

Arts of Asia Lecture Series Fall 2013  
The Culture and Arts of China: From the Song Dynasty to Contemporary  
*Sponsored by The Society for Asian Art*

## Ming Court Arts in Context

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February 22, 2013

There is a tremendous amount of information available on almost every form of art created for the court during the Ming dynasty. The common use of reign marks on art created in the imperial workshops makes it possible to trace the taste and concerns of individual emperors, to trace large trends in dynastic rule; even to see the impact of changes in tax structure, the ready availability of silver from the Americas, and other national and global events and trends.

The magnitude of the industrial capacity of the imperial workshops during the Ming and the following Qing dynasty is stunning. For example, 443,500 pieces were ordered from the imperial kilns at Jingdezhen in 1433-that is well over 1000 pieces per day. Perhaps as many as 1,000,000 pieces were created on imperial demand during the Jiajing reign (1522-66). The level of sophistication of the system for placing the orders and for creating these objects is equally impressive; for example in 1597 there were 168 workshops at Jingdezhen, 70 kilns, 66 storage areas, 104 areas for wood storage, dormitories, offices, and so on, taking a total space of approximately 54,300 square meters. The most elaborate ceramics were created in a 72 step process, each step carried out by highly trained specialists. Orders were placed by eunuchs in a specific bureau at the court in Beijing and communicated to the individual workshops. Pieces destined for the use in Beijing were transported by the Grand Canal.

In addition to technical aspects, research by Terese Bartholomew at the Asian Art Museum and others has led to an understanding of the meaning of the motifs that appear on many Ming court arts. Far from having only decorative appeal, it is now known that each motif was carefully chosen in combination with others to create a specific message or wish.

Less is known about how individual pieces were actually used. Paintings of court interiors during the Ming dynasty are rare and almost none survive that depict the rituals and ceremonies that would have been the primary purpose for the creation of many court art works.

This talk will be presented in two parts. The first will explore some of the context of the objects created for the Ming court-where and how they were made, and how they fit into the broader context of the Ming dynasty court. The second focus on three specific objects made expressly for the court: a fish jar made during the reign of the Jiajing emperor, a lacquer box made during the same reign, and an embroidered silk made during the reign of the Wanli emperor.

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## Emperors of the Ming Dynasty

Given Name	Life dates	Posthumous Name	Temple Name	Reign Title	Reign Dates
Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋	1328-1398	Gao Di 高帝	Taizu 太祖	Hongwu 洪武	1368-1398
Zhu Yunwen 朱允炆	1377-1402	Hui Di 惠帝	None	Jianwen 建文	1399-1402
Zhu Di 朱棣	1360-1424	Wen Di 文帝	Taizong, 太宗 Chengzu 成祖	Yongle 永樂	1403-1424
Zhu Gaochi 朱高熾	1378-1425	Zhao Di 昭帝	Renzong 仁宗	Hongxi 洪熙	1425
Zhu Zhanji 朱瞻基	1398-1435	Zhang Di 章帝	Xuanzong 宣宗	Xuande 宣德	1426-1435
Zhu Qizhen 朱祁鎮	1427-1464	Rui Di 睿帝	Yingzong 英宗	Zhengtong 正統 Tianshun 天順	1436-1449 1457-1464
Zhu Qiyu 朱祁鈺	1428-1457	Jing Di 景帝	Daizong 代宗	Jingtai 景泰	1450-1456
Zhu Jianshen 朱見深	1447-1487	Chun Di 純帝	Xianzong 憲宗	Chenghua 成化	1465-1487
Zhu Youyuan 朱祐棖	1470-1505	Jing Di 敬帝	Xiaozong 孝宗	Hongzhi 弘治	1488-1505
Zhu Houzhao 朱厚照	1491-1521	Yi Di 毅帝	Wuzong 武宗	Zhengde 正德	1506-1521
Zhu Houcong 朱厚燾	1507-1521	Su Di 肅帝	Shizong 世宗	Jiajing 嘉靖	1522-1566
Zhu Zaihou 朱載堉	1537-1572	Zhuang Di 莊帝	Muzong 穆宗	Longqing 隆慶	1567-1572
Zhu Yijun 朱翊鈞	1563-1620	Xian Di 顯帝	Shenzong 神宗	Wanli 萬曆	1573-1619
Zhu Changluo 朱常洛	1582-1620	Zhen Di 真帝	Guangzong 光宗	Taichang 泰昌	1620
Zhu Youjiao 朱由校	1605-1627	Zhe Di 愍帝	Xizong 熹宗	Tianqi 天啟	1621-1627
Zhu Youjian 朱由檢	1611-1644	Zhuang Lie Min Di 莊烈愍帝	Sizong 思宗	Chongzhen 崇禎	1628-1643

## Great Sacrifices

Sacrifice to	Where	When
The Lord of Resplendent Heaven ( <i>Haotian Shangdi</i> )	Round Altar	Winter Solstice
August Earth Spirit ( <i>Huangdi qi</i> )	Square altar	Summer solstice
Morning Sun ( <i>Zhao ri</i> )	Eastern jiao	Autumn Equinox
Ancestors	Great Ancestral Temple	First, fourth, seventh, tenth, and twelfth months
Great Earth and Great Grain Spirits ( <i>Taishe taiji</i> )	Great Altars of Soil and Grain	Second and Eighth months

From Romeyn Taylor, "Official religion in the Ming," CHC, vol. 8, pp. 843-44

### Additional readings:

*Power and Glory*: Introduction, pp. 11-21, Textiles, pp. 65-91, Lacquer, wood and bamboo, pp. 93-121, Ceramics, pp. 123-162

Huang, Ray. "The Ming Fiscal Administration," *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 8, The Ming Dynasty, Part 2*, pp. 106-171

Taylor, Romeyn. "Official Religion in the Ming," *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 8, The Ming Dynasty, Part 2*, pp. 840-892

Naquin, Susan: *Peking Temples and City Life, 1400-1900*, U.C. Berkeley, 2000

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### Slide List

**Slide 1.** Intro slide. **Slide 2:** China in the year 2 CE and now. **Slide 3:** *top:* Fishermen on an Autumn River, by Tai Jin (active 15th century), handscroll, ink on paper, Freer Gallery of Art. *Bottom:* Planting rice seedlings, by Mao Dan (or Mao Xiang, dates unknown), hanging scroll, ink and slight color on silk, B62D19. **Slide 4.** Map of China and two views of old Nanjing city walls. **Slide 5.** Beijing, the Northern Capital. **Slide 6:** Map of Ming China, Map of Grand Canal. **Slide 7.** Portraits of Nine (of 16) Ming Emperors. **Slides 8 & 9.** Forbidden City, Beijing. **Slide 10.** Tribute Bearers, by Qiu Ying (approx. 1482-1559), hand scroll, ink and color on silk, Palace Museum, Beijing. **Slide 11.** Portraits of envoys, Ming dynasty, album of 5 leaves, ink and color on paper, Palace Museum, Beijing. **Slide 12.** Stages in the life of the Ming official Xu Xianqing, album leaf, ink and color on paper, Palace Museum, Beijing. **Slide 13.** *Right:* Portrait of Minister Gu Lin (died 1544), hanging scroll, ink and colors on paper, Nanjing Municipal Museum. *Left:* Stages in the life of the Ming official Xu Xianqing, album leaf, ink and color on paper. **Slide 14:** Temple of Heaven and Temple of Agriculture, **Slide 15.** Great Sacrifices. **Slide 16.** Middle Sacrifices. **Slide 17.** Minor sacrifices. **Slide 18.** Sacrifices unique to Beijing. **Slide 19.** Sacrifices unique to Nanjing. **Slide 20-26.** Imperial Procession to the Ming tombs, perhaps reign of the Jiajing emperor, approx. 1550, one of 2 hand scrolls, ink and colors on silk, h. 36 1/4", length 1024", National Palace Museum, Taipei. **Slide 27.** Portrait of Zhu Youjiao, the Tianqi reign (1621-1627), ink and colors on silk, The Palace Museum, Beijing. **Slide 28.** *Above:* the Tianqi emperor. *Right:* material for a court robe, reign of the

Wanli emperor (1573-1619), silk, the Palace Museum, Beijing. **Slide 29.** *Left:* Portrait of the Tianqi emperor, *Right:* belt ornaments, buried 1371, jade with gold backs, Nanjing Municipal Museum. **Slide 30.** *Left:* Portrait of the Tianqi emperor, *Right:* textile fragment, 1450-1600, Palace Museum, Beijing. **Slide 31.** *Left:* Portrait of the Tianqi emperor, *Right:* Vase, reign of the Xuande emperor (1426-35), cloisonne, Palace Museum, Beijing. **Slide 32.** *Left:* Portrait of the Tianqi emperor, *Right:* bowl, Wanli mark and period (1573-1620), porcelain with underglaze blue decoration, AAM B62P124. **Slide 33.** Amusements in the Xuande emperor's palace, approx. 1426-87, hand scroll, ink and colors on silk, Palace Museum, Beijing. **Slide 34.** Amusements in the Xuande emperor's palace, approx. 1426-87, hand scroll, ink and colors on silk, Palace Museum, Beijing. **Slide 35.** Series of monochrome ceramics: red is Xuande reign (1426-35) Palace museum, Beijing; yellow is Hongzhi reign (1488-1505), AAM; blue and brown are Jiajing reign (1522-66), AAM. **Slide 36.** Portrait of a court woman, approx, 1500-1600, hanging scroll, ink and colors on silk, Palace Museum, Beijing. **Slide 37.** *Left:* Portrait of court lady, *Right:* covered box, 17th century, woven bamboo and lacquer, AAM B76M4. **Slide 38.** *Left:* detail from portrait, *Right:* wrapper, silk, Palace Museum, Beijing. **Slide 39.** *Left:* detail from portrait, *Right:* fabric sample, reign of the Wanli emperor (1573-1619), silk with gold motifs, Palace Museum, Beijing. **Slide 40.** *Left:* detail of portrait, *Right:* stand, 17th century, lacquered wood with mother of pearl inlay, private collection. **Slide 41.** view of Forbidden City. **Slide 42.** Court women in the inner palace, attributed to Du Jin (active 1465-1500), hand scroll, ink and colors on silk, Shanghai Museum. **Slide 43.** *Above:* Court ladies in the inner palace, attributed to Du Jin (active 1465-1500), hand scroll, ink and colors on silk, Shanghai Museum, *Right:* one of a pair of stools, approx. 1500-1644, lacquered wood with mother of pearl inlays, cloisonne top, Palace Museum, Beijing. **Slide 44.** *Above:* Court ladies in the inner palace, attributed to Du Jin (active 1465-1500), hand scroll, ink and colors on silk, Shanghai Museum, *Right:* covered box, approx. 1500-1600, lacquered wood with cloud head design, AAM B83M8. **Slide 45.** *Above:* Court ladies in the inner palace, attributed to Du Jin (active 1465-1500), hand scroll, ink and colors on silk, Shanghai Museum, *Right:* vase, reign of the Longqing emperor (1567-1572), porcelain with phoenix design, AAM B60P2349. **Slide 46.** Court ladies in the inner palace, attributed to Du Jin (active 1465-1500), hand scroll, ink and colors on silk, Shanghai Museum. **Slide 47:** Covered jar (2 views), Jiajing reign (1522-1566), porcelain, AAM B60P78+. **Slide 48.** Map-location of Jingdezhen. **Slide 49.** *Left:* jar with Lotus Pond decoration, porcelain with enamel decoration, Ming dynasty, Jiajing mark and period (1522-66), AAM B60P78+. *Right:* mark from jar. **Slide 50.** *Left:* jar with Lotus Pond decoration, porcelain with enamel decoration, Ming dynasty, Jiajing mark and period (1522-66), AAM B60P78+, *Right:* detail from Amusements in the Xuande emperor's palace, approx. 1426-87, hand scroll, ink and colors on silk, Palace Museum, Beijing. **Slide 51.** *Left:* Covered box, Ming dynasty, reign of the Jiajing emperor (1522-66), lacquered wood with carved decoration, B60M308. *Right:* mark. **Slide 52.** Map. **Slide 53.** Covered box, Ming dynasty, reign of the Jiajing emperor (1522-66), lacquered wood with carved decoration, B60M308 (two views). **Slide 54:** Empress's over vest, 1595, Ming dynasty, reign of the Wanli emperor (1573-1619), silk satin embroidered in canvas and satin stitching, over-embroidered in gold couching, 1990.214. **Slide 55.** Map. **Slide 56.** Detail of robe 1990.214