Prefatory Poem

Harmony accumulates, bright prosperity is rebuilt,* Imperial tributaries pay homage from all directions.
Who could withstand the mighty draw of history, letters, roads, and laws?¹
With our round heads and our square feet, the whole world's kin, one big family.

How could it be that a Fang Feng would arrive late for a meeting?²
Having heard far and wide of Our splendor, all now arrive on time.
Jade and silks bestowed at Mount Tu,³ remembered for millennia.
All the world witnessed as Shang courtiers were richly rewarded.
How vast, how extensive is the outline of Our current domains!
Yet, if not for sacrifices of our forebears, whence this splendor?
Looking to Tang times for inspiration and example,
Artists from the Academy here faithfully represent what's true.

From east and west, both fish and fowl present themselves before the throne;
The southern Man and northern Di come together on New Year's Day.
This superb artistry is not presented to exaggerate,
But rather to safeguard and to sustain these peaceful precedents.

Inscribed in the seventh month of the twenty-sixth year of the Qianlong emperor's reign, autumn of the xinsì year (1761)

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* The version of the Huang Qing zhigong tu reproduced here consists of a series of Chinese scrolls that read from right to left. Each pair of people depicted along with the accompanying text constitutes one “entry.” These units are not numbered in the actual scroll but here they are numbered from 1 to 301, corresponding to the list appearing in the Introduction to Zhuang Jifa, Xie Sui “zhigong tu” manwen tushuo jiaozhu (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1989), 2–10. All illustrations are courtesy of The Collection of National Palace Museum. The colophons on the scrolls are not reproduced here, but may be found on the website of the National Palace Museum, Taipei. Reproducing this hand-painted scroll within the format of a book posed certain challenges. The width of individual illustrations varies, and the handwritten texts do not have the uniformity of alignment we are used to in printed copy. In instances where the original illustrations are especially wide the text will appear proportionately smaller in reproduction. Readers desiring to see greater detail may consult the digital version. Decisions regarding whether or not to include seals, when present, was made on an individual basis weighing a number of considerations.

1 This allusion to the standardization of characters, axle width, and the legal code under the Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE) also conveys the sense, “Who would be exempted from the process of unification?”

2 Fang Feng arrived late for a meeting called by the sage king, Yu, and paid with his life.

3 This is an allusion to a meeting held by the sage king, Yu.