

Trad. attrib. to: Zhou Fang 周昉 (ca. 730–ca. 800)  
Title: *Palace Ladies Playing Double Sixes*  
*《內人雙陸圖》*  
*Neiren shuanglu tu*  
Dynasty/Date: Southern Song, late 12th to mid-13th century  
Format: Handscroll  
Medium: Ink and color on silk  
Dimensions: 30.5 x 69.1 cm (12 x 27-3/16 in)  
Credit line: Purchase and gift  
Accession no.: F1939.37 & F1960.4  
Provenance: F1939.37, C. T. Loo (Lu Qinzhai 盧芹齋, 1880–1957) and Company,  
New York, by purchase  
F1960.4, Jean-Pierre Dubosc (1903–1988), Lugano, Switzerland, by gift

**Physical description:** As currently mounted, the painting consists of two joined sections, a larger section on the left (with six figures) and a smaller section on the right (with two figures). Acquired at different times from different, but related, sources, these two unequal sections of painting were found to have been parts of the same work, and were subsequently rejoined by the museum in 1960 to comprise the current scroll.<sup>1</sup> For summary reports, see —Condition and restoration,|| below.



**Frontispiece:** Chu Deyi 褚德彝 (1871–1942)

Ink on gray-brown silk. Dimensions: 30 x 52.4 cm (11-13/16 x 20-5/8 in)  
5 columns clerical script (attribution and title), plus two columns standard script  
(signature).

唐周昉《內人雙陸圖》真蹟。松窗逸人褚德彝題於京師。

*Palace Ladies Playing Double-sixes*, by Zhou Fang of the Tang dynasty; a genuine work.

Inscribed in the capital by the Pine Window Recluse, Chu Deyi.

Signature: 松窗逸人褚德彝

Songchuang yiren, Chu Deyi

Date: none

Seals: (2)

*Songchuang* 『松窗』 (rectangle relief)

*Chu Deyi* 『褚德彝』 (square intaglio)

**Painting:** No artist signature, inscription, or seals. No collector seals.<sup>2</sup>

**Colophons:** (1) — Chu Deyi 褚德彝 (1871–1942)

Ink on gray-brown silk.

Dimensions: 30 x 52.3 cm (11-13/16 x 20-9/16 in)

22 columns standard script, plus 4 columns smaller standard script

此唐周昉畫《內人雙陸圖》也。攷宋郭若虛《圖畫見聞志》云：「周昉善屬文，窮丹青之妙，多游卿相間，貴公子也」。此圖畫二女子對奕雙陸，一女舉一子將下，一女坐而凝思，一女扶一婢旁觀，另有女婢二人，共舁一水壺。阮元所著《石渠隨筆》卷八，載周昉《內人雙陸圖卷》絹本著色，人物所畫共八人，無款，而未詳言畫意。惟劉孝基題詩云：「睡起深宮未梳沐，供湯侍婢走匍匐」云云。圖中二婢共舉一水壺，當指「供湯侍婢」，旁觀女子首籠白帕，鬢髮未整，亦與「未梳沐」之言合。其言畫中八人，但有六人者，必是年代久遠，畫絹一段失去。其設雙陸之几，照畫理論應設于中央，今既偏於右邊，是必失去一段，故畫中亦失去二人。至其畫，陸師道跋語謂：「設色精妙絕倫，如良工之無斧鑿痕，視之皆有生意」，皆與此卷相合，詢非虛語。《圖畫見聞志》云：「作仕女，宜有秀色嫵媚之態」。此圖寫內人奕雙陸，旁觀者侍婢，奔走慙嬌之態，無不一一傳出，曲盡其妙。斷非宋人所能學步，定為周昉真蹟之僅存者，殊可寶也。丁丑六月褚德彝記。雙陸始於西印度，即《涅槃經》之波羅塞戲。其流入中國，則始於魏之曹植。宋洪遵《雙陸序》云：「以異木為盤，盤中彼此，內外各有六枚，故名」。今日本尚有雙陸，黑白棋各十六枚，共三十二枚。

This is the picture *Palace Ladies Playing Double Sixes*, painted by Zhou Fang [ca. 730–ca. 800] of the Tang dynasty. In his *Experiences in Painting*, Guo Ruoxu [ca. 1060–1110] of the Song dynasty said: —Zhou Fang was good at literary composition and exhausted all the subtleties of painting. He often socialized with high officials and wealthy young men-about-town.<sup>13</sup> The picture shows two women playing a game of double sixes: one holds up a piece and is about to set it down, while the other sits in deep concentration.<sup>4</sup> A third woman leans on a serving girl and watches from the side, as two other serving girls carry in a container of water.



Chapter eight in the *Shiqu suibi* written by Ruan Yuan [1764–1849] records an unsigned handscroll painting [titled] *Palace Ladies Playing Double Sixes*, done in color on silk, with a total of eight figures, but it provides no details about the idea of the painting.<sup>5</sup> A poem by Liu Xiaoji inscribed [on the scroll] says: —They rise from sleep deep in the palace, not yet combed or bathed / Bringing hot water, the serving girls come creeping in at a crawl.<sup>6</sup> The phrase —the serving girls come creeping in at a crawl indicates the two maids in the painting who are bringing in the container of hot water, while the woman watching [the game] from the side whose head is covered with a white cloth and whose hair is not yet put to rights, also conforms to the phrase —not yet combed or bathed. The fact that [Ruan Yuan’s account] says that there are eight figures in the painting, but here there are only six, must be because a section of the painting silk was cut away at some point in the distant past. The double-sixes table, which logically should be at the center of the picture, is at present off to the right side, so this must be where the missing section was located, and therefore where the two figures were removed. In his colophon, Lu Shidao [1511–1574] said of [the painting]: —the application of color is marvelously refined and beyond compare, and just as ‘skilled craftsmanship shows no mark of hatchet or chisel,’ the work is very lifelike to look upon.<sup>7</sup> As this is entirely consistent with [the painting on] this scroll, [the above ] statement is certainly not without substance. In his *Experiences in Painting*, [Guo Ruoxu] said, —court ladies should be depicted as feminine and comely in appearance.<sup>8</sup> While this picture shows palace ladies playing a game of double-sixes, the demeanor of each onlooker and serving girl—whether hurried and rushed, or foolish and spoiled—is individually conveyed in the utmost marvelous detail. As this is decidedly not something that any Song dynasty [artist] could learn to do, [the painting] can be authenticated as the only genuine surviving work by Zhou Fang, and should be most especially treasured. Recorded by Chu Deyi in the sixth lunar-month of the *dingchou* year [July 8–August 5, 1937].



Smithsonian  
Freer Gallery of Art and  
Arthur M. Sackler Gallery

Freer Gallery of Art

Completed: 25 November 2007

Last updated: 10 May 2010

F1939.37

& F1960.4

The game —double sixes— originated in western India, and was [known as] *boluosaixi* in the *Mahaparinirvana sutra*. Cao Zhi [192–232] of the Wei dynasty was the first to play [the game] when it made its way to China. In his —Introduction to Double Sixes— (*Shuanglu xu*), Hong Zun [1120–1174] of the Song dynasty said: —The playing-board is made from different kinds of wood, and each side has six interior and six exterior pieces; thus the name.<sup>9</sup> Double sixes is still played in Japan to this day, and each side has sixteen pieces, either black or white, for a total of thirty-two pieces.<sup>10</sup>

Signature: 褚德彝

Che Deyi

Date: 丁丑六月

Sixth lunar-month of the *dingchou* year [July 8–August 5, 1937]

Seal: (1)

*Songchuang yiren* 『松窗逸人』 (square intaglio)

**Collector seals:** none

### Condition and restoration (summary reports)

F1939.37 (left six figures)

Dimensions at time of acquisition: 30.5 x 48.0 cm (12 x 18-7/8 in)

Purchased from C. T. Loo (Lu Qinzhai 盧芹齋, 1880–1957) and Company, New York

(R.J. Gettens, January 1960) This painting was examined at the time when F1960.4, which is part of the same painting, was being purchased. It is painted on fine silk and is considerably repaired with small patches and strips of a slightly coarser weave and darker silk. The colors are black (hair), white (flesh and robes), pale red (robes), bright red (lining of robe of left person), pale olive green (robes, furniture), and faint line drawing; the paints are very thin and abraded; hence no attempt was made to take samples for micro-chemical analysis. Appearance in ultraviolet light is normal; repairs and retouches show plainly. The resemblance and relationship to F1960.4 was noted. It was seen that there is a line across the painting about 4.1 cm. up from the lower fabric edge which represents an abrupt change in the uniformity of the weave. T. Sugiura [mounter at the Freer Gallery of Art] says that F1939.37 was heavily "washed" after the two parts were separated. Miss Grace Rogers, Division of Textiles, S.I., made a thread count in the upper right corner. The thread count—warp count—is 50 threads/cm. The fabric of the patches gives the same count, but the threads seem finer and more loosely woven.

F1960.4 (right two figures)

Dimensions at time of acquisition: 29.7 x 15.4 (11-5/8 x 6-1/8 in)

Acquired by gift from Jean-Pierre Dubosc (1903–1988), Lugano, Switzerland

(R.J. Gettens, January 1960) This painting was given preliminary examination prior to purchase, and compared with F1939.37 since it was supposed to have been part of this painting originally. The only differences are in the color tone of the background, which is darker in F1960.4, thus reducing the contrast, and in the presence of a somewhat powdery filler and sizing in F1960.4 not observed in F1939.37. The paint and pigments of both appear to be identical. Under ultraviolet light the tone of both is similar and there are no inconsistencies. The painting is much mended and repaired with pieces of a slightly coarser, darker fabric; the lower right edge is a repair. It is smaller than F1939.37 in vertical measurement by [0.8] cm, evidently caused by trimming. The

same line of non-uniformity in weave extends across both paintings, slightly higher in one by about 4.7 cm due to unequal trimming. J. F. Cahill pointed out that there is perhaps a piece missing between the two parts. Miss Grace Rogers, Division of Textiles, S.I., made a thread count on some portions of the painting.

(Takashi Sugiura 9/1/60) In September, 1960, Mr. Sugiura added this painting [F1960.4] to makimono [handscroll] F1939.37, using a strip of silk from F1917.333 to replace a missing section of about four inches in width.

**Traditional Chinese catalogues:** none

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*Song hua quanji: di liu juan, di liu ce* 宋畫全集: 第六卷, 第六冊. Hangzhou: Zhejiang daxue  
chubanshe, 2008. Pp. 10–17 and 254 (no. 3)

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The left section (with six figures) was purchased in 1939 from C. T. Loo (Lu Qinzhai 盧芹齋, 1880–1957). At that time the scroll also included the frontispiece and colophon by Chu Deyi 褚德彝 (1871–1942). Twenty years later, Jean-Pierre Dubosc (1903–1988)—C. T. Loo’s son-in-law and heir to his art business—brought the smaller right section (with two figures) to the attention of Freer curator, James F. Cahill, and gifted that section to the museum in 1960. Subsequent study of the two sections confirmed that both had come from the same original work. Accordingly, the museum re-mounted the two sections as a single scroll later that year. For an account of these events, see James F. Cahill, —The Return of the Absent Servants, in *Archives of the Chinese Art Society of America* 15 (1961): 26–28.

<sup>2</sup> As the current painting bears no artist’s signature, inscription, or seals—and most tellingly, no seals of collectors—it seems probable that the original work was substantially cut down on some

occasion at both the right and left ends, removing all such traces of previous ownership or attribution. As these losses may have been sustained when the painting was divided into two sections, as noted above, one must wonder if other portions of the scroll were also removed at the same time, such as an earlier label or frontispiece, or perhaps an inscription or previous colophon. Presumably, no other texts or seals were present on the scroll in mid-1937, when Chu Deyi composed his colophon authenticating the painting (left section) as a —genuine surviving work by Zhou Fang.<sup>||</sup>

<sup>3</sup> See Guo Ruoxu 郭若虛 (ca. 1060–1110), *Tuhua jianwen zhi* 圖畫見聞誌, annotated by Yu Jianhua 俞劍華 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, 1964), 130; and for a slightly different translation, see Alexander C. Soper (1904–1993), *Kuo Jo-hsü's Experiences in Painting*

(*T'u-hua chien-wen chih*): *An Eleventh Century History of Chinese Painting Together with Chinese Text in Facsimile* (Washington, DC: American Council of Learned Societies, 1951), 80.

<sup>4</sup> For a recent discussion of the double sixes game and its history, see Andrew Lo, —Double Sixes,

Holding Spears, and the Long March: Games of the Backgammon Family in China,<sup>||</sup> in Colin Mackenzie and Irving Finkel, eds., *Asian Games: The Art of Contest* (New York: The Asia Society, 2004), 96–103.

<sup>5</sup> See Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1764–1849), *Shiqu suibi* 石渠隨筆 (Yangzhou 揚州: Zhuhu caotang 珠湖草堂, 1815?), 8:2a–b. Chu Deyi mistook the Freer painting for a different version of *Ladies Playing Double-sixes*, which has eight figures and is currently in the collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei. Although this painting was attributed to Zhou Fang during the Qianlong

period, it bears a poem at left together with a signature and two seals purporting to be those of the much later Yuan-dynasty painter Qian Xuan 錢選 (ca. 1235–before 1307). Apparently unknown to Chu Deyi, a third surviving version also bears the same poem, signature, and seals of Qian Xuan as the Taibei scroll, but has the —unbalanced— six-figure composition of the Freer work prior to the addition of the two figures at right. In addition, the early Qing scholar Li E 厲鶚 (1692–1752) composed a 22-line poem on such a painting attributed to Qian Xuan that apparently lacked any figures on the right, though it is not known if this was the same work noted above. The relationship between the three surviving versions of the composition requires further study, as do the respective roles of Zhou Fang and Qian Xuan in their creation.

For the Taibei version, see Guoli gugong bowuyuan, eds., *Gugong shuhua tulu* 故宮書畫圖錄, vol. 15 (Taibei: Guoli gugong bowuyuan, 1995), 71–75. For the third version, see Mutō Sanji 武藤山治 (1867–1834), *Chōsō seikan* 聽松清鑒, 3 vols. (Osaka: Shimkō Art Society, 1928), vol. 2, plate 24; and Galerie Koller, *Asiatica*, auction catalogue, Zurich, Switzerland, Saturday, March 19, 2005, sale A132/33, lot 232 (pp. 16–17). Also see the poem *Qian Shunju mo Zhou Fang “Shuanglu tu” wei Liang Hulin zuo* 錢舜舉摹周昉內人雙陸圖為梁護林作 (On Qian Shunju’s copy of Zhou Fang’s *Palace Ladies Playing Double-sixes*, written for Liang Hulin), especially lines 5–12, in Li E, *Fanxie shanfang ji* 樊榭山房集, 5:5a–b, in WSKQS.

<sup>6</sup> For the full text of Liu Xiaoji’s four-line poem, appended to the version in the National Palace Museum, see Wang Jie 王杰 (1725–1805) et al., comps., *Shiqu baoji xubian* 石渠寶笈續編 (1793), published jointly with *Midian zhulin xubian* 秘殿珠林續編 (1793), facsimile reprint of 1948 ms. copy, 8 vols. (Taibei: National Palace Museum, 1971), vol. 5, 2639 (top); Ruan Yuan, *Shiqu suibi*, 8:2a; and Guoli gugong bowuyuan, eds., *Gugong shuhua tulu*, vol. 15, 71 and 75.

<sup>7</sup> Chu Deyi omitted two characters from Lu Shidao's colophon text; see Wang Jie et al., comps. *Shiqu baoji xubian*, vol. 5, 2639 (top); Ruan Yuan, *Shiqu suibi*, 8:2a; or Guoli gugong bowuyuan, eds., *Gugong shuhua tulu*, vol. 15, 71 and 75.

Lu Shidao borrowed the first part of this statement from an earlier characterization of the painting style of an entirely different Tang-dynasty artist, Bian Luan 邊鸞 (late 8th–early 9th century), who was primarily noted for his paintings of birds; see *Xuanhe huapu* 宣和畫譜 (preface 1120), 15:4a–b, in *WSKQS*.

<sup>8</sup> Chu Deyi's quotation contains some minor discrepancies with the published text. See Guo Ruoxu, *Tuhua jianwen zhi*, 11; and translation by Alexander C. Soper, *Kuo Jo-hsü's Experiences in Painting*, 11.

<sup>9</sup> Sections of the *Shuanglu xu* 雙陸序 (Introduction to Double Sixes) by Hong Zun 洪遵 (1120–1174) are frequently quoted in later sources. In his own quotation, Chu Deyi omits one character and alters another. For the original text cited here, see quotation in Chen Yuanlong 陳元龍 (1652–1736), *Gezhi jingyuan* 格致鏡原, 59:11b–12a, in *WSKQS*.

<sup>10</sup> For more on the Japanese version of the game, see Masukawa Koichi, “Bon-sugaroku: Japan's Game of Double Sixes,” in Mackenzie and Finkel, *Asian Games*, 104–11.