

FINE 2053: BEAUTIES AND BEASTS: SONG AND YUAN PAINTING

A Study on
Returning with a Good Bag after Hunting

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Returning with a Good Bag after Hunting (fig.1) is an album leaf bound in the *Sichao xuanzao ce* 四朝選藻冊 or Selection of Albums of the Four Dynasties. The main figure, dressed in a fur hat, a fur coat with narrow cuffs and a pair of black leather boots is standing on the right of the picture plane. It is the typical hunting costume of the northern peoples. Attached to his belt are all kinds of hunting equipment including arrows, nets, an arrow holder, a bow holder and several small ornaments. The hunter is inspecting an arrow with his head slightly tilted and one eye closed, whose facial expression suggests satisfaction for a good harvest after hunting. On the other side, his horse looks exhausted from running. The horse's head bows down, eyes droop and it is breathing heavily with widely open nostrils. Both the prey and the equestrian equipment seem very heavy.

Judging from the ethnic motifs and style, we can roughly date this painting back to sometime the middle of the Northern Song or the Southern Song and the hunter may be ethnically a Jurchen.¹ The painting appears to have no special meaning

¹ One should be always cautious when identifying the ethnicity of the figures, inferring the nationality of the painter or allocating the possible date of the original by looking at the ethnic motifs. Yu Hui suggests that many artists had little first-hand knowledge about non-Chinese peoples, nevertheless they made pictures of the non-Chinese. The artist might copy after the former masterpieces and mix the motifs of different tribes into one scene. As a result, some paintings can be ethnically confusing and the details are at odd with the archeological evidence. Furthermore, the northern tribes (Khitan, Jurchen and Mongol) had cultural exchanges with each other as well as with the Chinese in the Song. The costumes and daily utensils were never clearly distinctive from tribe to tribe. See Yu Hui, "Jindai renma hua kaolue ji qita" *Meishu yanjiu*, no.4 (1990), 30-41.

Some examples of the Five Dynasties and early Northern Song are comparable to *Returning after Hunting*. Similar scene of a foreign hunter checking and adjusting an arrow can be found in Li Zanhua's 李贊華 (ca. 899-936) *Archer and Horse* (Taipei Palace Museum) and Zhang Kan's 張戡 (active in 10th century) *Removing the Saddle, Inspecting the Arrows* (Freer Gallery). But *Returning after Hunting* is done in more refined lines and the three-quarter view of the horse shows a greater ability in depicting three-dimensionality. The treatment of facial characters, small ornaments, physicality of horses and equestrian gears is similar to that of *Nomads with a Tribute Horse* (10th-11th century copy, Boston Museum of Fine Arts, fig.2) and the monochromatic scroll of *Mingfei Crossing the Border* (mid-12th century, Osaka City Museum of fine Arts, fig.3). The soft and curvy delineation of the drapery is also close to those two later paintings, which is a style of Li Gonglin 李公麟 (1049-1106). Furthermore, the "double-dragon" seal, which appears as a half on the top-right of *Returning after Hunting*, can be evidence of Song collection. See Wang Yaoting 王耀庭, "Beyond the Admonition Scroll: A Study of its Mounting, Seals and Inscriptions," *Taida Journal of Art History*, no.17 (2004), 1-51+227. Therefore this album leaf was probably painted after the tenth century and before the Yuan.

The horseman in Yang Wei's 楊微 (12th century) *Two Horses* (Liaoning Provincial Museum) and the "Huns" in Zhang Yu's 張瑄 *Lady Wenji's Return to China* (Jilin Provincial Museum) are represented in Jurchen

beyond a vivid depiction of a foreign hunter and his horse. In fact, however, it exemplifies a specific painting genre called *fanzu* 番族 (literally “barbarian tribes”) associated at times with the concept of *laihua* 來化 (literally “come to be civilized”). This essay will decode the political implication of the painting in the social context of the Southern Song, and explain the internal paradox of this mode of pictorial representation of the Other.

According to Irene S. Leung, *laihua* served as a means to regard the Chinese culture as superior to the others’, which were either underdeveloped or in a state of total “barbarism”. Therefore some of the foreign tribes voluntarily would become subjects and being “civilized and transformed” by the Chinese, namely, be sinisized.² *Xuanhe huapu* 宣和畫譜 (Imperial Catalogue of Paintings in the Xuanhe Era, 1120) incorporated *laihua* rhetoric when cataloging the paintings representing non-Chinese people. Unlike the former dynasties which created tribute scenes to embody the *laihua* idea, the Song people constructed a whole new category of *fanzu* painting.³ In these pictures, the costume and lifestyle of *fan* (foreign or “barbarian”) people are reproduced in their native environment,⁴ made base, and thereby “elevated the virtues

costume, which the hunter in *Returning after Hunting* resembles. Especially the narrow cuffs was typical to Jurchen people. See Yu Hui 余輝, “Jindai renma hua kaolue ji qita 金代人馬畫考略及其他 (Investigation of Figure-and-Horse Painting in Jin Dynasty),” *Meishu yanjiu* 美術研究, no.4 (1990), pp.30-41.

² Irene S. Leung, “‘Felt yurts neatly arrayed, large tents huddle close’: visualizing the frontier in the Northern Song dynasty (960-1127),” in *China under Jurchen Rule: Essays on Chin Intellectual and Cultural History*, Hoyt Cleveland Tillman and Stephen H. West eds, (Albany : State University of New York Press, 1995) 193.

³ This strategy formed earlier in the Song dynasty before it was officially conceptualized in *Xuanhe huapu*. A record in *Tuhua jianwen zhi* 圖畫見聞志 (An Account of My Experience in Painting, 1080) Guo Ruoxu 郭若虛 reads:

“Today all nations to which the imperial virtue has extended, in their garments of grass and feather ornaments, gather in the barbarian’s guest quarters. Truly this should be represented pictorially for posterity, in order to exhibit the far-reaching extent of that virtue.”

See Susan Bush, and Shih Hsio-yen, *Early Chinese Texts on Painting*, (Cambridge, Mass: Published for the Harvard-Yenching Institute by Harvard University Press, 1985) 133.

⁴ Leung, “Felt yurts”, 198-200.

of Chinese culture”.⁵ Although *fanzu* could refer to various non-Chinese peoples, only the northern neighbors (the Khitan, Jurchen and Mongols) were represented under this category during the Song dynasty.⁶

“Accuracy” and “completeness” in recording the subject matter was more valued in *fanzu* painting than in any other genre.⁷ *Returning after Hunting* almost has an obsession with verisimilitude, which is similar to the *fanzu* masterpiece *Nomads with a Tribute Horse* (fig.2). Everything, even the strings of the nets and the reins, are meticulously delineated on a piece of silk no larger than size A4. Colors and subtle shading are carefully applied to suggest volume and the texture of fur and felt. Moreover, the hunter and horse are posed against a blank background, almost like an ethnographic specimen showing the life of a nomadic people in the greatest detail.

Leung argued that this kind of verisimilitude should not be mistaken as truthful representation of the historical facts. The northern peoples were neither always dressed in such an exotic manner nor did they live an exclusively nomadic life. The embassy accounts and encyclopedias fully recorded the cultural circumstances with the economic development and ethnical multiplicity of the Liao, in addition to their military might.⁸ Yet by depicting them with the “ethnographic authenticity”, the Song people could crystallize the Khitan in an eternally archaic and uncivilized stage. The

⁵ Ibid, 193.

⁶ Leung’s observation is that *fanzu* was associated with single ethnic designation, which was the Khitan in the case of the Northern Song. See Leung, “Felt yurts”, 196. However, after the eleventh century, *Fanzu* did not necessarily the corresponding northern ethnic group or polity bordering the Song. The Southern Song still represented the Khitan in poems and paintings either separately from or fused with the Jurchen, despite the fact that the Liao regime had been destroyed by the Jin. Both of the two peoples would be categorized as *fanzu*. See Robert E, Harrist and Virginia Bower, *Power and Virtue: The Horse in Chinese Art*, (New York: China Institute, 1997) 36-37.

⁷ Hui Gui 胡璣 (fl.907-960) and Li Zanhua are praised in *Xuanhe huapu* for their detailed and vivid rendering of foreign horses, costumes and accoutrements, which was valued as transcripts of ethnic truth. Both of the artists were ethnically Khitan and had the chance to observe Khitan life closely. See Harrist, *Power and Virtue*, 33.

⁸ Leung, “Felt yurts”, 206.

literati also composed *biansai shi* 邊塞詩 (frontier poems) to reaffirm the message that the Khitan were ethnically defined and culturally backward.⁹ By so doing, the Song literati veiled their cultural anxiety when the *laihua* ideal of “civilized -- barbarian” failed to work. By extension, they also could refuse acknowledging the Khitan as a both culturally and militarily powerful polity, who caused great trouble in the northern border.¹⁰

The Song was faced with an increasing unstable and tumultuous situation when they encountered the Jurchen in place of the Khitan. Under the Jurchen attack, the Song court lost its capital and retreated south to Lin'an in 1127. A peace treaty was signed in 1142 under the great pressure of Jin's military and diplomatic mighty. In addition to a territorial cession of nearly one third of its lands, the Song had to accept the vassal status subservient to the Jin and pay a huge tribute every year. The traditional tribute relationship had been entirely reversed and the treaty was considered an enormous ignominy in Chinese history.¹¹ On the other hand, the majority of Jurchen people moved from Manchuria to the newly occupied central plain, before when they had already adopted agriculture and some Chinese culture such as dressing and Confucian literature. Most importantly, the Jin court reformed their political system after the model of the Tang (618-907) and used the notion of

⁹ *Biansai* poems used standard tropes to visualize the environment of the northern border and the life of foreign peoples. Some examples include: 1) Use other nearby tribes in the history to represent the subject. Also use the past events to comment the present. 2) Poetic exaggeration of the harsh natural environment of the northern steppe. 3) Make iconic representation of the customs, lifestyle and psyche of the foreign peoples. See Leung, “Felt yurts”, 204-5.

¹⁰ Leung, “Felt yurts”, 209-10.

¹¹ Denis C. Twitchett and John K. Fairbank, *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol.6, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978) 226-35.

“Mandate of Heaven”.¹² This posed an ultimate threat to the Song’s attempt to maintain itself as the legitimate successor of the Chinese regime. Therefore it was necessary to continuously utilize the Northern Song’s pictorial and literal rhetoric of the northern peoples to reinforce the foundation of Sino-centric *laihua* idea. Based on the strategies of *fanzu* painting and the *biansai* poem genre, vying political claims could be made.

In the comment on a barbarian hunting scene painted by Zhang Kan 張戡 (active mid-10th century), Fan Chengda 范成大 (1126-1193) described a similar hunting custom as depicted in *Returning after Hunting*.¹³ Fan Chengda believed the “barbarians” were satisfied with their nomadic life in the north and should never disturb the central plain. He also expressed his confidence in the military power of the Chinese to defeat any invaders by referring to the famous Han general Li Guang 李廣.¹⁴ Neither of the two statements corresponded to the actual situation of the Song or the Jin, nonetheless the poem could support the morale and promote a tough attitude in dealing Song-Jin relations. In contrast, Zheng Keji 鄭克己 (ca. 1098-1174) insisted on the *huaiyou* 懷柔 (literally cherishing softness) policy to “win the barbarian’s confidence through kindness”.¹⁵ In a farewell poem dedicated to an envoy heading to the north, he suggested that there was no need to appease the border by violence.¹⁶ To

¹² Liu Pujiang 劉浦江, *Song mo zhi jian: liao jin qidan nuzhen shi yanjiu* 松漠之間：遼金契丹女真史研究 (Among the Pines and Desert: Historical Studies of the Khitan and Jurchen in the Liao and Jin), (Beijing: Zhonghua shu ju 中華書局, 2008) 240-5.

¹³ Fan Chengda, “Comment on Barbarian Hunting by Zhang Kan,” my translation, *Shongdai biansai shichao* 宋代邊塞詩鈔 (Anthology of Song Dynasty Frontier Poetry), Huang Linshu 黃麟書 and Cheng Shaoji 程少籍, eds, vol. 2, (Taipei: Dongming wenhua jijin hui 東明文化基金會, 1989) 892. Also see Appendix I.

¹⁴ Li Guang was a Chinese general in the Han Dynasty, famous for his exploits of defeating the Xiongnu.

¹⁵ Leung, “Felt yurts”, 193.

¹⁶ Zheng Keji, “To Secretary Wang Sheren who Departures to the North as an Envoy”, my translation, *Shongdai biansai shichao*, Huang and Cheng, vol. 3, 1033. Also see Appendix II.

make the argument strong, he used the rhetoric contrast of the god of literature and the “barbarian” Khan. The contradictory opinions of the two scholars reflected a struggle between the revanchists and appeasers after the treaty of 1142.¹⁷ Despite of the political dispute, they both incorporated the *laihua* tropes of stereotyping the nomadic peoples emphasizing on their cultural inferiority.

Some scholars in the Southern Song, however, rejected the iconic representation of the Other. Lou Yue 樓鑰 (1137-1213), who used to travel to the Jin as an envoy,¹⁸ stated his attitude to the Jurchen in a colophon on a *fanzu* painting done by (or owned by) his junior:

The nomads descend from the horses and rest together,
Tired they lean against the fur and felt sleeping sound.
The leader takes out the arrows and the servants inspect and adjust them,
Thus no arrow will be shot in vain in hunting.
.....
They are indeed all noble men with the heroic spirit of dragon.
.....
I have been to Yan and Ji and observed them,
Wearing hats of wolf fur and black boots is their custom.
Never say that they only rely on military power and do not know righteousness,
You should treat them with complete sincerity.
Alas, how could we gather and send out strong soldiers and muscular horses,
And make the barbarian army submit to us!”¹⁹

The poem firstly again described all the clichés about the Jurchen people, some of which are identical to the depiction in *Returning after Hunting*, such as the fur coat, inspecting arrows, the fur hat and the black leather boots. Lou Yue confirmed that these could be their actual customs, but he did not think they were base and signified

¹⁷ Denis and John, *The Cambridge History of China*, 248-249.

¹⁸ Huang Kuanzhong 黃寬重, “Literati Networks and Socio-cultural Activities in Siming during the Song Dynasty-The Example of the Lou Lineage,” *Zhongyang yanjiu yuan lishi yuyan yanjiu suo jikan* 中央研究院歷史語言研究所集刊, vol.70(3) (September 1999), 633.

¹⁹ Lou Yue, “Comment on the Barbarian Horse (owned) by Nephew Jiang Ruoshui”, my translation, *Shongdai biansai shichao*, Huang and Cheng, vol. 3, 985. Also see Appendix III.

cultural inferiority. The Jurchen were not “militant barbarians” and were in fact morally advanced even lofty. Fed up with the repeated tropes, he urged the young scholar to discard the biased *laihua* idea. The poem ends in the climax of emotion, expressing a deep concern for the future of the country. Lou Yue was by no means in favor of the Jurchen. But in order to rival the enemy, one must approach them with appropriate recognition and full respect.

Lou Yue conveyed a complex feeling towards the Jurchen. He knew the cultural and military competence of the other very well, but could not find a way to defeat the Jurchen. What is left more might be a disappointment of the self-deception of Song literati, who only veil the anxiety by rhetoric, but did nothing substantial to improve the situation. As pointed out by Robert Harrist, *fan zu* genre that was so keen on ethnographical specificity declined after Song dynasty.²⁰ After the Mongolian rule of Yuan, the relationships between the Chinese and surrounding ethnic groups were reshaped during the Ming and Qing. The iconography of the Khitan, Jurchen and Mongols merged into a vague and generic image of the non-Chinese. Painters in the Ming and Qing might still produce vivid *fan zu* paintings like *Returning with a Good Bag after Hunting*. But most of them were copying (or counterfeiting) the old master *fan zu* painters, and the works could no longer be situated back to its original political context.²¹

²⁰ Harrist, *Power and Virtue*, 38.

²¹ Ibid. For a discussion of different copies of *Returning with a Good Bag after Hunting* and its acceptance Qing emperors, see Appendix IV.



Fig. 1. Anonymous, *Returning with a Good Bag after Hunting*, ink and color on silk, album leaf, Beijing: Palace Museum.

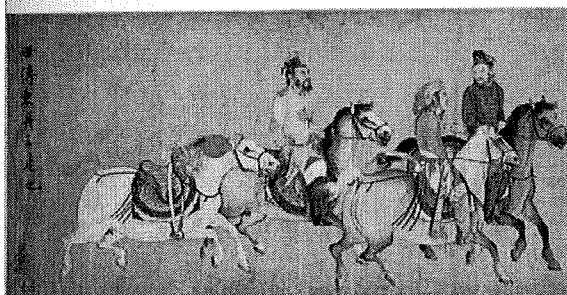
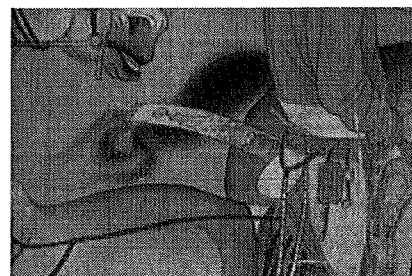


Fig. 2. Li Zanhua 李贊華 (attributed) (c.899-936), *Nomads with a Tribute Horse*, ink, colour and gold on silk, handscroll, Boston (MA): Museum of Fine Arts, 10th – 11th century copy. With details.



Fig. 3. Gong Suran 宮素然 (active in 1127-1162), section from *Mingfei Crossing the Border*, ink on paper, handscroll, Osaka: Osaka City Museum of fine Arts.

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-----"Jindai renma hua chengyin yu chengjiu 金代人馬畫成因與成就 (Development and Achievements of Figure-and-Horse Painting in Jin Dynasty)." *Meishu yanjiu* 美術研究, no.1 (1992), pp.55-58, 62.

Appendix I

"Comment on *Barbarian Hunting* by Zhang Kan" by Fan Chengda

題張戡蕃馬射獵圖

陰山磧中射生虜，馬逐箭飛如脫兔。
割鮮大嚼飽何求，荐食中原天震怒。
太乙靈旗方北指，掣轡逃歸莫南顧。
漢家飛將李將軍，馬蹄行踏燕然路。

In the desert encompassed by Yin Mountains²²,
The northern raw barbarians are hunting.
The horses are running, the arrows flying, as quickly as unconstrained rabbits.
Devouring cut meat and satisfied, what else could you ask?
The Heaven is furious when you trample on the central plain.
The First Great One²³ points his fighting banner to the north.
(You'd better) drive your horses and flee back home, never look to the south again.
The Flying General Li (Guang) of the Han.
Will ride on the road of Yanran Mountains.²⁴

²² Yin Mountains are located in the center of Inner Mongolia.

²³ The First Great One 太乙(or 太一) is one of the tree creation gods in Daoism.

²⁴ Yanran Mountains are present-day Khangai Mountains in Mongolia.

Appendix II

“To Secretary Wang Sheren who Departures to the North as an Envoy” by Zheng Keji

送中書王舍人使北

細馬縷金鞍，文星使可汗。
袖中天詔重，帳外節毛寒。
烽火燕城急，塵沙朔野寬。
安邊在大體，何必斬樓蘭。

The tiny horse is equipped with golden saddle.
The god of literature is going to meet the Khan.
The command of heaven in my sleeves feels heavy.
The air outside the tent is freezing cold.
The beacon announces an emergency in the city of Yan.
The vast northern wilderness is full of dust and sand.
The Great Way will appease the border.
There is no need to occupy Loulan.²⁵

Appendix III

“Comment on the *Barbarian Horse* (owned) by Nephew Jiang Ruoshui” by Lou Yue

賦蔣甥若水蕃馬圖

何處驅來良馬六，騮黃參錯如花簇。
胡為不作騰驤去，各有游韁繫前足。
胡人下馬俱少休，倦倚氍毹眠正熟。
酋豪揀箭奚奴撚，意欲時發不遺鏃。
琵琶橫倚續續彈，一夫坐聽羌中曲。
卧擁提壺將引飲，英氣虬鬚皆貴族。
沙磧坡陀高復低，天寒不見寸草綠。
我行燕薊頗見之，狼帽烏靴乃其俗。
勿云恃勇不知義，要以赤心置其腹。
嗚呼，安得壯士健馬咸作使，坐令戎馬皆臣僕。

From where come six steeds,
Red ones mixing with yellow ones make a garland.
Why not the nomads ride at full gallop,
Instead tighten the rein and speed down?
The nomads descend from the horses and rest together,
Tired they lean against the fur and felt sleeping sound.

²⁵ Loulan was an important city on the the Silk Road. In the Han Dynasty the Chinese and the Huns always had conflicts over this city for the control of the trade route. Eventually Han army killed the local Caucasian rulers and directly governed the city.

The leader takes out the arrows and the servants inspect and adjust them,
Thus no arrow will be shot in vain in hunting.
(The servant) takes out the lute and plays it without a stop,
A man sits down and enjoys the Qiang²⁶ music.
Lies down, he picks up a wine pot and is going to drink,
They are indeed all noble men with the heroic spirit of dragon.
The sand accumulates and forms rolling sandy hills,
The air is freezing cold and no green grass can be spotted.
I have been to Yan and Ji²⁷ and observed them,
Wearing hat of wolf fur and black boots is their custom.
Never say that they only rely on military power and do not know righteousness,
You should treat them with complete sincerity.
Alas, how could we gather and send out strong soldiers and muscular horses,
And make the barbarian army submit to us!

Appendix IV

Different Copies of *Returning with a Good Bag after Hunting*
and the Response of Qing Emperors to It.

The album leaf discussed in this essay, *Returning with a Good Bag after Hunting* (fig.4, also see fig.1), is held by Beijing Palace Museum. It is bounded *Sichao xuanzao ce* 四朝選藻冊 and recorded in the Qing imperial catalog *Shiqu baoji xubian* 石渠寶笈續編. The “double-dragon” seal might be the collection seal of the Song court, while the rest are seals of Ming collectors. Old documents attributed the painting to Zhao Bosu 趙伯驥 (1124-1182),²⁸ but researchers at the Palace Museum concluded that it was created by some anonymous painter in the Southern Song.

An almost identical album leaf is held in Taipei National Palace Museum (fig.5). Judging from the subject matter, composition and scale, it is a pair of duplicate with the Beijing leaf. The only difference is the color scheme. This painting was bounded in *Jigu minghui ce* 集古名繪冊 and recorded in the Qing imperial catalog *Shiqu baoji sanbian* 石渠寶笈三編. The only collector's seal on the painting was too blurred to be identified. Although it was formally attributed to Chen Juzhong 陳居中 (active 12th century) by the title inscription (may be at the time when bounded in the Qing album), its provenance remains unclear.

A third copy of was sold by Guardian Auction China in 2010. The item is 4-album-leaf remounted in the form of a handscroll, the last section of which is identical to *Returning after Hunting* (fig.6). The figure and horse have similar color scheme and

²⁶ Qiang 羌 was a people who live in to the west of the Central Plain. It generally referred to the non-Chinese in poetic tropes, like Rong 戎 or Yi 夷.

²⁷ Yan 燕 and Ji 蓟 were names of northern counties which were ruled by the Jin in the Northern Song. Yan was northern area of present-day Hebei Province. Ji was to the southwest of present-day Beijing.

²⁸ Bo Songnian 薄松年, "A Rare Song Dynasty Northern Tribesmen Painting -- Appreciating "Song Copy of Guo Zhongshu's Four Horsemen Hunting", "jiade tongxun 嘉德通訊, no.2 (2010), 119.

scale, but done on a larger piece of silk. It was recorded in the Qing imperial catalog *Shiqu baoji* 石渠寶笈. The scroll bears an inscription by Southern Song collector He Mengran 何夢然 (n.d.), thus could date back to no later than the Southern Song. The title inscription attribute it to Guo Zhongshu 郭忠恕 (died 977), but it is most likely to be a copy by later Song painters since Guo was never known for *fanzu* genre.²⁹

All of the three pieces bear the seals of the Qing emperors. Both of the album leaves have a poem on the opposite page by the emperors: the Beijing leaf by the Qianlong 乾隆 Emperor (1711-1799) and the Taipei leaf his son Jiaqing 嘉慶 Emperor (1796-1820). The poems have strong martial connotation. The scroll was cherished by Qianlong, and he made a commission to the painter Ding Guanhe 丁觀鶴 (? – after 1771) to make a copy of it.³⁰ The emperor also regained the famous scroll *Nomads Resting* by Hu Gui 胡瓌, which was lost from the Song imperial collection, and composed a long poem on it. It is possible that the Qing emperors, starting from Qianlong, were active in collecting *fanzu* paintings and deliberately made a discourse of them in order to express some martial and political ideas. This hypothesis needs further research and evidence to substantiate.

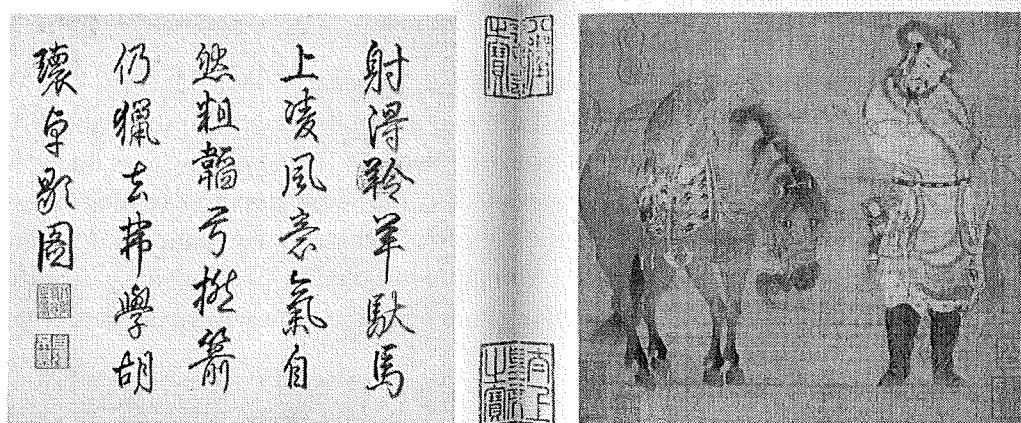


Fig. 4. Anonymous, *Returning with a Good Bag after Hunting*, ink and color on silk, album leaf, Beijing: Palace Museum.

²⁹ Bo Songnian, "A Rare Song Dynasty Northern Tribesmen Painting," 118-9.

³⁰ Ibid.



Fig. 5. Chen Juzhong 陳居中 (attributed) (active 12th century), *Returning with a Good Bag after Hunting*, ink and color on silk, album leaf, Taipei: National Palace Museum.

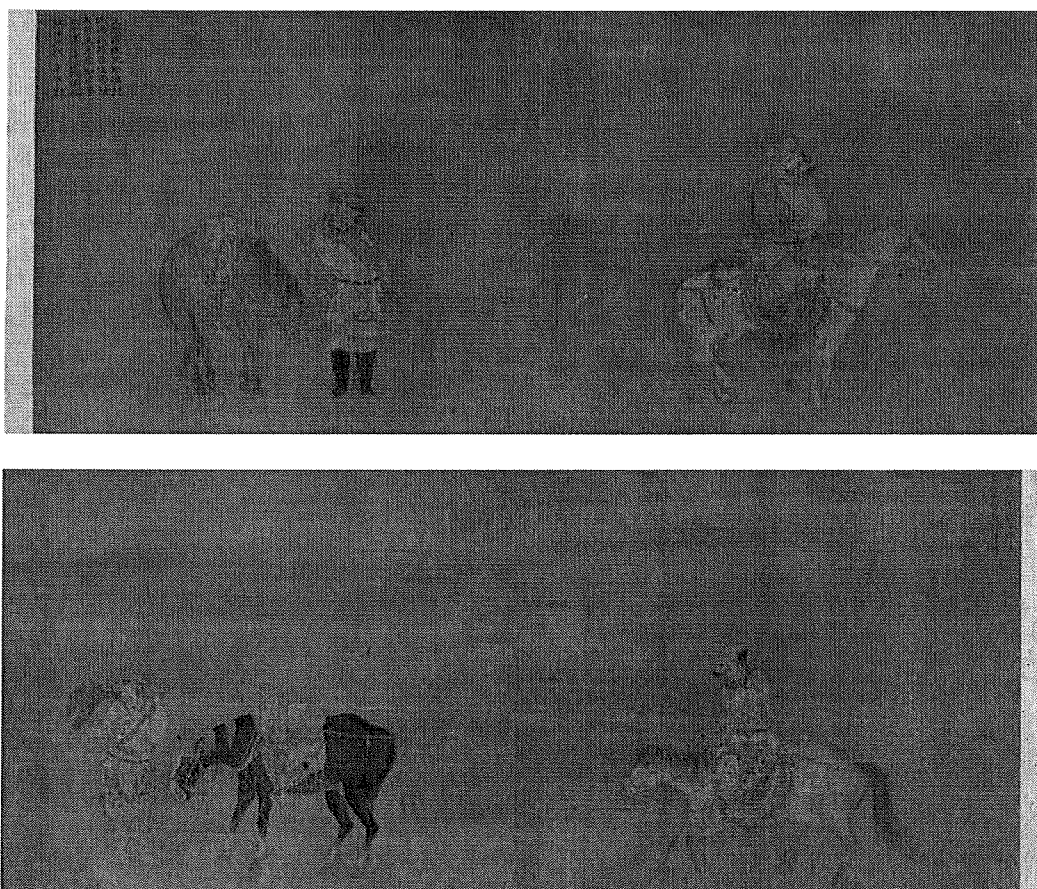


Fig. 5. Anonymous, *Song Copy of Guo Zhongshu's Four Horsemen Hunting*, ink and

color on silk, album leaves rebounded as handscroll, private collection.