
PAGODA RED



MONUMENTAL ANCESTOR PORTRAIT SCROLL

\$4,880

c. 1850 • Shanxi, China • Pigment, Fabric • Collection #CTA004

W: 63.5" D: 1.25" H: 85.0"

Believing that the departed continue to hold influence over the lives of the living, many Chinese households honor their ancestors in private family rituals, invoking their spirits for long life, health, and prosperity. Commemorative portraits, which came into vogue in the late Ming and Qing dynasties, were commissioned specifically for ancestor worship and were believed to house the spirits of the deceased. When properly cared for, one's ancestors were believed to be a powerful source of honor, protection, and good luck. Continued...



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This grand scale and fine detail of this composition painted in the late Qing dynasty is an excellent example of ancestral portraiture and points to the central role ancestor worship played in Chinese culture. The painting depicts several generations seated directly facing the viewer. The oldest ancestors are largest in scale at the rear, while the more recent relatives are smaller in scale and seated in the front. Although their formal postures are similar, their features are distinct, capturing the unique characteristics of the individuals represented. Their silk robes are painted with rich colors and further detailed with gold jewelry, embroidery and fabric folds.

Suggesting the continuum of life and the common practice of ancestral rituals practiced in the home, the group is pictured in an interior room before an altar table, set with ceremonial offerings and an altar tablet bearing the names of remote ancestors.

Significant water damage and discoloration to the upper portion of the scroll.

