

<http://www.revolvy.com/main/index.php?s=Yan%20Liben>

Title: Emperor Wudi of the Northern Zhou Dynasty

Date: 578 AD

Location: China

This painting was painted by Yan Liben an artist that was commissioned to paint all of the great Emperors. He was known for his public works and services, but quickly became known for his art. "Although the Chinese aristocracy counted painting as one of their accepted pastimes, the profession of the painter was not a highly venerated vocation. On one occasion, when Emperor Taizong was rowing a boat with his attendant scholars at the imperial pond, there were birds flying by. Emperor Taizong had the scholars write poems to praise the scene and then summoned Yan to paint a portrait of the scene. Yan was at the time already a mid-level official in the administration, but when he summoned Yan, the imperial attendants called out, "Summon the imperial painter, Yan Liben!" When Yan heard the order, he became ashamed for being known only as the painter, and he commented to his son, "I had studied well when I was young, and it was fortunate of me to have avoided being turned away from official service and to be known for my abilities. However, now I am only known for my painting skills, and I end up serving like a servant. This is shameful. Do not learn this skill." However, as he still favored painting, he continued to do so even after this incident."

