



CHEERS FOR PUBLIC HEALTH

OLIVER YÌ-BING CHÉN

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DATE PAINTED: 2006
INK ON RAW XUAN PAPER, APPROX. 100 X 100 CM
TECHNIQUE: GONG-BI

The title of the painting is “The Drunk Li Bai”. Li Bai (705 – 762), courtesy name Tài-bái (literally meaning Venus), also known as Li Po, and his friend Dù Fu (712 – 770), were the two most prominent poets in the mid-Táng Dynasty that is often called the “Golden Age of China”. His poetry was introduced to Europe circa 18th-century by Jean Joseph Marie Amiot in his Portraits des Célèbres Chinois. Further translations were published by Marquis d’Hervey de Saint-Denys in his 1862 Poésies de l’Époque des Thang. The painting delineates a story, probably apocryphal, of Li Bai, during his service at the Royal Hán-Lín Academy. Once, while drunk, Li Bai (front left) ordered Gao Lì-Shì (front right), Duke of Qí, the most politically powerful eunuch in the palace, to remove his shoes; and he asked Yáng Guó-Zhong (second to the right), a cousin of the favorite Imperial Consort Yáng Yü-Huán (back left), and the Chancellor in the reign of Emperor Xuan-Zong of Táng Dynasty, to grind ink. They took offense, and along with Consort Yáng, persuaded Emperor Xuan-Zong to send Li Bai away from the royal court.

The take-home public health message is: do not drink too much; it is not good for your health, and you may lose your job. The painting was painted à la Gong-bi on xüan paper (made of *Pteroceltis tatarinowii* tree bark et al).