except that they became ever more lavish and leisurely. He never again repeated his excursion to Shaoxing and in the last two tours he traveled by boat both to and from the capital.⁵

It was his triumphant second tour of 1689 which Kangxi chose to have commemorated in painting. The route of his journey was condensed into twelve long handscrolls which were collectively titled the *Nanxuntu* or 'Picture of the Southern Tour'. Begun around 1691, the entire project took about seven years to complete; nine of the twelve finished silk paintings and four of the paper drafts are still extant (Table 2).⁶

The first scroll shows Kangxi's departure from Beijing. It begins at the Yongding Gate, the southern gate of the city, and ends at Nanyuan, a royal hunting park six miles due south of the capital. Scroll II follows the emperor's journey through northern Shandong from Pingyuan to the provincial capital of Ji'nan; scroll III illustrates the emperor's route from Ji'nan to Mt Tai and on to Mengyin. Scroll IV stretches from the Shandong-Jiangsu border to the point where Kangxi crossed the Yellow River (which at this time flowed into the sea south of the Shandong peninsula through Jiangsu Province) and includes the nearby confluence of the Yellow and Huai Rivers. It was at this point that Kangxi and his retinue boarded boats and followed the Grand Canal for the remainder of their southward journey. Scrolls V and VI are missing, but probably feature Yangzhou and the crossing of the Yangtze River. Scroll VII illustrates the journey from Wuxi to Suzhou. Scroll VIII is again missing, but a paper draft for this scroll survives and illustrates the route from Suzhou to Tangqi, a small town located on the grand Canal about fifteen miles (25 km) north of Hangzhou. Scroll IX records the route from the Qiantang River to Shaoxing and the Temple of Yu. Scroll X depicts the first leg of Kangxi's northward return journey from Jurong to Nanjing, including an inspection of troops in the former capital; scroll XI illustrates the emperor's passage from Nanjing down the Yangtze to the island of Jinshan. Scroll XII is unique in the series in that the direction of travel of the emperor's entourage is contrary to the direction in which the scroll unrolls. The painting begins at the right with the Taihe Hall in the heart of the Forbidden City, and progresses outward along the axial way, showing all of the court and the imperial insignia bearers arrayed on either side of the route between the Meridian Gate (Wumen) and Duan Gate, awaiting

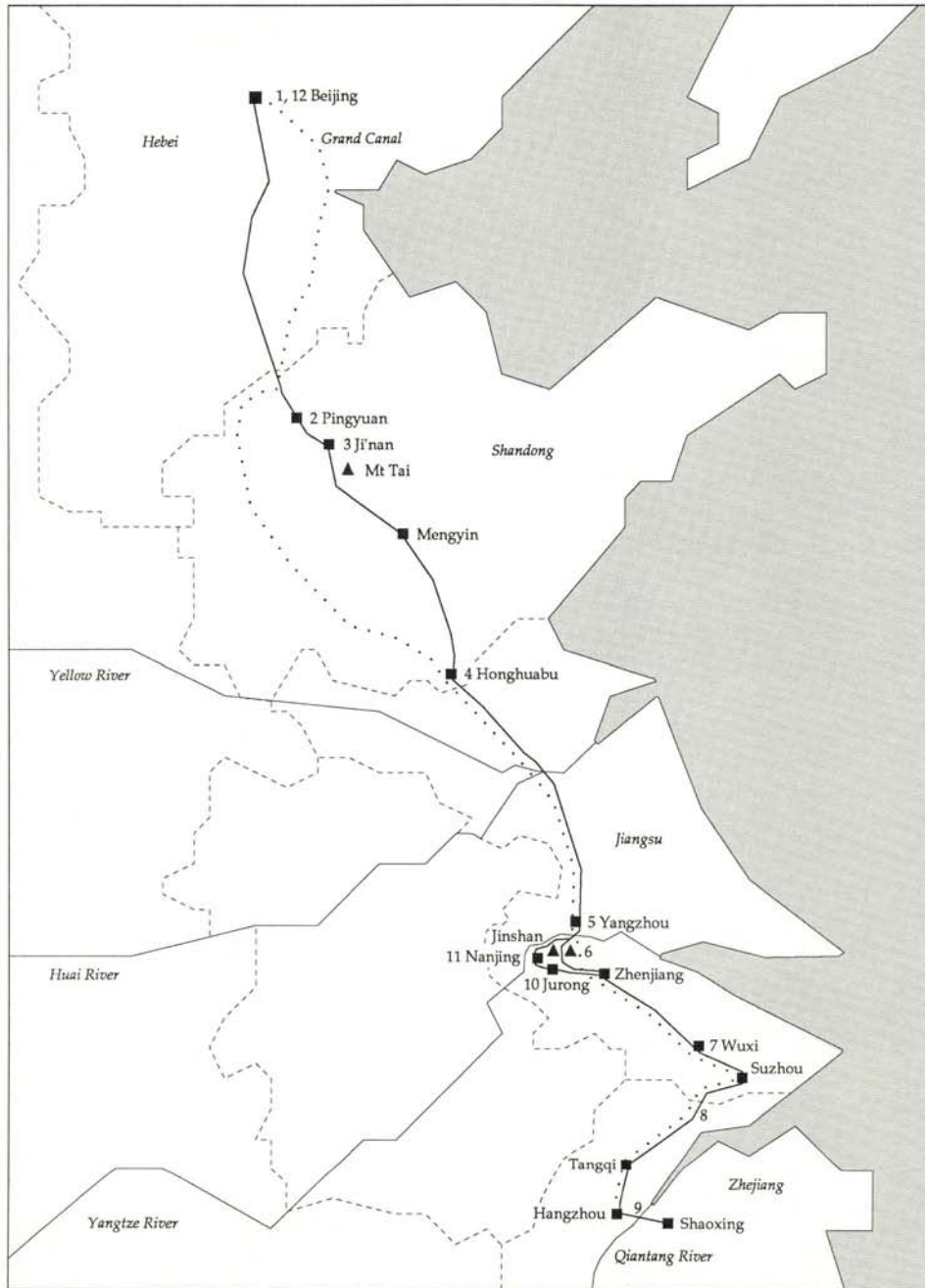
Scroll	Itinerary	Dates	Distance depicted mi (km)	Collection	Length@ (cm)	Draft version and dimension (cm)
I	Beijing: Yongding Gate to Nan Yuan	28 Jan	6 (10)	Beijing	1555	
II	Pingyuan to Ji'nan	03-05 Feb	55 (90)	Paris	1377	
III	Ji'nan to Mt Tai to Mengyin	05-08 Feb	120 (200)	New York	1393	
IV	Shandong-Jiangsu border (Honghuabu) to confluence of the Yellow and Huai Rivers	12-13 Feb	95 (155)	Paris	1562	
V	(Yangzhou?)					
VI	(Crossing the Yangtze to Zhenjiang?)					
VII	Wuxi to Suzhou and Tiger Hill	22-23 Feb	30 (50)	Canada	2195	Nanjing 64.7 × 2955
VIII*	Suzhou to Tangqi	24-27 Feb	85 (140)	Beijing	1965	Beijing 65.7 × 1965
IX	Qiantang River to Shaoxing and Yu Temple	04-05 Mar	36 (60)	Beijing	2227.5	
X	Jurong to Nanjing; military inspection	16-20 Mar	28 (45)	Beijing	2559.5	Beijing 66.1 × 2451
XI	Nanjing to Jinshan	21-22 Mar	50 (85)	Beijing	2313.5	Shenyang
XII	Beijing: Yongding Gate to Hall of Supreme Harmony	08 Apr	3 (5)	Beijing	2612.5	
Total		71 days	508 (840)		19760#	

@ The width of the scrolls is 67.8 cm.

* Scroll VIII survives only in a paper draft version. Its width, 65.7 cm, makes it slightly narrower than the finished silk version.

This is equivalent to 642.19 feet. Assuming that the silk version of Scroll VIII is no shorter than the draft and that Scrolls V and VI each measure at least 1370 cm, the total length of the twelve scrolls would exceed 22,500 cm (more than 730 feet.)

Table 2. Kangxi's Second Southern Inspection Tour (1689)



Map 1. Kangxi's 1689 Southern Tour, illustrated in Wang Hui's *Nanxuntu*.

the emperor's arrival. Kangxi is shown in the midst of his entourage approaching the Qian Gate in a palanquin. The scroll ends with the Yongding Gate, the same gate with which the first scroll in the series had begun. Just inside the gate is a final tribute to Kangxi: a remarkable rebus-like assemblage of citizens forming the characters *tianzi wannian* ('Long Live the Emperor').⁷

The nine scrolls on silk plus the paper draft of the eighth scroll together document about 473 miles (785 km) of the route (see Table 2); the missing scrolls, V and VI, probably add at least 50 more miles (80 km) to this figure. Taking into account that large portions of the emperor's return journey retraced his outward path, the *Nanxuntu* illustrates nearly one half of the route traversed by the emperor.

The Kangxi *Nanxuntu* documents the route and major events of his trip in amazing detail. The first and the last scrolls, showing the emperor departing from and returning to the capital, are largely devoted to cataloging the pomp and ceremony of court occasions. They are dominated by the imperial entourage and the incredible array of state carriages and insignia bearers called for on such full dress assemblies of the court.⁸ The ceremonial aspect of official life is also chronicled in the draft of scroll VIII where local magistrates and provincial officers are assembled on either side of the Jiangsu-Zhejiang border to welcome or send off the emperor, reflecting the 1675 statute that all office-holders living within a distance of 100 *li* of the emperor's route were required to present themselves when he passed.⁹ Other manifestations of imperial power and legitimacy appear in the tenth scroll where Kangxi is shown reviewing a military exercise in Nanjing, and in the third and ninth scrolls where the emperor is depicted en route to Mt Tai and visiting the Temple of Yu. The emperor's various modes of travel are also recorded: in a palanquin, on horseback, on barge and sail boat, as well as on foot. His temporary palaces include temples, the Silk Commissioner's Residence in Suzhou, and an elaborate complex of Manchu-style tents which were used when no other suitable residence was available. The lavish entertainments provided for the emperor – theatrical performances, banquets and elaborate decorations – are all depicted in great detail. Perhaps even more fascinating, however, is the diversity of local life presented by the scrolls: wood gatherers, fishermen and farmers in rural areas as well as the teeming street life, shops and private residences of city dwellers in the major cultural and commercial centers. The scrolls do not stop with the prosperous and happy; impoverished peasants kneel before the emperor in Shandong, crowds sometimes push and shove and have to be restrained by force, and at a display of Manchu horsemanship in Nanjing,

a sizable crowd finds diversion in watching one bannerman chase helplessly after his recalcitrant mount. Indeed, for large sections of the Suzhou and Nanjing scrolls, one loses sight of the imperial procession altogether and our attention is completely absorbed in exploring the fascinating richness of city life. Shown in this context, Kangxi emerges as an onlooker as well as the principal actor in the affairs of the empire – not all of which are subject to his control. The *Nanxuntu* celebrates Kangxi as supreme ruler, but also shows him sharing the stage with an immense cast of characters. The very diversity of these subsidiary actors – beggars, rowdy crowds and a Manchu soldier unable to command his horse – all reflect upon Kangxi's own humanity, tolerance and openness.

At the age of seventy-four, the Qianlong Emperor cited two major accomplishments in reflecting on his fifty-year-long reign: one was his ten victorious military campaigns; the other was his Southern Tours.¹⁰ This observation suggests how importantly the emperor viewed his travels to the South; yet it was not until he was forty years old (41 *sui*) that Qianlong made his first Southern Tour.

Hongli (1711-1799), who took the throne as the Qianlong Emperor (r. 1736-1795) at the age of 25, ruled for fifteen years in the shadow of the four regents appointed by his father. With the death of Oertai (1680-1745) and the retirement of Zhang Tingyu (1672-1755) in 1749, however, Qianlong's rulership entered a new phase. No sooner had Zhang Tingyu submitted his petition for retirement than Qianlong initiated plans for his first Southern Tour which began a little over one year later on 8 February 1751.¹¹

By this time, Manchu rule had been established for over 100 years and there was little need to visit the South for reasons of national security. Indeed, Qianlong's father, the Yongzheng Emperor (r. 1721-1735), made no Southern Tours. Qianlong's stated reasons for this and the five other tours he eventually made (Table 3) were to inspect river conservation work and investigate conditions among the people. Other important motivations for the emperor must have been his curiosity about the fabled beauties of the South and his eagerness to emulate his grandfather, the Kangxi Emperor.

The route of Qianlong's Southern Tours and their manner of documentation are modeled closely on those of Kangxi and are best understood in light of his ambition to rival or surpass the deeds of his grandfather.

Tour	Year	Reign Year	Age (<i>sui</i>)	Inclusive dates	Lunar calendar	Days
I	1751	16th	41	08 Feb-26 Jun	01/13-05/04	139
II	1757	22nd	47	28 Feb-12 Jun	01/11-04/26	105
III	1762	27th	52	05 Feb-27 May	01/12-05/04	113
IV	1765	30th	55	05 Feb-09 Jun	01/16-04/21	124
V	1780	45th	70	16 Feb-11 Jun	01/12-05/09	117
VI	1784	49th	74	11 Feb-10 Jun	01/21-04/23	121

Table 3: Southern Tours of the Qianlong Emperor (r. 1736-1795)

Qianlong became obsessed with representing himself to posterity as an ideal Confucian ruler or sage-king. Not only did he undertake ambitious military campaigns, immense public works projects and grandiose palace constructions, he documented his every deed through painting, poetry, publications and the erection of stelae to insure that history would judge him to be an exemplary monarch.

Although the route of Qianlong's six tours and the ceremonies he enacted closely parallel those of Kangxi (Table 4, Map 2), there is a curious fifteen year hiatus between his fourth tour of 1765 and his fifth tour of 1780.¹² One explanation may be that the financial burden of these extravagant pageants may have influenced the emperor to discontinue them.¹³ It was only in his later years, after Qianlong fell under the influence of the sycophant Heshen (1750-1799), that he made a fifth tour in 1780 – on his seventieth birthday (70 *sui*) – and a sixth tour in 1784, thereby equaling the number made by Kangxi.¹⁴

That Qianlong originally intended his 1765 tour to be his last is suggested by his commission of a grandiose publication, the *Nanxun Shengdian* ('Magnificent Record of the Southern Tours'), to commemorate his first four Southern Tours.¹⁵ Published in 1771, the year after Qianlong's sixtieth birthday (he was 60 *sui* in 1770), it is a massive work of 6,700 pages divided into 120 chapters (*juan*). Although Kangxi never published a formal record of his Southern Tours, Qianlong's *Nanxun Shengdian* is clearly based on a similar Kangxi era publication, the *Wanshou Shengdian* ('Magnificent Record of Longevity'), which was compiled to commemorate Kangxi's sixtieth birthday celebration and which is also 120 chapters (*juan*) in length. Both works include extensive woodblock illustrations. The *Wanshou Shengdian* illustrates the birthday procession of the Kangxi Emperor from the Changchun Palace to the Forbidden City, taking as a model the *Wanshoutu* ('Painting in Celebration of Longevity'), the nearly

300-foot-long painting created for the occasion under the supervision of Wang Yuanqi (1642-1715).¹⁶ The Qianlong *Nanxun Shengdian* is copiously illustrated with diagrams and pictures concerning river conservation, sea walls, military formations and scenic spots as well as a map of the route that covers seventy-five double-pages. The more than 150 scenic spots illustrated in the publication are based on paintings executed by Qian Weicheng (1720-1772).¹⁷

Like Kangxi, Qianlong also commissioned a twelve-scroll painting of one of his Southern Tours.¹⁸ Whereas Kangxi commissioned the illustration of his 1689 tour less than two years after the trip's conclusion, Qianlong waited nearly fifteen years to commission a similar set of scrolls illustrating his first tour. The Qianlong *Nanxuntu* was begun in 1764; the finished scrolls were submitted to the throne in the fifth month (25 May – 22 June) of 1770, the year of the emperor's sixtieth birthday celebration.¹⁹ Completed only one year before the publication of the *Nanxun Shengdian*, the *Nanxuntu* was probably conceived together with that text to form a single, grand commemorative work that directly recalls the Kangxi *Wanshoutu* and *Wanshou Shengdian*.

In its physical characteristics, the Qianlong *Nanxuntu* closely resembles the Kangxi series. Both sets are made up of twelve oversize handscrolls. The Kangxi paintings measure nearly 27 inches (67.8 cm) in width and from 45 to 85 feet (1,377 to 2,612.5 cm) in length. The Qianlong paintings are slightly larger – about one centimeter wider – but they are generally not as long, measuring only 30 to 71 feet (915 to 2,172 cm) in length.²⁰ Both sets of scrolls are mounted with patterned brocade wrappers and massive jade clasps. The scrolls of the two sets are further protected by silk brocade cloths and richly decorated lacquer boxes, each inscribed with the title and number of the scroll it contains.²¹

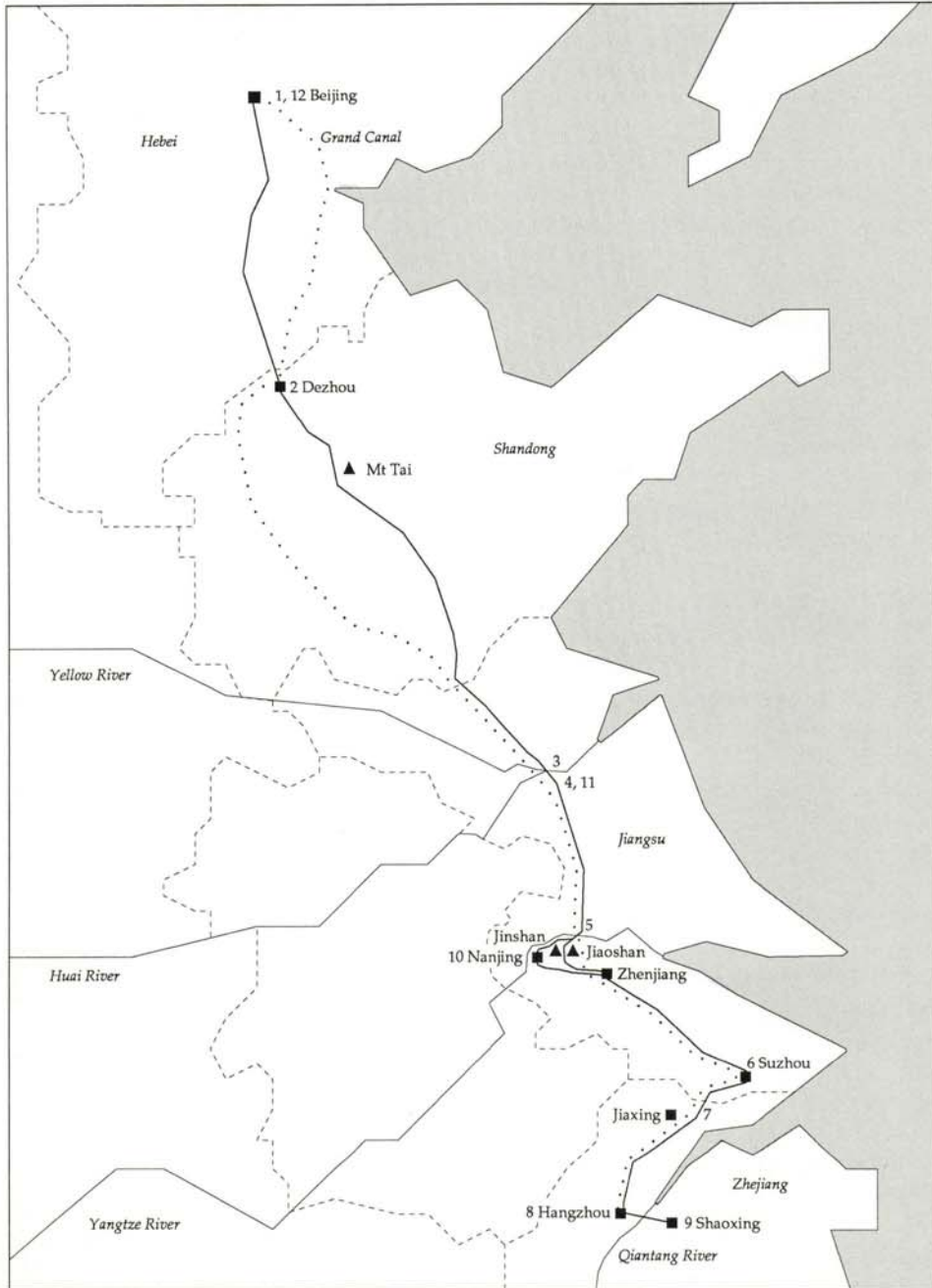
The Qianlong *Nanxuntu* further resembles the Kangxi set in its general content, but differs significantly in the length of the route and the quantity of specific details it shows as well as in the greater emphasis it gives to selected sites. Like the Kangxi *Nanxuntu*, the Qianlong version opens with a depiction of the emperor's departure from Beijing and first day of travel. It begins with the Zhengyang (Qian) Gate and ends with the first temporary place in Liangxiang county. Scroll II focuses on Qianlong's crossing of the old course of the Yellow River and his entrance into Dezhou (see Map 2). Scroll III presents the Qianlong Emperor in Jiangsu Province, crossing the Yellow River by boat while scroll IV illustrates the emperor inspecting the nearby confluence of the Yellow and Huai Rivers. Scroll V shows Qianlong on the Yangtze River traveling between the islands of Jinshan and Jiaoshan; scroll VI illustrates his entrance into

Scroll	Itinerary	Dates	Distance depicted mi (km)	Collection	Length@ (cm)	Length of draft (cm)	Recorded length of draft*
I	Beijing: Zhengyang Gate to Liangxiang County	08 Feb	15 (25)			1988.6	62.2
II	Dezhou, Shandong	—	5 (8)	Canada	1685.6	1244.5	38.5
III	Crossing the Yellow River	—	3 (5)	Nice	1607.0	1363.1	42.3
IV	Confluence of Huai and Yellow Rivers	—	3 (5)	New York	1095.0	1106.5	34.3
V	Crossing the Yangtze from Jinshan to Jiaoshan	—	5 (8)	Japan	976.0	1083.4	33.4
VI	Entering Suzhou from north of Tiger Hill	—	5 (8)			2171.9	67.1
VII	Jiangsu-Zhejiang border, approaching Jiaxing	—	15 (25)			949.9	29.5
VIII	Hangzhou and West Lake	—	4 (7)			1126.4	35.4
IX	Shaoxing and Temple of Yu	—	6 (10)	Beijing	1050.0	1243.1	38.5
X	Nanjing; inspection of soldiers	—	1 (1.5)	Paris	966.0	915.0	28.3
XI	Confluence of the Yellow and Huai Rivers	—	3 (5)			1239.6	28.5
XII	Beijing: Meridian Gate to Duan Gate	26 Jun	1/4 (0.5)	Beijing	1029.4	985.8	30.9
Total		139 days	65 1/4 (108)			15417.8	468.9

@ The width of the silk version is 68.9 cm; the draft version, 68.3 cm.

* Lengths recorded in *Shiqu Baoji Xubian* in *chi* and *cun*.

Table 4. Qianlong's First Southern Inspection Tour (1751)



Map 2. Qianlong's 1751 Southern Tour, illustrated in Xu Yang's *Nanxuntu*.

Suzhou, showing the route from Tiger Hill to the vicinity of the Zhizaofu, the Silk Commissioner's Residence, which served as the emperor's temporary palace. Scroll VII begins with a depiction of the emperor reviewing the officials massed at the Jiangsu-Zhejiang border and ends at the city gate of Jiaxing. Scroll VIII begins at the Yongan Gate of Hangzhou and surveys the scenery of West Lake. Scroll IX illustrates the emperor's visit to Shaoxing and the Temple of Yu; scroll X depicts Qianlong's inspection of troops in Nanjing. Scroll XI returns to the area depicted in scrolls III and IV; it shows Qianlong's resumption of land travel after recrossing the Yellow River at Qinghe. Scroll XII, like the final Kangxi painting, illustrates the emperor's return to Beijing. As in the Kangxi scroll, the direction of travel in this closing scroll is opposite to the direction of unrolling, but a much smaller segment of Beijing appears: the Kangxi scroll shows the axial way from the Taihe Hall to the Yongding Gate, the southernmost gate of the city, the Qianlong scroll opens with the Meridian Gate and closes with the Duan Gate – a distance of several hundred meters – and shows the imperial retinue received by members of the court and the files of imperial insignia bearers.

When the contents of the Qianlong set and Kangxi set are compared (see Tables 2 and 4), several discrepancies appear in the choice of sites illustrated. Three segments of the tour route depicted in the Kangxi set do not appear in the Qianlong set: Mt Tai (scroll III), the Yangtze River from Nanjing to Jinshan (scroll XI), and Yangzhou, which is presumably the focus of the missing fifth Kangxi scroll. The Qianlong set focuses greater attention on the emperor's activities around the Yellow River: scrolls III, IV and XI treat this area while scroll II shows the emperor crossing the old course of the Yellow River outside of Dezhou.

Even more striking is the enormous difference in the amount of the tour route illustrated by the two sets. Except for the first and last scrolls, which record the departure from and return to Beijing, each scroll in the Kangxi set depicts a 30 to 100 mile (50 to 170 km) segment of the route (see Table 2). The scrolls of the Qianlong set generally depict less than five mile segments of the route and only two scrolls show as much as 15 miles (see Table 4). One reason for this is that each Qianlong scroll was matched to a poem composed by the emperor on his 1751 tour and each painting is inscribed with that poem. Because Qianlong composed hundreds of poems on his tour – all later published in the *Nanxun Shengdian* – the choice of what segments of the tour to illustrate was not significantly restricted by the need to match illustrations to poems. Since the poems tend to focus on single events or specific sites, the content of each poem did serve as a limiting factor. The Kangxi scrolls also have accom-

panying texts mounted in front of each painting, however these anonymous prefaces merely describe the sites and events depicted in the paintings and serve only to complement the pictorial record.

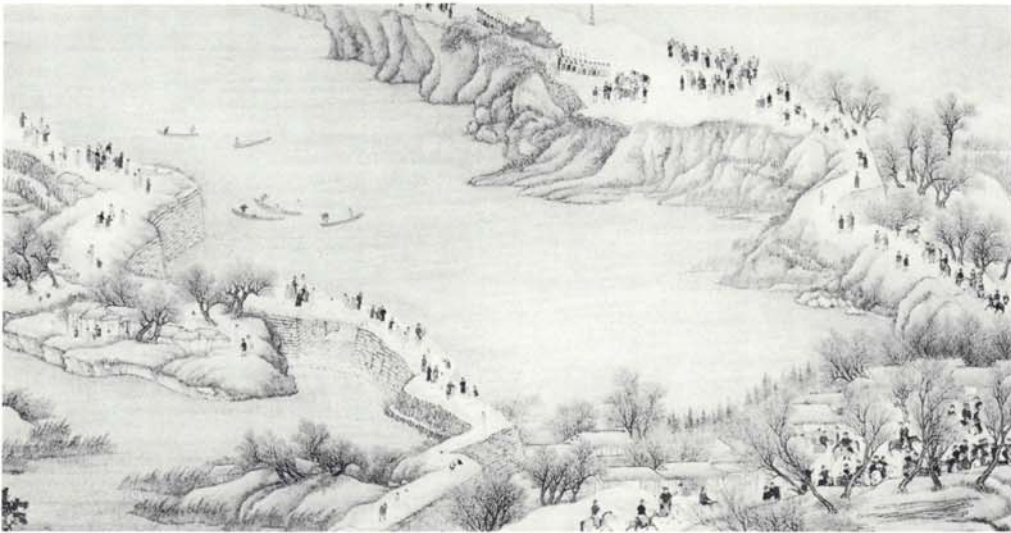
This difference in approach not only resulted in a much smaller proportion of the actual route being depicted in the Qianlong series, but also transformed the very manner of presentation. The Kangxi scrolls present the emperor's journey as a lengthy and nearly continuous travel narrative; the Qianlong set presents the emperor in a series of monoscenic historical tableaux.

The contrasting narrative content and dramatic goals of the two sets are clearest in their divergent treatment of the Yellow River crossing and the confluence of the Huai and Yellow Rivers. During both the Kangxi and Qianlong reigns, the Yellow River flowed into the sea south of the Shandong peninsula through Jiangsu Province. In the Kangxi set, the river crossing and confluence sites appear as the finale and objective of a single scroll that illustrates the emperor's tour route from the town of Honghuapu near the Shandong-Jiangsu border. The importance of both sites is emphasized by the presence of thrones and crowds of expectant onlookers and officials – devices that clearly indicate the emperor's intention to stop there and inspect the river work (Figure 1). But Kangxi is depicted at neither spot. Instead, he appears much earlier, about midway through the scroll, stopping to view the numerous destitute people inhabiting this flood and famine-threatened region, who have come out to thank the emperor for his remission of taxes (Figure 1e). The presence of these people offers a bit of propaganda showing Kangxi's concern for the masses, but it is also a frank admission of the problems still besetting the empire. The scene is a sobering reminder of the consequences of lax river conservation measures. The challenge of controlling the Yellow River is likewise forcefully conveyed at the crossing point where laborers frantically work to reinforce the dikes directly in front of Kangxi's viewing pavilion.

In the Qianlong set, the crossing and confluence scenes are treated in separate scrolls. Scroll III, now in Nice at the Musée des Beaux Arts, presents a grand panorama of the Yellow River. The scroll extends from the northern bank to the point on the southern bank where the imperial barge comes ashore (Figure 2). Over 21 feet of the 52-foot-long painting are devoted to the river and the numerous boats which move across it. The preceding scroll anticipates this crossing and gives some intimation of Qianlong's concern for river conservation by showing the emperor crossing the old course of the Yellow River on a pontoon bridge near the



b



d

Figure 1. Wang Hui and assistants, *Kangxi Nanxuntu* ('Kangxi Southern Tour'), scroll IV, detail. C. 1698. Ink and colors on silk. Collection of the Musée Guimet, Paris (MA 2460).



a



c

city of Dezhou. Yet, there is no effort in either scroll to illustrate the roughly 300 miles (500 km) of terrain that separates Dezhou from the Yellow River. Instead, scroll IV focuses on the act of crossing and the sheer magnitude of the river. By drastically limiting the scroll's narrative content, all of the drama is centered on the action of the emperor. Yet, when we finally see Qianlong, his sedate, well-choreographed landing is something of a letdown. Rather than a feat of courage, the crossing looks almost matter-of-fact. In the Kangxi scroll, the tempestuous waters look dangerous (Figure 1a, b). There is only one boat on the river and the force of the water is emphasized by the roiling waves and the frenetic activity of the men laboring to reinforce the near shore. The perils of crossing are vividly conveyed. In the Qianlong version, the river appears wide but easily navigable: large and small boats move back and forth across its untroubled surface while the emperor, seated calmly in a barge propelled by two lines of oarsmen, rides smoothly towards the Southern shore where kneeling officials prepare to receive their monarch.

In scroll IV of the Qianlong series, the Yellow River occupies nearly as prominent a position as it does in scroll III.²² It begins with a view of the north shore only a few miles upstream from where Qianlong made his crossing. Following this is a long passage devoted to the Yellow River. A variety of vessels sail across its muddy waters, recalling the emperor's own recent passage. The confluence of the Huai River, also called the Qinghe or Clear River, is illustrated by the merging of the Huai's blue waters with the silt-laden Yellow. Qianlong stands at the point of confluence, the most critical spot in the Yellow River conservancy system (Figure 3). The single figure kneeling before him almost certainly represents Gao Bin (1683-1755), the regional Director-General of the Grand Canal and Yellow River Conservancy.²³ Behind the emperor, the officials and populace of the region reverently kneel in the imperial presence. The scroll ends with a depiction of the well-maintained series of locks or gates channeling water from the Huai into the Grand Canal, stockpiles of lumber and bundles of *gaoliang* used to repair leaks, orderly files of workers building up an already imposing dike, and finally, the stone-faced Gaojia Levee. All this contrasts dramatically with the frenzied dike work depicted in the Kangxi *Nanxuntu*.²⁴

From the point of view of propaganda, the Qianlong *Nanxuntu* pointedly emphasizes the emperor's avowed interest in river conservation. More space in the set is devoted to river-related themes than to any other subject (scrolls III, IV, V and to a more limited degree II, IX and XI). In the *Nanxun Shengdian*, too, more space is devoted to this topic (about 900 pages) than to any but the transcription of the emperor's poems and stele



Figure 1e. Kangxi silk version, scroll IV, detail. Musée Guimet, Paris.

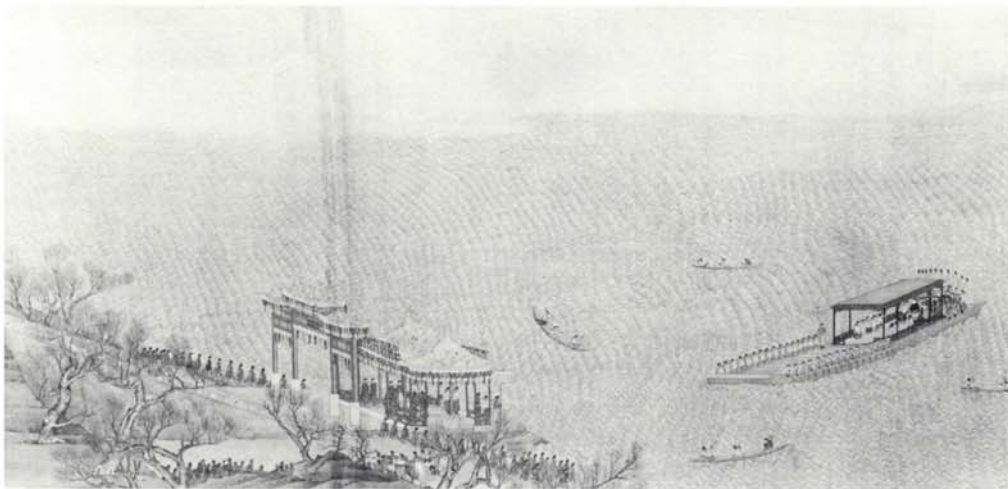
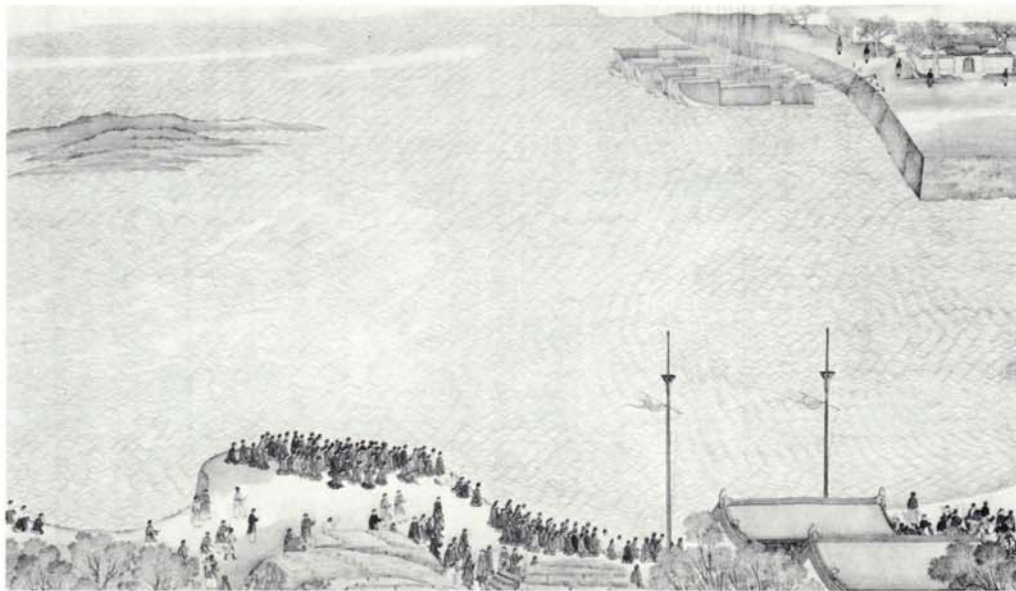


Figure 2. Xu Yang, *Qianlong Nanxuntu* ('Qianlong Southern Tour'), scroll III, detail. Dated 1770. Ink and colors on silk. Collection of the Musée des Beaux Arts, Nice (C 2498).

texts (about 1,500 pages). Scroll IV, in particular, highlights the key point in the intricate system of canals, holding basins, and dikes perfected during the late sixteenth century by Pan Jixun (1521-1595).²⁵ In the *Nanxun Shengdian*, this locale is illustrated no fewer than nine times in various maps and diagrams throughout the text – far more than any other site.²⁶ Scroll IV of the *Nanxuntu* not only accurately records all the river conservation features of this site, it dramatically focuses attention on the figure of the emperor. Extraneous details are eliminated and all action converges on the central point occupied by the emperor.²⁷ To the right, the boats on the river recall Qianlong's recent crossing while the ranks of kneeling officials and scenes of dike building to his left emphasize the emperor's concern for eternal vigilance in maintaining the dikes, a theme touched on in his poem. The river does not appear threatening, there are no beggars or unruly onlookers, and there is no sense of urgency to the river work. Nature and the empire are under control in this painting, exemplifying the idyllic state of *datong* or 'Great Peace' which Qianlong believed had begun under his reign.

In the other Qianlong scrolls the thematic content is also circumscribed and focused. Scroll VI illustrates Qianlong's entrance into Suzhou; scroll

Figure 3. Xu Yang, scroll IV, detail. Collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art (1984.16).



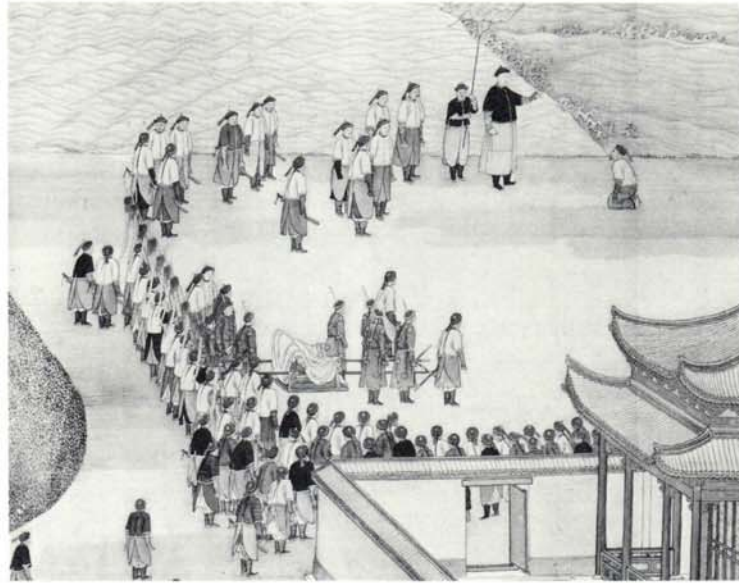
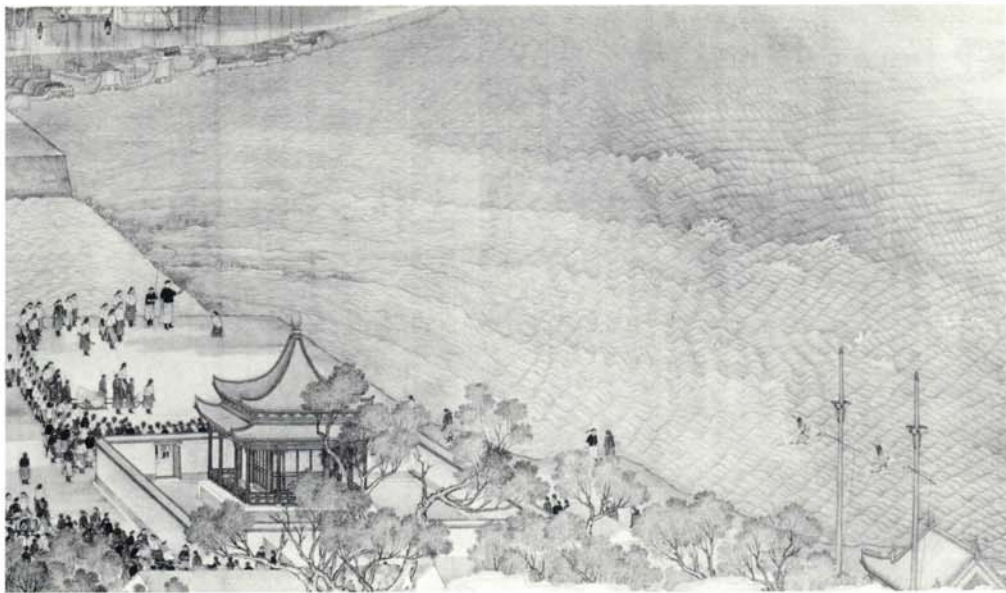


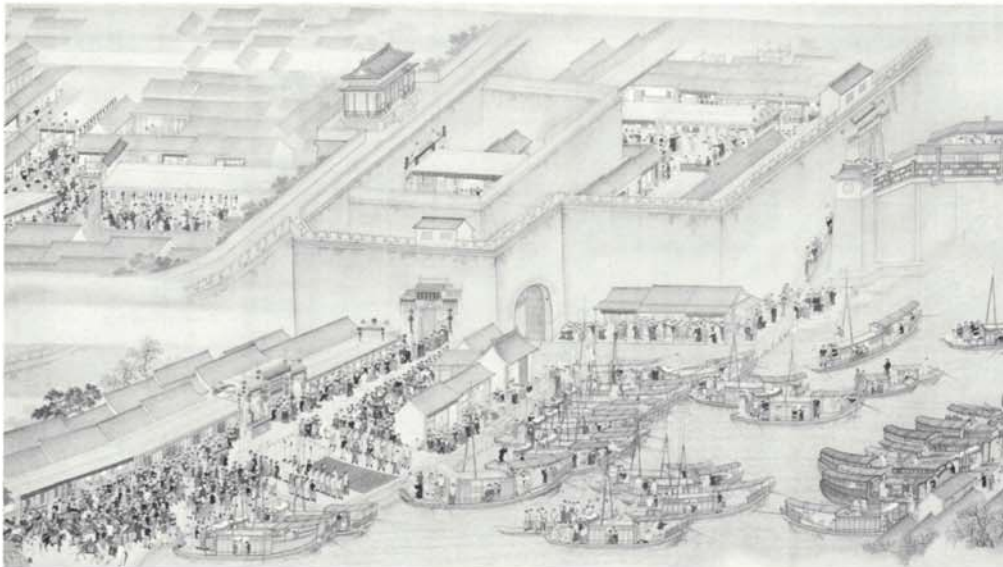
Figure 3. Detail.



VII shows the emperor reviewing officials at the Jiangsu-Zhejiang border; in scroll X he is viewing a military display of horsemanship. Each of these events is treated in the Kangxi scrolls, but only as part of a larger and more complex narrative. In the Kangxi set, the importance of the emperor and his action is read against the immense scale of the empire he ruled; at times, Kangxi and his retinue are dwarfed by the landscape or lost from view in the hubbub of busy city streets. In the scene illustrating his arrival in Suzhou, for example, Kangxi sits inconspicuously in his boat, looking out at the maelstrom of houses, boats and people which converge upon the Chang Gate (Figure 4). In the Qianlong scene of the emperor inspecting the confluence site, Qianlong appears larger than life, the central figure in a setting that magnifies his importance and power.

Another explanation for the circumscribed content of the Qianlong scrolls, especially the extraordinary emphasis given to water scenes, is artistic expediency. Scrolls III, IV and V, one-fourth of the scrolls in the set, are dominated by water – certainly a less demanding subject than mountains or cityscapes. By 1764 when this series was begun, the number of court artists had been greatly reduced and there simply may not have been adequate manpower available to complete these paintings without drastically simplifying their pictorial content.²⁸

Figure 4. Kangxi silk version, scroll VII, detail. Private Collection, Canada.



Authorship, Style and Production

The divergent content of the Kangxi and Qianlong Southern Tour paintings immediately raises the question of authorship and style. The Kangxi *Nanxuntu* was the earliest large-scale painting project sponsored by a Qing emperor. In both subject matter and format these paintings set a precedent that clearly influenced later court productions. But what artistic options were available to Kangxi and his officials when faced with initiating such a project? One possible source of talent was the painters employed within the palace. Among these may have been one or more Western artists. Kangxi was deeply fascinated by the Western sciences introduced by Jesuits working at the Qing court; he may well have gained an early appreciation for Western painting. In 1690, however, there were no Jesuits at court who specialized in painting and Western techniques were probably regarded more as a curiosity than as a viable artistic option. Among the Chinese painters who may have been at work in the palace at this time was Jiao Bingzhen (active c. 1689-1726). Jiao later executed an important series of illustrations on agriculture and sericulture, the *Gengzhitu* ('Pictures of Tilling and Weaving'), datable to 1696, in which Western techniques of spatial illusion and modelling are actively embraced. But in 1690 Jiao probably had not yet attracted the emperor's attention.²⁹

Professional painters working outside the court provided a wider range of talent and styles to choose from. One center of painting which Kangxi



undoubtedly became familiar with on his 1689 tour was Yangzhou. Yuan Jiang (active c. 1690-1725) was just becoming established in Yangzhou by 1689, but probably had not yet achieved a prominent enough reputation to be considered for this undertaking.³⁰ Kangxi met the individualist painter Daoji (Shitao, 1642-1707) in Nanjing on his 1684 Southern Tour and might have known that Shitao came to Beijing late in 1689, remaining in the capital until the fall of 1692.³¹ But Daoji's style was hardly suitable for the kind of pictorial documentary required by such a commission and he was probably never seriously considered.

In fact, there was only one group of painters whose style was both well established and had great appeal for the scholar-officials in Kangxi's court: the so-called orthodox artists whose paintings transmitted the stylistic principles first set forth by Dong Qichang (1555-1636). In contrast to the paintings of the individualist masters, among whom the trauma of the Qing conquest was a potent influence, the orthodox style seems to have evolved undisturbed by the political turmoil of dynastic change. Thus, it not only preserved a sense of continuity with the past, but gave Kangxi the opportunity to present himself in harmony with the most revered traditions of scholarly painting. Furthermore, the orthodox painter Wang Hui (1632-1717) was probably the most renowned artist of the day.³²

Early in 1691, less than two years after the completion of the tour, Wang Hui arrived in Beijing to undertake the execution of this commission. Yet there is no record in the *Shilu* ('Veritable Records') of either the decision to initiate this project or the process by which Wang Hui was selected. The two high-ranking officials mentioned in connection with the project once it got underway, however, were both from prominent Jiangsu families and both knew Wang Hui personally: Wang Shan (1645-1728), who was later to become a Grand Secretary, was the eighth son of Wang Hui's mentor, Wang Shimin (1592-1680), while Song Junye (d. 1713), who had been in the entourage of the second tour, was an amateur painter and had once had Wang Hui as his teacher. One or both of these men is also mentioned in the biographies of Yang Jin (1644-1728) and Gu Fang (active c. 1690-1720), two pupils of Wang Hui whose participation in the project is suggested by their biographies.³³

From Wang Hui's biography it is clear that he had the help of a number of assistants, but that he provided overall direction for the task:

From everywhere lofty talents and skilled artists were assembled in the capital. All mixed ink, moistened their brush-tips, spread out the silk, looked at each other and racked their brains not daring to start painting and waiting for Mr

Wang to speak. The master, dressed in hermit's garb, sat on a dais and assumed leadership. He stared straight ahead, concentrated for a long time, and finally started composition and execution, saying: Here we place towns, there we place mountains and rivers, here people are waiting for the imperial traveler, the entourage looks like this, imperial resting places like that, and here is the emperor himself in procession. Mr Wang led the work, painted here and there over the whole stretch of varied landscapes until the whole work was ready. The artists followed his directions, and now and again Mr Wang added some strokes of extraordinary beauty. When the pictures were finished they were shown to the emperor.³⁴

How accurately does the above account reflect the actual working conditions under which the Southern Tour scrolls were created?

The finished paintings bear no artist's signature, seals, or other identifying information. Like imperial portraits, the set is not only without signature, but was apparently stored in a separate archive apart from the imperial painting collection and was therefore never recorded in the imperial painting catalog, *Shiqu Baoji*. There is, however, a painting entitled *Nanxuntu* recorded in that catalog as the work of Song Junye.³⁵ A student of Wang Hui and a member of the second tour's entourage, Song may well have contributed preliminary sketches based on his firsthand observations. In the absence of a clearly defined imperial painting academy, Song apparently functioned as a bureaucratic intermediary between the throne and the artists. Is it possible that Song also took a hand in the production of the scrolls? And how much of the final paintings is actually the work of Wang Hui?

The four surviving draft scrolls for the Kangxi *Southern Tour* (see Table 2) shed important light on the authorship and process of creation of the finished paintings. The link between the twelve-scroll *Southern Tour* and Song Junye is specifically recorded in a colophon to the draft version of the Kangxi scroll VII by a descendant of the artist named Song Xiang (1748-1862).³⁶ The colophon, which is dated 31 March 1828, may be translated as follows:

The former official [Song] Junye was summoned to attend the emperor in the Southern Library (Nanshufang) in the *gengwu* year of Kangxi (1690). There he respectfully received the command to paint the *Nanxun Shengdian*. Consequently, he invited Wang Shigu (Wang Hui) and other famous masters to gather in the capital where they resided, deliberated, and laid out [their work] until the *yihai* year (1695) when he announced the completion of altogether twelve handscrolls [depicting the route] from the capital to Zhejiang. When they submitted their work for imperial inspection they received the emperor's

praise and the scrolls entered the *Shiqu [Baoji]* (imperial collection). The twelve draft scrolls entered our family collection, but later generations divided them up so that, before long, they were all scattered. In my spare time I entertained the notion of searching out [these drafts], but I only found one scroll [depicting the route from] Wuxi to Suzhou plus three miscellaneous pieces which I carefully mounted as a scroll and stored together in a bamboo case. According to Xia Shiliang's (Xia Wenyan) *Tuhui Baojian* [preface dated 1365], draft paintings (*huagao*) of the ancients are called 'chalk versions' (*fenben*); former generations greatly valued and collected them. How much more important at the present time [to have this] *Magnificent Record of the [Southern] Tour* which combines all the famous masters of the period in a rare, long, and large-scale draft painting. May all of my descendants respectfully preserve this and eternally regard it as a treasure of this world.

An even clearer statement of Song's bureaucratic role in the project is recorded on a label appearing on the brocade wrapper of the draft for the tenth scroll, now in the collection of the Beijing Palace Museum. The label reads: 'Draft of the first scroll illustrating the Southern Tour Return Journey of the Shengzu Ren Huangdi [the Kangxi Emperor]; presented by Song Junye, executed by Wang Hui.'³⁷

Although the division between Song's administrative responsibility for the project and Wang Hui's artistic leadership is confirmed by these two documents, the actual process of creation as revealed in the drafts appears far more complex. Based on the surviving pictorial evidence, the process of creation involved at least three distinct steps.³⁸

First, rough drafts (*gaoben*) were executed in ink on paper by several painters, possibly including Song Junye himself, who either accompanied the emperor on his tour or were later dispatched to record the major sites visited by Kangxi. This stage may be represented by three fragments preserved by Song Xiang together with the draft version of scroll VII. Two of these fragments are far more cursory and far less skillful than the more complete draft scrolls and are also clearly executed by different hands. Landscape details in these fragments are sketchy and only a few, stick-like figures are included.

Second, final draft scrolls (*dingben* or *fuben*) were executed in ink and pale colors on paper. These final drafts, represented by the paper versions of scrolls VII, VIII, X and XI, show Wang Hui's achievement in orchestrating the visual information provided by the rough drafts and organizing the journey into twelve handscrolls. Landscape and architectural elements are beautifully drawn in great detail. Where sections of paper are joined, slight differences in ink quality and brushwork show that dif-

ferent sections were executed or at least finished by different artists. Figures were first sketched in charcoal or light ink then finished with dark ink outlines in a simplified manner, often with no facial features. The presence of additions and corrections to these drafts – redrawing a figure or adding several boats – by pasting the correction on top of the original drawing graphically illustrates how one or more artistic supervisors reviewed and amended the character of the work in progress.

Third, the finished version (*zhengben*) was executed in ink and mineral colors on silk. The silk scrolls generally follow the final drafts quite closely. In the draft and finished versions of scroll X, for example, a depiction of a neighborhood organization called the *Tai ping hui* shows a complex crowd scene that is almost identical in both versions (Figures 5 and 6). Elsewhere in the same scroll, however, the differences are striking. In depicting the parade field (*jiaochang*), the silk version of scroll X presents a complex display of military horsemanship that is totally absent from the much simpler draft. This suggests that some changes may have come about as a result of a review of the drafts by Kangxi or one of his representatives. In other places, the changes appear purely artistic. In places, the ground plane angle may be shifted, or a section abbreviated. The most striking difference between the two sets is the greater diversity of action and demeanor represented by the figures in the silk version when compared to the ‘placeholders’ sketched in the drafts. The care with which people are drawn in the silk version is further underscored by the presence of faint underdrawing around some of the figures.

There is no evidence that Wang Hui participated in the early drafts. In the final drafts however his influence is pervasive. The style is unified and the most outstanding elements – rocks, trees and bamboo – compare closely with similar elements in Wang Hui’s signed works dated to the late 1680s. Figures, animals and architecture are all probably the work of Wang’s assistants. The final silk paintings are executed with great care, but in the landscape details there is a formality in the drawing that robs the brushwork of some of the flair and spontaneity found in the drafts. Just the opposite is the case with the figures which appear extraordinarily lively and vital in the silk version. Part of the difference in the quality of landscape elements may be attributed to the change in medium and the need to make a more ‘finished’ set, but it seems fair to assume that many passages in the silk version were executed by Wang’s assistants.

Based on the above information, the various stages in the creation of the *Kangxi Nanxuntu* may be tentatively reconstructed as follows. In 1689 Song Junye accompanied Kangxi on his second Southern Tour. With the help of one or two assistants he made rough sketches of the important



Figure 5. Wang Hui and assistants, *Kangxi Nanxuntu Fenben* ('Kangxi Southern Tour Draft'), datable to c. 1695. Ink and colors on paper. Scroll X, detail. Collection of the Palace Museum, Beijing.

sites and events of the tour. Probably while the emperor and his entourage were visiting Suzhou, Song sought out his painting teacher Wang Hui and proposed the idea of a pictorial record of Kangxi's tour. Shortly thereafter, Wang Hui set about drafting the composition. Extant paintings by Wang dated to the years 1689 to 1691 are particularly scarce; this suggests that Wang devoted most of his energies to the project for nearly three years.³⁹ By 1690 when, according to Song Xiang's colophon, Song Junye was summoned to an audience with Kangxi, he was in a position to recommend that the emperor's triumphant second Southern Tour be commemorated by a painting; he may even have had one or more draft scrolls to show Kangxi at the time of his interview. In any event, the set of draft scrolls was probably completed by the time Wang Hui arrived in Beijing in 1691. Once Kangxi approved the draft version Wang Hui and his assistants could proceed with the final paintings on silk. The silk itself may well have been provided by the Suzhou Silk Commissioner. Wang Hui and his assistants worked for four years in Beijing to complete the project. A concentration of collaborative works signed by Wang Hui, Yang Jin, Gu Fang, Song Junye, Wang Yun (1652 – after 1735), Xu Mei (fl.



Figure 6. Kangxi silk version, scroll X, detail. Collection of the Palace Museum, Beijing.

1690-1722) and others and dated to the years 1692-1695 helps to identify which of Wang Hui's students were with him in the capital and elucidates how these artists worked together.⁴⁰

After the silk version of the *Nanxuntu* was completed Kangxi granted Wang Hui a private audience and presented him with a scroll bearing the imperially-brushed characters, *shanshui qinghui*, 'clear and radiant landscapes'. When Wang Hui returned to his home in the fall of 1698, he hung the scroll in his hall and gave himself the sobriquet, 'Master of the Qinghui Hall' (Qinghui Zhuren).⁴¹

The commission for illustrating Qianlong's 1751 Southern Tour was given to the Suzhou painter Xu Yang (active c. 1750 – after 1776). Xu became a court artist after submitting a sample of his work to Qianlong when the emperor was visiting Suzhou on his first tour. Unlike Wang Hui, who travelled to the capital specifically to illustrate Kangxi's second tour, Xu Yang had already served as a court artist for more than twelve years by the time he began his series of paintings illustrating Qianlong's first tour.

According to the practice of court artists of the period, Xu Yang, like Wang Hui, first executed a draft version on paper which he would have submitted to the throne for approval.⁴² None of the drafts are extant; a record in the palace archives dated 21 May 1764, however, states that in that month permission was given to Xu Yang to begin work on a *Nanxuntu* draft (*gao*). The preparation of the *Nanxun Shengdian* was begun the same year. In 1766 Xu received imperial approval of his work in progress and he began work on a silk version which he submitted for mounting on 23 November 1769. According to Xu's inscription on scroll XII, the set was presented to Qianlong in late May or June of 1770.⁴³ Seven scrolls from the finished silk version are extant (see Table 4). As with the Kangxi *Nanxuntu*, and also portraits of the royal family, this version was never recorded in any imperial painting catalog and was stored in a separate archive.⁴⁴ Like those of the Kangxi set, the individual scrolls from this set were unsigned with one important exception: the final scroll in the Qianlong series bears a long and flowery dedication by Xu Yang.

In March of 1771, only a few months after Xu Yang completed work on his silk version of the *Nanxuntu*, he set to work on a second, duplicate version executed on paper (*xuanzhi*); he submitted this version in the fifth month (16 June – 15 July) of 1776. A close copy of the silk version, this paper set was subsequently recorded in *Shiqu Baoji Xubian* and the entire set is today preserved in the Historical Museum, Beijing. Each scroll from this set is signed at the end by Xu Yang; scroll XII also includes the same long dedicatory text inscribed by Xu on the silk version.⁴⁵

Is it possible that Xu Yang was the sole author of these two immense sets of scrolls? It was customary during the Qianlong period that when several artists participated in a collaborative project all the artists would sign the scroll. Yet only Xu Yang's name appears on the paintings. Furthermore, the paintings in both sets are each sealed with a jade clasp that bears an inscription incised on its inside face that gives the authorship to Xu. The record of the paper version in the *Shiqu Baoji Xubian* also names Xu as the only author. At the very least, this suggests that Xu had fewer helpers available to him than were available to Wang Hui and that their roles were comparatively unimportant. Efforts to curtail the amount of detail in the scrolls, notably by devoting long sections to the depiction of water, likewise suggests a shortage of manpower and increases the likelihood that Xu did the majority of the work himself.

Stylistically, the *Nanxuntu* closely resembles Xu Yang's other major architectural and figural subjects, the *Shengshi Zishengtu*, or 'Scenes of Burgeoning Life in a Resplendent Age', which Xu completed in 1759, five

years before he began work on the first set of the *Nanxuntu*.⁴⁶ This painting depicts the city and environs of Suzhou from Mt. Lingyan in the west to Tiger Hill in the east. The scroll follows the *yudao* or 'imperial way' constructed in honor of Qianlong's 1751 visit. Since Qianlong chose Xu as a court painter while on his 1751 tour, it is not unlikely that Xu painted this scroll with Wang Hui's *Nanxuntu* in mind. Xu's able and vivid depiction of the rich life of Suzhou immediately recalls the scenes of Suzhou and Nanjing in the Kangxi set. In the representation of figures and the renderings of the architecture, the painting is also very close to the two versions of the Qianlong *Nanxuntu*.

Since Xu Yang was a senior member of the Qianlong Painting Academy, his painting style evidently reflected the emperor's taste. This style may be summarized as meticulous in detail, eclectic in its sources, but homogenous in appearance with idiosyncracies of personality subordinated to a universal Academy manner. The roots of this style do not reach very deep into the past. Although Qianlong's court artists may have sought to emulate the Sung Painting Academy and such masters as Zhang Zeduan (active early twelfth century), the immediate sources of Xu Yang's style lies in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. In his meticulous treatment of architecture he may have been inspired by such Kangxi and Yongzheng period artists as Jiao Bingzhen and Yuan Jiang, while in his landscapes he follows the general idiom established by Wang Hui and other Kangxi era orthodox painters. Despite Xu Yang's dependence upon seventeenth century models, however, there is a dramatic shift in the character of his work from that of the Kangxi and Yongzheng eras. Three reasons may be cited for this change: the evolution of a new hybrid painting style based on the increasingly anonymous and collaborative nature of palace productions, the impact of Western painting on court taste, and the personality and objectives of the Qianlong Emperor as patron.

The major difference between the Kangxi and Qianlong *Nanxuntu* is the pervasive influence of Western painting techniques. Both sets achieve a high degree of topographic specificity, but Xu Yang's work is more consistent in its description of recession and use of foreshortening to locate objects in space and impart a sense of relative scale and measurable distance between elements. As a result, his compositions attain a degree of spatial unity absent from Wang Hui's work where space is compartmentalized and additively organized.

In scroll IV of the Qianlong *Nanxuntu*,⁴⁷ for example, Xu Yang presents a broad panorama in which Qianlong's position at the confluence of the Yellow and Huai Rivers is both the focus of all action and the center of the

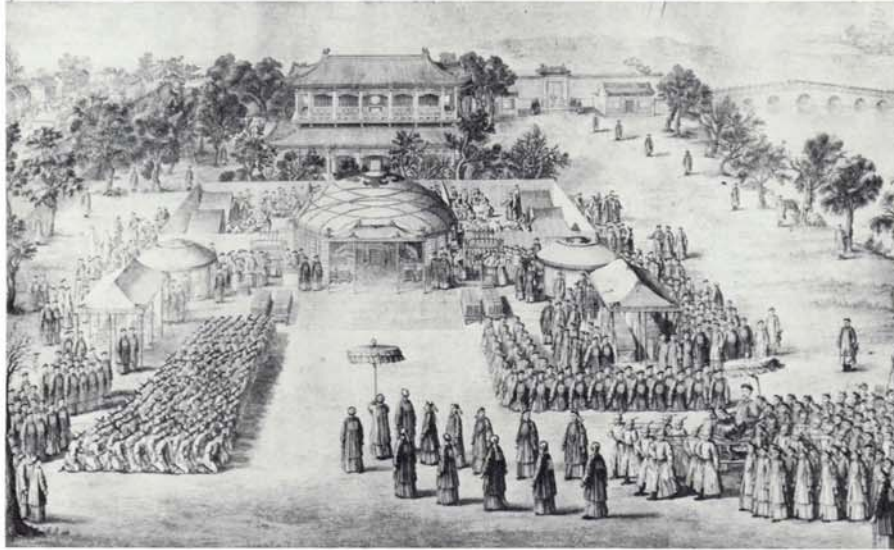


Figure 7. Giuseppe Castiglione, *Banquet for the Western Mongols at the Hall of Purple Brilliance (Ziguang Ge)*, copperplate engraving by Jean Philippe Le Bas in 1770 (51.4 × 89 cm). Collection of the Musée Guimet, Paris (MG 17019).

composition. He utilizes an approximation of Western one-point perspective to magnify the emperor's importance: the centrality of Qianlong is emphasized by the framing lines of the near and far shores which converge toward a single vanishing point directly behind the emperor. The low horizon line, the restriction of most picture elements to the foreground, and the dramatic shift in scale between the nearground and far distance also serve to emphasize the towering figure of the emperor and his central role in the drama.

Xu Yang's limited use of Western-style perspective and his decision to treat most of the *Nanxuntu* scrolls as single panoramas recall paintings of banquets and battles by Giuseppe Castiglione (Lang Shining, 1688-1768) and other Jesuit painters active at Qianlong's court.⁴⁸ In his Chinese style paintings, Castiglione did not strictly adhere to one-point perspective, but maintained a sense of spatial unity that clearly influenced Xu Yang's work. In a copperplate engraving after a design by Castiglione that shows Qianlong making his entrance at a tribute banquet (Figure 7), the bird's-eye view and upturned ground plane of the composition recall traditional Chinese landscapes, however, the converging lines of the architecture and rows of figures show an underlying reliance upon one-point per-

spective to organize picture elements. The foreshortened view of rooftops in the first Qianlong *Nanxuntu* scroll (Figure 8) clearly parallels the treatment of the tents shown in the foreground of this engraving. This is quite different from the way in which roofs are depicted in the Kangxi *Nanxuntu* where they are usually viewed frontally from one side of the crest or the other; only rarely are both sides shown. In Wang Hui's depiction of this same location the roofs are depicted from both sides, however, apparently because the curving line of houses here made such a rendering impossible to avoid (Figure 9). The houses are not represented as receding in space, however, but merely as part of a sequence of rectangular segments set around the curving perimeter of the moat. There is no systematic use of foreshortening.

In Wang Hui's *Nanxuntu* changing aspects of the terrain are organized and presented additively to create a constantly shifting vantage point. Because scenery is divided into discrete space cells, the viewer's perspective changes, yet so seamlessly do spatial compartments interlock that one is hardly ever aware of discontinuities or interruptions. Whereas Xu Yang's compositions approximate the physical reality of a fixed view such as that caught by a camera, Wang Hui creates a psychological sense of space in which the mind is constantly piecing together and unifying disparate images captured by the eye as its position and focus shift. Wen Fong has described this same spatial structure in the monumental landscapes of the tenth and eleventh centuries: 'Conceived part by part, the great landscape is read rather than visually experienced; it has a great intellectual sense of scale but lacks physically described space and recession. The result is a conceptual landscape that represents no mere retinal image of nature but a vision of the macrocosm.'⁴⁹

In the Kangxi *Nanxuntu* it is the activity and movement of thousands of figures that draw the eye along and provide a narrative thread that links one space to the next. From a distance, figures appear like musical notes, dense dots of color that tap out a syncopated tattoo against the more pastel hues of the landscape, providing a persistent melody that transcends and unifies the larger 'symphonic movements' defined by the composition. Foreshortening, shifts in scale or atmospheric distortion – effects that fix the viewer's position in space – are largely ignored.

In scroll VIII, for example, the eye is led from the suburbs of Wuxi along a line of travelers that leads back into the far distance (Figure 10). Although these figures are presumably quite a distance away, they are still three-quarters of the size of those in the foreground and their facial expressions are still clearly discernible. This consistency in scale and

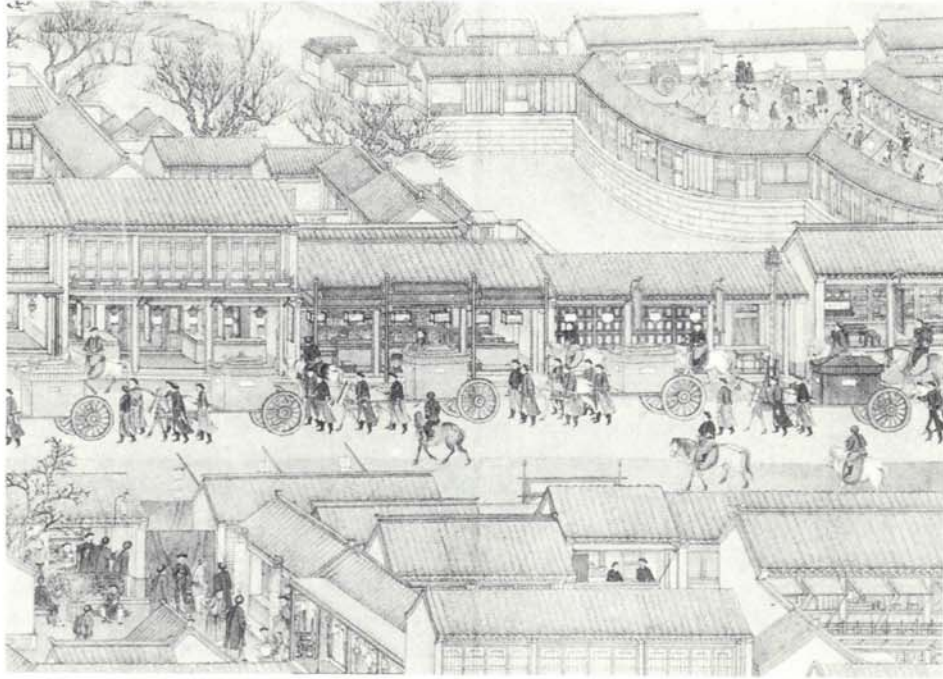


Figure 8. Xu Yang, *Qianlong Nanxuntu* ('Qianlong Southern Tour'), scroll I, detail. Dated 1776. Ink and colors on paper. Collection of the Historical Museum, Beijing.



Figure 9. Kangxi silk version, scroll XII, detail. Collection of the Palace Museum, Beijing.

degree of detail from foreground to far distance enables Wang Hui to draw the eye into the distance and hold it there so that the viewer feels as if he, too, had moved back in space rather than observing the action from a stationary vantage point. Once the viewer has followed the line of travelers into the distance he encounters an empty shoreline that brings the eye to a halt. He then 'looks back' from that distant vantage point to the other shore where the villages of Xin'an and Wangting are situated. From Wangting he crosses a small tributary and arrives in Xushuguan. Thus, in a very short segment of the painting Wang Hui has moved the viewer from Wuxi to Xushuguan, two-thirds of the distance to Suzhou. By manipulating the position of the viewer Wang Hui has not only enriched the sense of space in his work but also has added to the time it takes to experience the painting. As a result, the sense of traveling a great distance has been effectively evoked even though the actual amount of the painting devoted to this segment of the journey has been dramatically compressed.

The seamless transition between different views or space cells is achieved by small incremental shifts in the way individual picture elements are presented. Near Tiger Hill, the canal moves into the foreground then recedes again along two converging diagonal lines (Figure 11). As the viewer approaches the junction point all of the boats along the canal are shown as if viewed from the rear. Just beyond the point where the canal bends back into the distance, however, the boats are depicted as if seen from the front. The eye hardly notices the change, but this shift implies that the position of the viewer has shifted so that the leftward receding canal, a bridge that spans it, and all the buildings that line its bank, may all be seen from the new perspective without any sense of spatial distortion or warping of the ground plane. This small shift mimics the constantly shifting focus of the human eye which often links together disconnected images to form a coherent mental picture that a painting executed with one-point perspective or a photograph cannot recreate.⁵⁰

Wang Hui's ability to routinely twist space enables him to present landmarks from their most characteristic or fully revealed view; Xu Yang, however, often doggedly maintains a consistent perspective even when it means diminishing the content of his images. Both Wang Hui and Xu Yang depict Tiger Hill near Suzhou and the Temple of Yu near Shaoxing. In Wang's paintings, these places appear in their most characteristic view; space is warped to suit his narrative and pictorial requirements. Xu Yang, however, visualizes his images, if not from a single point, then at least from a position parallel to and at a consistent distance from the line of travel illustrated. In his Suzhou scroll he remains to the north and east



Figure 10. Kangxi silk version, scroll VII, detail. Private collection, Canada.

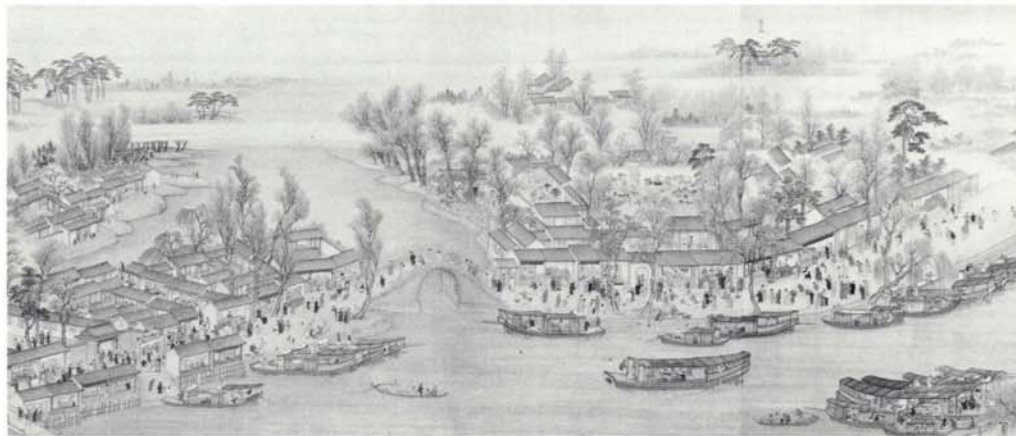


Figure 11. Kangxi silk version, scroll VII, detail. Private collection, Canada.

of the emperor's path; Tiger Hill, consequently, is viewed from the 'back' so that most of its recognizable features are obscured. In depicting the Temple of Yu, the climax and culmination of the ninth scroll in both artists' sets, Wang Hui clearly shows all of the temple's courtyards and halls (Figure 12). In Xu Yang's scroll, however, the artist's imaginary position in relation to the emperor's path forces him to show the temple compound from the rear and at a low angle so that most of the complex is hidden (Figure 13). The resultant reduction in pictorial detail may have been desirable for reasons of expediency, but Xu Yang's systematic application of this method of visualization throughout the set suggests a commitment to foreshortening as a means of maintaining a consistent sense of scale and descriptive accuracy among his picture elements. Wang Hui, on the other hand, consciously abstracts and manipulates forms to enhance the narrative content. In the two artists' depictions of the Zhengyang Gate in Beijing, for example, Wang Hui presents the gate in a schematic fashion from a high side view to facilitate the lateral flow of the procession (see Figure 9). In Xu Yang's depiction, however, the same gate is presented frontally in a foreshortened view to show that the procession made a 90-degree turn at this point (Figure 14). Nowhere is Wang Hui's manipulation of picture elements more striking than in his presentation of Kangxi's arrival at the Chang Gate of Suzhou. There streets, canals, and houses all converge in a vortex-like compositional movement that heightens the drama of the moment as it focuses attention on the figure of the emperor (see Figure 14).

Related to the differing conceptions of space in the two sets of *Nanxuntu* paintings is the inclusion or absence of place names within the composition. In the Kangxi set, Wang Hui inscribes the names of towns, gates, bridges and other important sites adjacent to their depiction. This labeling technique goes back at least as far as Han times and the engraved wall murals of the Wuliang Ci where cartouches identifying figures are inserted into the picture space.⁵¹ In Xu Yang's paintings, however, such labels are omitted and sites go unidentified, perhaps because Xu saw such labels as intrusions into his illusionistic space. The only exception is Qianlong's poems which were inscribed within the picture space after the paintings had been completed.

Figures in the Qianlong *Nanxuntu* are also clearly influenced by Western canons of proportion and anatomical accuracy. The elaborate poses and theatrical gestures of Xu Yang's tall, slender figures are more convincingly articulated than the squat, conventionalized figures in the Kangxi scrolls,



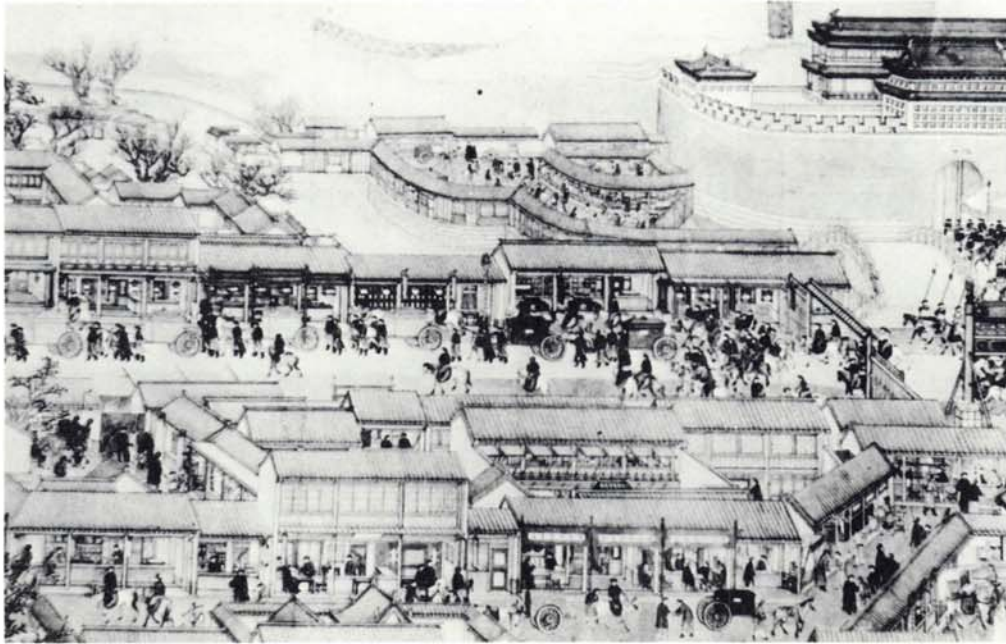
Figure 12. Kangxi silk version, scroll IX, detail. Collection of the Palace Museum, Beijing.





Figure 13. Qianlong silk version, scroll IX, two details. Collection of the Palace Museum, Beijing.





but the overall effect is rather stultifying (Figures 15, 16). This is especially true in group scenes: while the Kangxi figures interact with great animation, Xu Yang's figures appear like isolated actors frozen into mime-like tableaux. In this respect they are not unlike some of Castiglione's early religious paintings.⁵²

The 'descriptive realism' of Xu Yang's *Nanxuntu* clearly met with Qianlong's approval as the perfect style for documenting the important events of his reign. Xu limited the number of details in his pictures so as to concentrate attention on the figure of the emperor. Focusing on small segments of Qianlong's tour, he devoted a maximum of energy to the minute description of the emperor's action and immediate setting. In the Kangxi *Nanxuntu*, on the other hand, many details are clearly extraneous to the actions of Kangxi and often appear as comic relief to or in competition with the emperor's actions. Yet the pictures function more effectively as a catalog of the diverse activities and enterprises of the realm, documenting the prosperity of the empire and, indirectly, the success of Kangxi's rule.

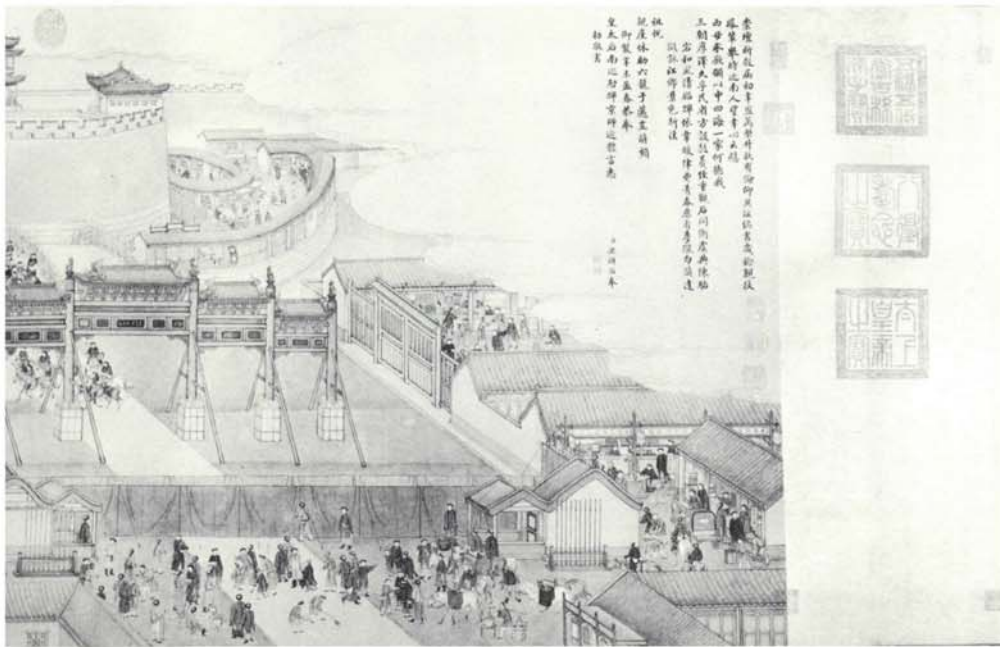


Figure 14. Qianlong paper version, scroll I, detail. Collection of the Historical Museum, Beijing.

Conclusion

The route which Kangxi and Qianlong followed on their Southern Tours generally coincided, but in both purpose and documentation, their tours were significantly different. Kangxi's tours arose out of his desire to personally acquaint himself with and control all aspects of his empire and government as well as the strategic need to favorably influence and win the support of the local Han gentry. As his reign progressed, the loyalty of his Southern subjects was no longer an issue. Wang Hui's *Southern Tour* scrolls record and celebrate this turning point in Kangxi's career. They capture the energy and curiosity of the emperor, the magnitude of his journey, the diversity of his realm, and the enthusiasm of his subjects in their welcome of their ruler.

From the beginning, Qianlong's tours surpassed his grandfather's in duration and cost while they lacked the same strategic need to encourage the support of the local gentry. Indeed, Qianlong's tours seem to have had the opposite effect, becoming a heavy burden on the people living



Figure 15. Qianlong silk version, scroll IV, detail. Collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (1984.16).



Figure 16. Kangxi silk version, scroll III, detail. Collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (1979.5).

along the route. Qianlong's documentation of his tours was more extensive, more formalized, and more focused on the imperial person. Xu Yang's paintings are idealized, officially-sanctioned images in which man and nature are dominated by the central presence of the emperor. By incorporating both Chinese and Western elements, they epitomize a new, universal style appropriate to Qianlong's view of himself as a universal ruler.

Clearly, both sets of *Southern Tour* scrolls also reflect the personalities of their patrons. Wang Hui's paintings share in the adventurous spirit of his monarch; they are filled with surprises, touches of humor and glimpses of the harsher side of life. Xu Yang's paintings, on the other hand, reflect Qianlong's desire for a sanitized and idealized image of his reign in which he sat at the center of a totally ordered realm.⁵³