

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36059/978-966-397-508-5-79>

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## THE IMAGE OF THE “BOOK BOY” IN THE PAINTING OF DYNASTIC CHINA

*Key words: fine arts, painting, China, children’s images*

The prerequisite for the spread of children’s images in the painting of dynastic China (2070 BC-1911) is the prototypes of nobility children or “learned children”, playmates and study companions, members of the imperial court. As for the “book boy,” he was a personal servant of a scholar in ancient society who accompanied “literary men” and had a high level of education, unlike ordinary servants. In Chinese history, there are many stories and legends about the selection of children and the examinations for the position of a “book boy”. He had to be intelligent and clever, as well as have certain skills in poetry, calligraphy, and painting. According to the records of Zhao Guang, a student of the Song Dynasty painter Li Gonglin (960-1279), book boy was very talented in terms of drawing. Not only painted scrolls, but also ancient legends and poems are devoted to the relationship between scholars and “book boys”.

Images of “book boys” in Chinese painting had established iconographic features that distinguished them from other children’s images. Firstly, the image of “book boy” was never devoted to a separate composition; it was always a complement to the picture with the image of a scholar. Secondly, in traditional painting scrolls, the image of a boy is of secondary importance and never becomes the center of a genre work. This method was to achieve the compositional balance of the painting in terms of the plot, but the presence of this character was mandatory in the painting, which testified to the status and well-being of the scholar-literary figure. The figure of the “book boy” was placed by Chinese artists in the corner of the painting, or as a barely visible silhouette next to mountains, trees, or rocks, always maintaining a certain character of secondary importance.

This distance and position allowed to achieve a balanced composition both in terms of painting visual effect and in terms of the etiquette system of feudal society. The boy’s position and the distance between him and his master reflect the ethical order of master and servant. In the creation of ancient Chinese domestic painting, the ethical order has always been an extremely important creative criterion. Artists usually embodied the “dignity” and “modesty” of this character through their proportions, simple clothing and lack of jewelry, etc. In these paintings, the static pose of the “book boy” set off the dynamic figure of a scholar playing the xiang, musical instruments or drinking tea.