



Chinese Painting under the Qianlong Emperor

The Symposium Papers in Two Volumes

Phœbus 6, Number 2
A Journal of Art History

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Edited by Ju-hsi Chou and Claudia Brown

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Preface

Phœbus 6, in two issues, publishes in revised form the papers from the international symposium held at the Phoenix Art Museum, 3-5 October 1985, in conjunction with the exhibition, *The Elegant Brush: Chinese Painting under the Qianlong Emperor, 1735 - 1795*. Together with the exhibition catalog, these form a trilogy which serves to investigate painting in eighteenth-century China. *Phœbus* 6, Number 2 provides an index to all three volumes.

Phœbus 6, Number 1 presents general perspectives on the Qianlong era as a whole and afterwards shifts its focus onto the court in Beijing and its sponsorship of painters and paintings. *Phœbus* 6, Number 2, in turn, examines those artistic phenomena beyond the walls of the capital, with a justifiable concentration on Yangzhou in its heyday. This is followed by a brief glimpse of an evolving painting tradition in Guangdong and an analysis of the eighteenth-century foundations of post-Qianlong painting.

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A Note on Romanization

Romanization of Chinese characters in *Phoebus 6*, will adhere to the *pinyin* system, with the following exceptions:

Anglicized words which are already a part of the normal English vocabulary and are not easily substituted, e.g. Yangtze.

Terms and names in titles of publications using different systems of romanization, e.g. *The Literary Inquisition of Ch'ien-lung* (not Qianlong).

Self-chosen names of modern Chinese scholars in the West, familiar through previous publications, e.g. Yu Ying-shih (not Yu Yingshi) and Wen Fong (not Fang Wen).

Place names outside of mainland China, the usage of which is accepted internationally, e.g. Hong Kong (not Xianggang) and Taipei (not Taibei).

Figure, Fiction and Figment in Eighteenth-century Chinese Painting

Richard Vinograd

An occasion such as the exhibition, *The Elegant Brush*, devoted to the art of a single period under the Qianlong Emperor, inevitably leads us to reconsider some of the terms and formulations with which the period has been characterized. We all recognize that general characterizations are part rhetorical formula, part stereotype, usually inadequate and often misleading; most often they fulfill the historian's need for a clarity that is seldom an attribute of the historical data under study. But we should not underestimate the power of such characterizations, perhaps most marked when they are submerged, to set the direction of our investigations and the terms of discourse which our interpretations will follow. It is perhaps the least studied fields which are most vulnerable to the tyranny of the formula; thus we are doubly grateful to the organizers of this exhibition and symposium for directing attention to a surprisingly neglected period.

There appear to have been a couple of major directions in the study of eighteenth-century painting. The first took the polarity between court circles and the independent masters of the southeast as its leading theme.¹ This is a useful and still valid approach, of course, but perhaps any kind of polar scheme tends to exaggerate the contrasts between extremes, and this is probably still more tempting when one side has such an intriguing label as the Eight Strange or Eccentric Masters with the other side overshadowed by the imperial presence. The court is perceived as a stronghold of artistic conservatism, and the southeastern schools in the Yangzhou area as a dialectical counterweight, with an emphasis on qualities such as free experimentation, spontaneity, individuality, humor and a boldness of approach verging on the uncontrolled. Disregarding the inadequacy of such stereotypes to account for the artistic situation at the time, it is of interest that the artistic qualities attributed to the Yangzhou masters can also be qualities of personality.² There is a tendency in this approach to focus on anecdotal or biographical studies that would confirm a certain kind

of personality, and to place the valuation of paintings on a standard related to the expression of a certain attitude. The danger is that it can lead us away from the complexities of particular paintings, or from paintings in general, and replaces a considered appraisal of quality and concern in painting with characterizations of painters.

A more recently popular direction in studies of the period has been toward an investigation of patronage, or, more broadly, of socio-economic factors in art.³ This is in many ways a healthy corrective to some earlier approaches, and has some important strategic advantages. First, we can look at and interpret the entire period in consistent terms; clearly, imperial patronage is a central issue for court painting; on the other hand it is helpful to look at the art of the southeast not simply as the spontaneous creations of eccentric minds as has long been the practice, but in terms of a group or class of artists working under some common constraints and in parallel directions, responding to changing sources of sponsorship and altered markets. Second, such an approach allows us to incorporate new fields of data and broader ranges of investigation into our studies of art. Studies of economic distribution and power, the sociology of the merchant class, education and office-holding patterns among the merchant elite of the southeast can all be relevant to our explanations of artistic phenomena.⁴ A patronage-centered approach does lead productively to new modes of art-historical explanation. Instead of spontaneous whimsy as the engine of artistic production, we are apt to consider relationships between such phenomena as the taste for extravagant gesture and ostentatious display among the newly wealthy merchants and a certain surface boldness and flashiness of style among the artists of the region and period. Or we might consider what seems to be an increased specialization in genre and style and possibly higher volume production by artists in the context of a freer market economy and a broader but more openly competitive patronage base for art. Patronage studies have been, and promise to be, so broadly useful that I would not make even a rhetorical pretense of arguing against them, although the focus of this paper lies in another direction.⁵ I would only add a couple of qualifications. First, I would argue that the usefulness of this strategy is increased to the degree that the concept of patronage is expanded from a narrow focus on material kinds of exchange to include symbolic exchanges of all sorts between patron, artist and audience, exchanges of values, prestige and significance, as well as of harder forms of compensation. Second, a potential drawback of narrower kinds of patronage studies is that they tend to conceive of art in terms of product, of subject matter in terms of demand, and of styles as the

result of market pressures or the need for publicity. Most of all, in this light art is seen as an epiphenomenon of social or economic structure, something tossed up from the here-and-now (in this case, of course, the there-and-then) of contemporary events, whose potential significance is circumscribed by that origin. The danger, of course, is that the work of art will, just as in personality-centered approaches, be pushed into the background, seen as a more or less incidental by-product of a social event. The value and meanings proper to an artistic tradition with its own history of concerns, as well as those kinds of significance that cannot comfortably be seen as grounded in socio-economic motives, may well be overlooked.

One quick, if somewhat indirect, way of suggesting some of the limits of the patronage-centered approach, while introducing some of the specific concerns of this paper, is to refer to recent studies of the eighteenth-century Chinese novel, particularly of Cao Xueqin's Qianlong period masterpiece, *The Dream of the Red Chamber*. In particular, two recent critical studies of that novel, by Andrew Plaks and Lucien Miller, have attempted to redress what they see as the limits of studies focused either on the identity and biography of the author, or on the novel as a mirror of eighteenth-century aristocratic society and political events. Plaks sees the novel as fundamentally concerned with archetypal patterns of thought and making use of an allegorical method.⁶ Miller's study explores three interpenetrating modes in the fictional world of the novel: a realistic or mimetic mode, an allegorical mode focusing on myth, and the narrative mode of fictional devices and personae.⁷ He sees the realistic concerns of the novel, with its subtle psychological characterizations and a rich evocation of the rarefied society of upper-class garden and boudoir, as only one coequal facet of the text. The other principal concerns are the author's complex manipulation of fictional devices, especially the complex masked personae of author, commentator and narrator, and beyond that a broad mythic framework for the story which deals with fundamental issues of reality and illusion, transcendent and sensual experience, and moral confusion and enlightenment.

There is, of course, no inherent reason why Qianlong period painting should directly parallel the concerns of even the most important of contemporary novels. It does seem to me, however, that critical approaches to literature of the time are very likely to touch on issues that are apposite for the sister art of painting. Moreover, these literary studies point to a certain set of intellectual concerns and a world view expressed in fiction that must at least be considered as a relevant

conceptual framework for eighteenth-century painting.⁸ In fact, I see pointed parallels between themes and approaches in *The Dream of the Red Chamber* and those found in contemporary painting. I want to point out some dimensions of significance in eighteenth-century figure painting that go beyond the mimetic impulse or a response to patronage demands. One of these dimensions has to do with the painted figure as fiction, which may involve emphasis on a persona or on impersonating some historical or literary figure; elsewhere it may be manifested in the artist's preoccupation with presentation or point of view, or in the foregrounding of the problematic nature of the pictorial equivalent of narrative voice and tone. Another dimension has to do with the figure as figment, including paintings in which the asserted level of reality of the figure depicted is in doubt, or where the line between the perceptually present and the illusory or apparitional is blurred; others involve cases in which the painted figure is psychologically or ontologically absent from the everyday world of discourse and interaction, or paintings in which the whole representational enterprise is called into question.

I will discuss very briefly examples of three categories of figure painting that exemplify these concerns: portrait images, genre figures or anonymous contemporary types as opposed to identified individuals, and figures from the realms of literature, myth and religion.

We are accustomed to thinking of portraiture, perhaps especially Chinese portraiture, as the pictorial genre most straightforwardly involved with the here and now of physical appearance, and beyond that, with assertions of status or of social role through depictions of dress, surroundings, accouterments and the like.⁹ In those concerns portraiture is linked closely with patronage (narrowly conceived), performing functions of commemoration and glorification. Above all, portraiture is conceived as a genre of painting that affirms a self-identity. I would like to begin with two portraits, rather conventional in stylistic terms, that throw into relief at the outset the potential ambiguities and internal contradictions that can lie beneath even seemingly placid pictorial surfaces in eighteenth-century figure painting. Both works have been discussed at length in other studies, so I will only touch upon them here. They embody the poles of eighteenth-century society and culture: one is a youthful portrait of the Emperor-to-be Qianlong posed as a Taoist priest, and painted in 1734 (Figure 1); the other is a portrait of perhaps the leading southern poet and man of letters of the time, Yuan Mei, painted by Luo Ping and carrying an inscription dated 1781 (Figure 2).¹⁰ Qianlong represents all of the values



Figure 1. *Portrait of Qianlong as a Taoist Priest, dated 1734.*



Figure 2. Luo Ping, *Portrait of Yuan Mei*, dated 1781.
Collection unknown.

of ritual, authority and control of both state and culture; Yuan Mei was a humorist and sceptic and a free-living, unconventional soul.¹¹ What is remarkable is that both subjects raised in their inscriptions fundamental questions about their self-identities. The prince Bao inscribes the question: 'Who knows the true self of this youth' to accompany his role as a Taoist priest, and signs himself 'The Ever-Verdant Scholar.'¹² Yuan Mei raises a whole chain of cunningly offhanded questions, about the adequacy of his portrait and the nature of the self that is depicted in the portrait, that lead to ever more disturbing and fundamental analyses of selfhood and identity.¹³ He concludes with a conceptual shrug: 'the picture can simultaneously be me and not me, it doesn't matter.' It is true enough that for the future Qianlong, the imperial function demanded a universe of roles to be assumed, many of which are documented in an array of portraits of Qianlong as everything from Buddha to bowman.¹⁴ Thus, there is no special reason to assume that this image, as a Taoist priest, was a particularly sincere or revealing one. But the very bewilderment of roles that lay before him may have led the emperor-to-be to dwell for a moment on the elusiveness of a true identity, and there may thus have been a sincere penetration in his plaint. In a similar fashion, we can recognize that Yuan Mei might have been acting playful or even devious in his elaborate self-analysis and rhetorical self-destruction, while still raising pointed and profound questions about the reality of persons. At any rate, the congruence of these concerns, in images of figures that we should otherwise expect to be radically disparate in intellectual focus, should alert us to levels of significance in portraiture beyond the functional.

The next image I would like to consider has also been treated eloquently and at length in a published study by Wai-kam Ho; it is the *Literary Gathering in A Yangzhou Garden*, painted in 1743 by Fang Shishu and Ye Fanglin, and depicting the eminent Yangzhou patrons, the brothers Ma, and their guests.¹⁵ It would seem that this work is a nearly perfect embodiment of the centrality of patronage factors in the figural art of eighteenth-century Yangzhou; not only do we see cultural patronage in action, so to speak, with the painting's commission and the scene of the Ma brothers' gatherings depicted in it, but the scroll also records both the participants and the social structure of their relationships, with the 'correct order for seniority by age and social standing,' all the minute calculus of status, reflected in the compositional placement of the figures.¹⁶ I would only add to this interpretation by noting that even this most specific and realistic of group portraits has a shadowy sub-agenda connected to it. There is a certain inevitable

idealization involved with the reconstruction of the event after the fact by the painters.¹⁷ Moreover, the cultural associations and prototypes for the gathering are numerous and recognized even by the participants. Associations with the early recluse-poet Tao Yuanming and with Du Fu of the Tang are recorded in the inscriptions by participants, and Wai-kam Ho suggests a pictorial prototype in an early Ming garden group portrait owned by the Ma brothers.¹⁸ It seems likely that the shadow of the fictional *Elegant Gathering in the Western Garden* would lie over an image of artistic pursuits in a garden, and the stiff, audience-oriented portrayal of the participants in the Ma brothers' gathering picture certainly implies an awareness of posing in rather well-worn roles on a long-established stage.¹⁹ Thus, although the primary focus of this image is certainly the participants as social figures, or even as figurations of society, they also appear as characters in cultural fictions.

It would be hard to imagine a more extreme contrast in technique and presentation to the previous group portrait than appears in Jin Nong's *Self Portrait, Walking with a Staff* of 1759 (see below, Wu, 'Jin Nong,' Figure 7). All color and finished detail are dispensed with in this nearly minimalist portrait image, as well as the engagement with the audience, since Jin Nong portrays himself in profile. Also diminished, it would seem, is the whole realm of issues concerned with patronage since in a self-portrait we have not patron and artist, but a presentation of a self-image. In fact, the situation is a little more complex than that. A self-portraitist can be concerned with many of the same issues as a commissioner of a portrait image; whereas the economic factors may be absent, certainly motives of publicity, prestige and commemoration may still be very much alive in a self-portrait, and these are the factors of gain that a portrait commissioner is paying for. Even the withdrawal into the profile view shifts the audience engagement from the plane of visual eye-contact or confrontation to that of intellectual dialogue with the artist's inscription at the upper right, which he seems to walk toward and point to with his staff. The curiously distanced and impersonal rendering of himself in profile, along with an odd *tour de force* treatment in what approaches reduction to a single outline stroke, the kind of technical conceit we might expect in one of his plum paintings, but seemingly almost callous in a self-image, are both symptomatic of Jin Nong's transformation of this portrait from the category of a physical and social image to that of a conscious cultural fiction. While absorbing his identity into a brushline, Jin also associates himself with certain cultural forms pointed to in his inscription.²⁰ The text makes a claim, quite spurious in art-historical terms as Jin may well have been aware, for the near-uniqueness of the accompanying

self-portrait in Chinese painting, and his recounting of famous portraitists and portraits over time links him by association with some of the greatest names in the whole tradition. At the end of the text, Jin alludes to the more prosaic function of portraiture as a record of his appearance for a long-separated friend, but he asserts his status as a cultural type, showing, in his words, 'the air and appearance of a recluse.' What Jin does not acknowledge in his text is perhaps equally as interesting as what he asserts. The closest compositional parallels to his self-portrait come in late Song dynasty images of strolling poets, such as Liang Kai's famous image of Li Bo, with its profile presentation and drastic economy of technique.²¹ Jin Nong's visual echo of this type may have intended an association through similarity even as the issue of indebtedness is evaded. Finally, this image belongs in the category of fictional figures not only because of the willful association with selected cultural types, but on the more general level of its conscious manipulation of presentation and technique.

What I would call a portrait figure as figment is exemplified by an image of the Chan master Tan by Luo Ping in 1763 (Figure 3). Luo portrays the monk seated in an outdoor setting, in a fashion reminiscent of Chan Buddhist priest or abbot portraits from as far back as the Song dynasty. Initially, then, the formal associations are with a category of portraiture that was primarily commemorative and realistic, with a well-defined religious function – the type known as *chinsō* – that suggest the more constraining aspects of patronage at work.²² However, the artist's inscription and some features of the image raise some fundamental questions about the nature of the portrait subject, and the level or levels of reality that are presented. Luo Ping's inscription records an encounter with the monk in which the artist observes a similarity with the Chan eccentric figure, Budai, supposed to have been a reincarnation of the Buddha of the Future Maitreya, whereupon the monk Tan produces a cloth bag to complete the identification.²³ It is not completely clear, and perhaps cannot be in this realm, whether the artist intends a portrait of the monk in the guise of Budai, or instead and more radically, a manifestation of Budai in, or through, Monk Tan, as the inscription seems to suggest. At any rate, the painting presents a living Budai, leaning on his bag, bare-chested and with his belly exaggerated into a swelling hourglass shape. What is especially intriguing, and disturbing, is the linking of traditional Chan imagery (usually treated humorously) with the specificity and sense of confrontation implicit in the full-face portrait of an individual who meets our gaze with a piercing equanimity. Both genres of painting are distorted by the interpenetration.



Thus it appears that these eighteenth-century portraits differ not only in techniques and conventions of presentation, but more fundamentally in the underlying conceptions of the persons they represent.

The next category of images to be considered comprises genre figures, presumably contemporary figures who are not individually identified and are therefore more conveniently associated with classes or types. The artist who chiefly specialized in genre figures in the eighteenth century was Huang Shen whose output reveals a diverse array of approaches and conceptions.²⁴ He painted a few more or less directly observed genre images, such as his *Blind Beggars*, that suggest a kind of social realism in their concerns, but there seems to have been much less of this type of painting than our view of eighteenth-century southeastern schools, with their acknowledgment of economic pressures on artists and their reflection of the strengthening of more popular levels of patronage, might lead us to expect.²⁵ Rather than a straightforward depiction of the contemporary environment or social reality, most of Huang Shen's genre figures seem overtly theatrical in the sense of presenting stock characters, little varied in essence from one to the next except for the accouterments that identify them alternately as fishermen, flower-bearing elders, immortals or literary paragons from the past.²⁶ They are consistently histrionic in style, with rough, powerful brushwork and splashy ink patches that rather stridently call attention to the technique, and quite overpower any distinguishing characterization of the figures. The issue of artistic sincerity is as difficult to avoid, given an acquaintance with a series of such figures, as it is adequately to assess. Most seem ready made and mass-produced, rather sentimental in their appeal. There is a certain tension between reading them as figures from the contemporary environment or as somewhat idealized types, with literary and art-historical associations. In either case the conspicuously uniform, somewhat coarse and sentimentalized treatment implies that these may have been rather cynical products, designed to provide a kind of instant cultural aura for sale.²⁷ On the other hand, they may have been meant as ironic or satirical pictorial comments on just such pretensions, on the distance between cultural ideals and an often besotted-looking reality. The ambiguity raised has to do with a voice, or authorial tone, and with the breakdown of the artist's and viewer's complicity in a representational fiction. Some, at least, of Huang Shen's genre figures involve pointed social satires, directed at issues like the commercialization of values and the reality of economic pressures and burdens that may lie behind his stock genre types. An early album attributed to Huang Shen, dated

1720, presents in a restrained style genre figures that are fictional or literary in the sense of exemplifying common wisdom, folk sayings or parables; these include the householder reduced to a beast of burden by family responsibilities, and the scholar who exemplifies the commercialization of cultural values by illustrating the power of those with money to command the services even of ghosts.²⁸ Some others of the Yangzhou genre figures, mythological figures or poets which have a suspiciously everyday quality about them as if they were courtesans or drinkers suddenly endowed with a higher identity, are reminiscent of some Wu school imagery of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, as in Tang Yin's art. Here the reverberations call to mind analogies to artistic situations in which ideal values and concepts of artistic status were very much challenged by circumstances, and the tension between the ideal and the actual in artist's lives was paralleled by a confusion in the nature of depicted figures.²⁹ There seem to be two diametrically opposed tendencies coexisting somewhat tensely in eighteenth-century figure painting: one is toward a trivialization of formerly prestigious subjects, and the other toward a mythologizing of the everyday.

One other genre image that has some affinities with both the social realist and parable types, but with some extra dimensions of its own, is a painting of *Blind Beggars* by Cai Jia, active until the mid-eighteenth century (Figure 4).³⁰ It is rendered with an almost etherealized version of the plain outline manner that renders the figures, isolated against a plain background and seeming to hover in their diagonal arrangement, nearly insubstantial. The drawing manner achieves a special poignancy because the image is of figures who are blind. Moreover, the accompanying poem alludes to the relation of painting to perception in a fashion that suggests a consciousness of fundamental issues of representation, and points in turn to the elusive, figmentary quality of the figures depicted: 'With only beggar's instruments they go, a long journey. Six ears can hear the world but there is not even one eye to see it. Don't say this painting doesn't pay attention to them; this floating world is all confused and indistinct.'³¹ The last line includes a Buddhist reference and implies the illusory quality of the phenomenal world; it may suggest a kind of blindness in painters that parallels that of the depicted beggars.³²

The final category of figure paintings that I will discuss includes images that are explicitly literary, art-historical, or mythical/religious in their inspiration. These works can reveal an interest in the fictional or figmentary through their choice of theme. An example is Hua Yan's



Figure 4. Cai Jia, *Blind Beggars*. University Art Museum, Berkeley.

illustration of the Northern Song writer Ouyang Xiu's *Sound of Autumn Ode*, in which the sound of autumn wind engenders in the narrator the auditory illusion of calamitous sounds, and then, when the sound is identified, a vivid meditation on the melancholy and transience of the human situation.³³ Hua Yan's somewhat askew composition and frail figures suggest the mental tumult of the narrator, but hardly convey the profundity of cosmic rhythms evoked in the original prose-poem. This kind of irresolute and ambiguous tone is echoed in an album leaf by Jin Nong, with an inscription identifying it as an attempt to imagine retrospectively the intent of an original by Ma Hezhi of the Southern Song that carried a poem by the Empress Yang Meizi, on the theme of *Conversation in an Autumn Grove*.³⁴ Jin concludes by asking rhetorically of his own effort to recapture the flavor of the original: 'Is this it? Or is it not? I can't know that myself.' Jin's questioning of the epistemological underpinnings of his dialogue with the past is perhaps echoed in his composition, in which one of the conversing figures has his face hidden by a tree trunk; a sense of incompleteness or uncertainty about the adequacy of the image is translated into a partial erasure of one of his painted figures.

In the realm of mythical and religious figures, we are even more forcibly struck by the ambiguous and at times nearly illusory status implied in some examples. A painting by Wang Shishen (Figure 5) probably represents the ascetic Buddha-to-be Sakyamuni meditating in the wilderness, chin resting on knees, in a pose characteristic of the iconographic type.³⁵ The accompanying poem is certainly Chan Buddhist in flavor, but the imagery also seems to suit the mood of the times:

Like a reflection in a mirror, or the moon in the water; the cloud passing the mountain top – the lion emerges from his cavern.

The final reference is presumably to Sakyamuni as the Lion of the Sakya Clan, emerging from his mountain privations and austerities to return to the world. But this is a very insubstantial spiritual lion, quite unlike the emaciated, troubled, and all-too-humanly vulnerable figure in Liang Kai's famous version of the subject.³⁶ Wang Shishen's Sakyamuni remains in dreamy meditation, seeming to float above the rocky platform below him, at the same uncertain, mirage-like distance that the reflection of the moon floats in, or on, the water below, as the poetic images imply. There are a number of other related Buddhist and secular figures from the painting of the period.³⁷ The prominence of sleeping, dreaming, or meditating figures in the painting of the time reminds us of *The Dream of the Red Chamber*:



Figure 5. Wang Shishen, *Ascetic Sakyamuni Meditating*.
 Guangdong Museum.

Thus the preface, with its stress on the origins of the novel in a dream-vision, and the hidden meaning of its affairs, points to the theme of complementary opposites, *zhenjia* ... 'the author relates that he once passed through a dream vision, and afterwards he hid the real affairs therein and composed this book, the stone record...' The passage points to a continual question in the novel, what is ultimately real? This line suggests that Ts'ao [Cao] takes what is 'real' in a dream-vision and hides that reality to create his work of fiction, or, conversely, that he uses a dream-vision to disguise the facts of 'real,' that is, conscious life. Whichever reading we adhere to, a neat ambiguity has been built which signifies the unity of dreams and reality, the unconscious and conscious experience, and of 'true' and 'false'...³⁸

That is, the spatial totality of the allegorical vision of the novel is of an order that includes both being and non-being within its scope, so that the apparent opposition of being and non-being emerges as an example of the sort of interpenetration of reality and illusion for which the dream is the nearest analogue in human experience.³⁹

This brings us, finally, to a consideration of ghost images in eighteenth-century painting. The most prominent subject is the ghost official Zhong Kui, the demon-queller, who is depicted in a variety of states. He leans pensively on a tree trunk, supervises a retinue in attendance at his sister's marriage, or slouches stuporously homeward, his drunken frame supported by ghost-helpers, in a formulation that combines the fashion for ghost figures with an interest in vague states of consciousness - sleeping, dreaming, meditation and intoxication (Figure 6).⁴⁰ The popularity of the subject is a case study in the difficulty of accounting for motivations for iconographic choice. Images of Zhong Kui were certainly occasional images, hung outside of doorways on festival days.⁴¹ Thus we can't exclude the issue of patronage and market demands in their popularity, although the images discussed here should probably not be confused with the truly popular, mass-produced imagery of the professional workshops. We might also say that the popularity of Zhong Kui is a reflection of the literary taste for ghost stories in the eighteenth century, represented by the early eighteenth-century specialist in the genre, Pu Songling, and his story collection.⁴² The third kind of motivation we could ascribe would have to do with the beliefs of the artists, their fascination with ghostly lore, or, more subtly, their awareness of the iconographic type as a vehicle for some critical or artistic statement. The more interesting and complex an image is the more difficult it becomes to separate ulterior and interior motives. This is equally true of the most famous and



Figure 6. Luo Ping, *Drunken Zhong Kui*, dated 1762. Palace Museum, Beijing.

important example of the ghost genre in eighteenth-century painting, Luo Ping's *Fascination of Ghosts* handscroll (Figure 7).⁴³ We cannot exclude a reflection of currently popular literature in the form of illustration of ghost tales as the motivation for the scroll, although simpler kinds of sponsorship would seem unlikely in view of the artist's long-term possession of the scroll. Moreover, the artist Luo Ping forthrightly maintained his special ability to perceive ghosts and to paint them; personal belief, verging on what we might call aberrant psychology, was certainly a factor in his choice of specialty.⁴⁴

It is worth inquiring what kinds of contemporary cultural patterns and issues with which this admittedly quite exceptional scroll is connected. What is significant perhaps about ghost images is that issues of reality and illusion are moved from the mind of the artist or viewer to the being of the subject. It seems to me that the intellectual trends of the eighteenth century reach toward two seemingly quite different poles: one may be exemplified by the school of textual criticism, with its evidentiary and sceptical spirit; the other may be typified by *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, with its acceptance of the mythical and the illusory as coequal aspects of existence with mundane experience.⁴⁵ In another sense, however, both poles have to do with a disillusionment, intellectual for the textual critics, moral or spiritual for the characters and readers of *The Dream of the Red Chamber*. The eighteenth century seems to have been a period of debunking and reexamination of old traditions, including, in the realm of art, the capsizing of the hierarchy of painting subjects and the demystifying of the status of the artist.⁴⁶ In the realm of social and cultural values we see a satire on the world of Confucian literati in the novel *The Scholars*; and in the intellectual realm we see a pursuit of sharply critical, that is philological, paleographic and connoisseurship, activities of all kinds.⁴⁷ We note that a major study of the Qianlong Emperor is concerned with the disparity between 'image and reality.'⁴⁸ Even the reality or knowability of the self and the adequacy of cultural images of it were called into question, as we saw in our first two portraits (Figures 1 and 2). It would be surprising in such a world not to find compensating activities and assertions. *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, even as it deals with spiritual disillusionment, finds refuge from the world of rationalist analysis in the sphere of allegory and myth, and in the sheer richness of its language, imagery and fictions. It may well be symptomatic that the major artist whose life most nearly coincided with the Qianlong reign period, Luo Ping (1733 - 99), was the author of a text not about art history, connoisseurship, technical secrets of painting, or even about painting theory, but of something called *Record of What I Believe* in which he deals



Figure 7. Luo Ping, *Fascination of Ghosts*, dated 1797, detail.
Xubaizhai Collection, Hong Kong.

with spiritual and epistemological matters: ghosts, demons, reincarnations, fate and the like.⁴⁹ Thus the importance of ghost subjects in his art, and more broadly in the figure painting of the time, might on the one hand reflect the accumulated ghosts of tradition and cultural practice that were under assault through satire or textual examination, or, on the other hand, might reveal an effort to preserve, in the face of disillusioning pursuits, a realm which by its very essence is proof against rationalist destruction, a realm of conflated identities and transformation with a dream-scale of time and activity, a realm analogous in some ways to the 'Grand View Garden' in the *Dream of the Red Chamber* in which the real and the illusory, the true and the false, mingle.⁵⁰

Yuan Jiang: Image Maker

Alfreda Murck

In the late seventeenth century Yangzhou was one of the most prosperous cities of the empire largely due to the privilege of administering the highly profitable government salt monopoly. The Yangzhou merchants who amassed fortunes directly or indirectly through the trade of salt had the financial capacity to augment their social status through patronage of the arts. Responding to the economic opportunity, dozens of artists prospered in Yangzhou.¹ Some painters with literary reputations were sought after for their social cachet. They were patronized with a modicum of traditional respect; that is, their paintings were acquired through friendship and persuasion as well as payment in cash or tangible goods. Other painters were frankly professional with a commercial relationship to the newly wealthy. Among them was Yuan Jiang, a native of Yangzhou, who with his followers created one of the most prolific schools of painting of the eighteenth century. Richly detailed and technically accomplished, their paintings were visual entertainment suitable in scale as well as aesthetic content for the opulent mansions of Yangzhou merchants. This essay will focus on Yuan Jiang and how his paintings were shaped by and reflect his time.

Yuan Jiang was astonishingly versatile as an examination of his extant paintings reveals. He could paint everything from Song academy flower studies, to ink plays in the Xu Wei style (handscrolls of 1720 and 1721), and from brilliantly colored wall murals (*The Palace of Nine Perfections*) to intimate album leaves in monochrome (albums of 1711 and 1720). Expansive landscapes with palaces and sumptuous gardens are only the most distinctive and recognizable of his paintings. With references to historical allusions and classical styles, his paintings answered multiple needs among Yangzhou's well-to-do: of generous proportions, they served to fill the walls of spacious new villas; with grand historical themes, they demonstrated an appreciation of the past; and in alluding to contemporary events, they celebrated the

present. His broad artistic range and his frankly commercial status lead to the reasonable assumption that Yuan Jiang painted what would sell and what would sell was determined to a large extent by the demands of his clientele.

Biography

Yuan Jiang is little mentioned in surviving records of the eighteenth century. As he did not compose poems, there is no literary collection. His birth and death dates are unknown, and as a professional he is given only the most summary biography in Zhang Geng's *Guochao Huazheng Xulu* of about 1740:

Yuan Jiang, *zi* Wentao, from Jiangdu. Excelled at landscapes and architectural painting. In his middle years he obtained anonymous sketches after ancient paintings and then made great progress. In the Yongzheng era (1723-35) he entered court as painter-in-attendance (*zhihou*).³

The next mention of Yuan Jiang appears in the *Huaren Buyi*, an anonymous text published around 1790. Close in content to the above, it adds that Yuan Jiang's court appointment was to the Outer Yangxin Palace Hall (*Wai Yangxindian*).³ A painter of Yuan Jiang's skill surely would have made an able court artist, but the record is not entirely consistent. In 1795 Li Dou repeated most of the above information in *Yangzhou Huafang Lu*, deleting the reference to a court appointment and adding only that Yuan Jiang early studied the style of Qiu Ying (ca 1494 - ca 1552). Surely aware of previous biographies, Li Dou must have doubted the detail about service at court.

The meager historical record summarized above is admirably augmented by Yuan Jiang's paintings which were widely appreciated and have been preserved in quantity. It is from the paintings and the inscriptions on them that we know that Yuan Jiang travelled to Nanjing, Zhejiang and Beijing. It is from the extant dated paintings that his active dates can be tentatively established (see Appendix). The dated paintings extend from the earliest composition known to me of 1680 to the latest creditable picture of 1730. For thirty-five years from 1691 to 1726, paintings survive from virtually every year. In three rare instances Yuan Jiang included a reign name in his inscription: *The Palace of Nine Perfections* (*Jiucheng Gong*) of 1691, *Landscape* of 1716, and *The Green Wilderness Hall* (*Lüye Tang*) of 1720. These three exceptions are important, for they provide specific years by which to anchor the other cyclical dates. Paintings with cyclical dates outside the forty year period 1690 - 1730 must be carefully considered as to authenticity and as to whether they fall at the early or late end of Yuan's career.⁴ The

almost one-hundred dated works, along with another fifty undated pictures, provide a portrait of a prolific artist, confident of his craft and responsive to the currents of the time.

Three hanging scrolls provide evidence for Yuan's presence in north China, if not his formal service at court. A landscape dated 1724 is inscribed by Yuan Jiang in Yantai (Beijing), placing him in the capital at the beginning of the Yongzheng reign.⁵ Second, an undated river scene in a private collection carries the seal of Prince Yi (1686 - 1730), the thirteenth son of Kangxi and the half-brother of Yongzheng. Prince Yi would have used the seal from his enfeoffment in 1723 until his death in 1730.⁶ The third painting provides persuasive visual evidence for a sojourn in Beijing. In a hanging scroll now in Phoenix, Yuan Jiang depicts Chinese scholars in blue robes and queue setting off past willow trees for the triennial examination. A rare example of contemporary costume and hair style, the painting is inscribed by Fu Wangwen, an unidentified official who may have served as an examiner. His poetic references to pounding brushes, locked doors, and imperial favor make the palace examination context clear.⁷

Although it is safe to conclude that Yuan Jiang visited Beijing, the question of service as *zhihou* is confounded by the absence of his name in court records; not a single work by Yuan Jiang is listed in the imperial catalog *Shiqu Baoji* and there is no instance of Yuan ever having used 'your servitor' (*chen*) in signing a painting. Pointing to the absence of Yuan's name in palace archives, Nie Chongzheng argues that the position at court was a local Yangzhou embellishment of Yuan's travel to Shanxi and Beijing. According to an oral tradition, Yuan Jiang and Yuan Yao (his putative son) were engaged by the Wei family, a banking family from Shanxi, to decorate its extensive mansions in Taiyuan. This story was given credence by an assortment of over one hundred Yuan Jiang and Yuan Yao paintings coming onto the Beijing antiques market from Shanxi during the period immediately after the fall of the Qing dynasty.⁸ Although Yuan's detailed, colorful style would have appealed to the taste for the decorative among the Qing emperors, there is insufficient evidence to conclude that Yuan Jiang served officially at court.

Yuan's brief inscriptions on his paintings suggest a self-effacing professional with high enough social status to sign his own name, but humble enough to use occasionally the craftsmanly verb *zhi* ('made'). Yuan Jiang never reveals his mood or the circumstances of his painting. Typically an inscription includes the following: title with an indication

of his art historical model; more than half the time, a pair of characters for a cyclical year (in several instances only one character of the pair is given); an indication of the month in literary or colloquial language; and a signature which consistently reads 'Hanshang (literally "on the Han River," a reference to Yangzhou) Yuan Jiang.' Their terseness stands in sharp contrast to the longer, self-reflective inscriptions of his older contemporary Daoji (1642 - 1707) and his friend Li Yin (active second half of the seventeenth to the early eighteenth century).

Art and Commerce

The demand for paintings in Yangzhou was an economic boon for all artists. For some painters, like the individualist Daoji, however, it was also a physical trial. Jonathan Hay cites a letter from Daoji to a patron negotiating a four-panel screen. It is indicative of the financial risks as well as the physical effort required to create large, multi-panel compositions.

...You know that originally my work was not associated with the general run of painting, and that I should not have to paint screens. I only do it because I have so many mouths to support and my old illness is getting worse all the time! When I exhaust all the Xuan and Luowen paper on the market, and connoisseurs cannot find more, only then do I turn to satin and silk for my calligraphy and painting; and it is after silk that I turn to screens. When I get a [folding] screen, it has twelve [panels for] paintings. The first and last ones are useless [because they are much narrower than the others], but the middle ten are fine for painting. I split the screen into its individual sections and paint it that way, which means I can't paint it as a [continuous] composition. I know that none of you gentlemen can be as free with your finances as before, so I charge twenty-four taels for the whole screen. But if someone wants a continuous scene, it means standing on a scaffold or a bench, stretching my arm and craning my neck to reach the painting, up and down, up and down, always moving about or standing. For painting in these conditions I charge fifty taels per screen. Now that I'm old I don't have the energy I used to. It's difficult for me to move the brush around vigorously. And even if I can complete the screen, it may be of no use – I may ruin one of the panels, then the other eleven will all be worthless. It is better if I just paint twelve separate panels...⁹

The letter is a valuable document for shedding light on prices of paintings as well as on Daoji's working methods. For a continuous composition Daoji charged more than twice the price of a series of individual compositions of the same width. While a substantial sum, fifty taels of silver is not out of line at a time when Yangzhou salt

merchants were among the wealthiest people of the world.¹⁰ We do not know if Yuan Jiang charged similar prices for his screens, but the Daoji letter makes clear that the cost of materials was significant. Given the necessary investment of silk, pigments and time, large compositions were probably done only on commission and not produced to be held in stock. In Yuan Jiang's case extant paintings indicate that he may have based his large screens on previously executed hanging scrolls.¹¹

A rare example of Daoji's large continuous-composition screen painting can be found in the twelve-panel *Panoramic Garden Vista* dated 1693 in the Palace Museum, Taipei. A stream laces between islands of bamboo, garden rocks, flowers, banana and pine which are arrayed in a shallow space. An unspecified background suggests that we are viewing a corner of a garden against a plaster wall. The five compositional clumps stand independent of one another, visually connected only by the meandering stream and overlapping branches. Although the individual elements are handsomely painted, the labor of which Daoji spoke is evident in the additive nature of the composition. He is not at ease on this large scale, but is struggling to balance the elements as he fills the paper.¹² Not a painting done for his own pleasure, it is a commercial production.

The physical effort and financial risks necessary to produce large continuous paintings did not inhibit Yuan Jiang. From his earliest multi-paneled screens, one senses a confidence and delight in creating seamless, sweeping compositions. By 1693, the year of Daoji's *Panoramic Garden Vista*, Yuan Jiang had been painting twelve-panel screens for more than a decade. One must wonder if the success of Yuan Jiang's huge compositions did not put pressure on other Yangzhou painters to work on a similarly grand scale.

The earliest extant example of Yuan Jiang's large scale work is a twelve-panel screen in Beijing, entitled *Landscape with Architecture in North Song Brush Idioms* (Appendix, entry 1681.1). Completely at ease with the large format, Yuan Jiang framed the composition with steeply rising banks on the two narrow end panels, guiding us deep into the low-lying distance, bringing us back to a rural estate in the foreground. The ample residence with courtyard is next to a structure of bizarre rock forms which grow mushroom-like into massive mountains, a technique which he will use repeatedly with increasing mastery in later compositions. The distinctive qualities of Yuan Jiang's style are fully present: a high point of view, graceful sweeping curves into the distance, a consistent recession, and harmonious proportion of architecture, figures and landscape. The design, however, is slightly less complex

and the execution somewhat less accomplished than works such as *The Palace of Nine Perfections* discussed below. Whereas some motifs such as cascading waterfalls and clusters of pines are virtually identical in the two paintings, *Landscape with Architecture* is unquestionably the less mature work and its cyclical date of *xinyou* therefore corresponds to 1681, a decade before *The Palace of Nine Perfections*.

Solidly within the traditions of both literati and professional painting, the subject matter of *Landscape with Architecture* is familiar: a comfortable country estate with gentlemen meeting in a courtyard, fishing boats plying a river, a scholar gazing at a waterfall, in short, the genteel activities of an idealized rural existence. It is consistent with the traditional range of subject matter for professional painters in the Ming dynasty who in turn drew upon Northern and Southern Song court painting. To decorate halls and villas in the Ming, the school painters provided bird and flower studies as well as landscapes, often heightened for dramatic effect with extremes of weather, mixed with bucolic themes of fisher folk and the aesthetic pursuits of the literati.

One of the most frequently encountered subjects in Yuan Jiang's painting, the lavish imperial palace, is scarce in Ming painting.¹³ Palaces had no place in the solitary search for plum blossoms in winter or in the pursuit of self cultivation. What then are palaces doing in abundant numbers in the work of Yuan Jiang? Depicted in the heat of summer, beneath an autumn moon, blanketed by snow, Yuan Jiang's palaces are extravagant architectural complexes. His intriguing compositions lead the eye back into private courtyards, across lotus ponds to secluded pleasure boats and involve the viewer in the daily life of the privileged. When Yuan Jiang identifies his palaces, the inspiration is invariably attributed to Han and Tang dynasty models, but a case can be made that they reflected their own time.

In the year 1691 Yuan Jiang produced a huge composition entitled *The Palace of Nine Perfections* (Figure 1). Grandly conceived and exuberantly executed, the composition stretches over twelve hanging scroll panels almost twenty feet in width. The inscription written at the upper left on the twelfth scroll reads: 'The Palace of Nine Perfections: Yuan Jiang of Hanshang imitates antiquity. The time: Indian Summer of the *xinwei* year of the Kangxi reign (the tenth lunar month of 1691).' Yuan Jiang's ostensible subject was the celebrated Tang dynasty imperial retreat which was located in the hills north of Xi'an. First built around AD 600, repaired and expanded under Tang rule, the Palace of Nine Perfections provided the imperial family with relief from the oppressive heat of Xi'an. Although it was destroyed by the end of the ninth century, its

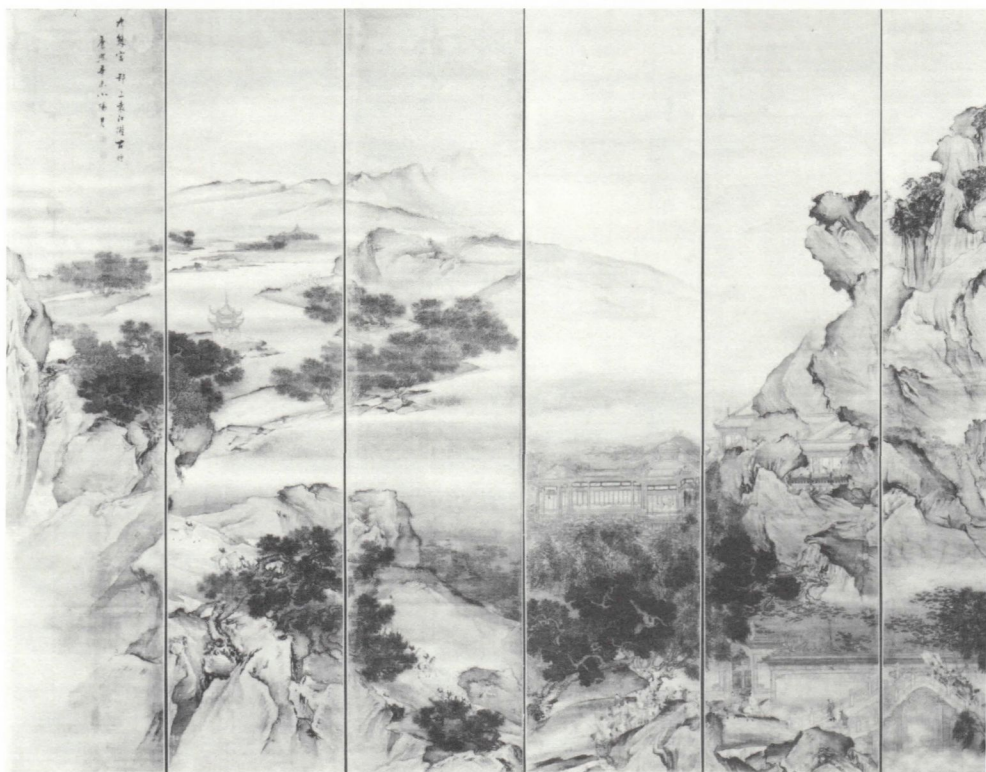


Figure 1. Yuan Jiang, *The Palace of Nine Perfections*, dated 1691.
The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

legendary splendor lived on in literary descriptions, providing a theme of imperial luxury and historical lustre. Like a well-crafted poem, however, a good painting embraces more than one level of meaning. The details within this airy composition considered with contemporary events suggest that the more relevant inspiration was the pomp and splendor of the Kangxi emperor's second Southern Tour which passed through Yangzhou in 1689.¹⁴

During the Kangxi emperor's first tour to the south in 1684, Yangzhou had been bypassed, perhaps out of cautious respect for the citizens' bitterness from the harsh and bloody Manchu massacre there in 1645. But Yangzhou was deemed politically safe by 1689, for during Kangxi's second tour the city was favored with a two-day visit on 23 and 24 March. Whereas the 1684 tour tested the political waters, during the 1689 tour Kangxi cultivated the image of a sensitive aesthete. The procession of about 300 colorful banners, splendidly garbed outriders,



and the august presence of the Son of Heaven himself must have impressed the populace. Along with recent military successes, the Southern Tour of 1689 seems to have engendered more tolerance towards Manchu rule and a new enthusiasm for imperial tradition.

If the visit kindled enthusiasm among the populace, the plan to commemorate the 1689 Southern Tour in a cycle of large paintings undoubtedly caused a stir in painting circles. A pictorial record of the tour was apparently discussed as early as 1686, during preparations for the trip, but a master painter was not designated until after the tour.¹⁵ Wang Hui (1636 - 1717), the preeminent painter of the day, was appointed to design and supervise the execution of the scrolls. Wang Hui with his impeccable orthodox pedigree may have been the inevitable choice, but other painters undoubtedly hoped to be considered. Beyond responsibility for the complete cycle, there were assistant painters to be assembled. Wang Hui's entourage included Wang Yun

(1652 - after 1735), a Yangzhou painter who shared stylistic affinities with Yuan Jiang. From the time of the Kangxi emperor's visit in 1689 throughout the subsequent months as Wang Hui prepared to depart for Beijing with his painting assistants in 1690, talk of documenting the imperial tour was surely a topic among artists.

Painted in 1691, *The Palace of Nine Perfections* includes motifs that can be related to the imperial tour. An imperial procession approaches from the left and passes over a steep, ornately carved marble bridge. A canopy is held above an emperor who, from his white steed, gazes wistfully, the sensitive aesthete, at the lush scenery. As prescribed by Qing ritual, outriders follow with ceremonial paraphernalia and imperial insignia including a *jue* wine vessel, a falcon, and a conical crown which in design is strongly similar to Manchu head gear (Figure 2). The hats of the outriders also resemble Manchu design. The tail end of the extensive entourage rounds a hillock in the far distance (the carriage may refer to Kangxi's eldest son Yinti who accompanied him in 1689) while within the airy halls of the palace bamboo-slat curtains are raised in preparation for the emperor's arrival (Figure 3). The expansive mood is enhanced by a bright mineral palette, frequently used to depict paradises of the immortals, a reference to longevity.¹⁶

Is it conceivable that a wealthy Yangzhou salt merchant could be so brazen as to commission a picture of the reigning emperor and to hang it in his home? It is possible, I believe, due to the artful convergence of multiple meanings: Tang imperial splendor and the auspicious theme of longevity provided ample, and highly complimentary, camouflage for the discreet presentation of recent imperial events still vivid in memory. The motive for commissioning the screen might have been pride in Yangzhou's successful hosting of the monarch, indicating some acceptance of the Kangxi emperor with a public display of confidence in his rule. Cynical motives may also have played a role in the commission of *The Palace of Nine Perfections*. Since it was the emperor's pleasure that dictated which merchants were to be allowed to trade in the lucrative government-controlled monopolies, the compliment of comparing Kangxi's reign to the High Tang may have represented a 'protective act' by a vulnerable Yangzhou merchant eager to demonstrate his loyalty.¹⁷

Whatever the motivation, *Evening Palace Scene after Guo Zhongshu* seems also to have been inspired by the imperial visits to Yangzhou. The 1693 garden composition contains some of the most delicately detailed imperial style pavilions and halls to be found anywhere (Figure 4). From a high point of view outside the wall, we are permitted a glimpse

of the elite world within: a lantern-hung dragon boat has delivered guests across a private lake; an extensive garden residence is screened by high walls and veiled by mists; servants are available but discreet. The architectural detail is specific and graphic from the embellishments on marble trim to the cantilevered brackets of the eaves. Rapidly sketched with fidelity, the specificity of Yuan Jiang's palatial gardens argues for some concrete inspiration. Even his fertile imagination could not have concocted these buildings. He had some hints from the *Mustard Seed Garden Manual*, the painting manual first published in 1679, but the few sketches of palatial architecture pale beside Yuan's fully conceived complexes. Had Yuan Jiang visited some of the temporary residences built for imperial visits? Had he been enlisted with other professional craftsmen to decorate beams, screens or lanterns within the new halls? Although there is no record of those who worked on the temporary imperial residences, the detail within Yuan Jiang's paintings argues that he had firsthand knowledge.

Yuan Jiang's hanging scroll in Shanghai entitled *Spring at Riverside Pavilions in Style of Guo Zhongshu* depicts a sumptuous imperial garden under moonlight. Connections to an imperial visit are suggested by the mood of anticipation among those who wait on the marble terraces and within the halls, and by the elaborate dew collector erected on a terrace in the far distance. The painting dates to the second lunar month of 1704, less than a year after the Kangxi emperor's Southern Tour of 1703 and third visit to Yangzhou, and about a year before the 1704 tour, for which preparations may have already begun. Even the paintings of the immortals' island of Penglai are little more than excuses to depict sumptuous imperial halls. (In the 1708 hanging scroll, for example, the imperial architectural program is complete down to carved marble ramps over which sedan chairs would be carried.)

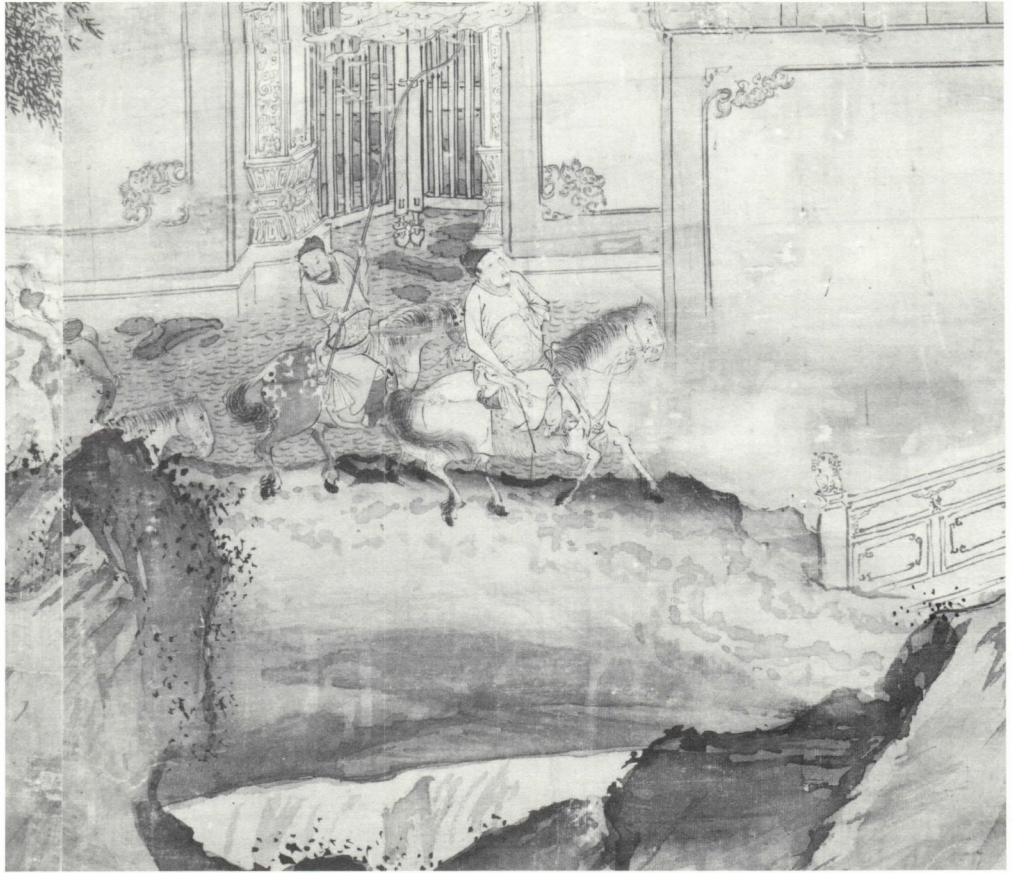
Yuan Jiang's palace paintings represent a convergence of his unusual talent for architectural painting on a large scale with the flurry of Kangxi's imperial visits. The building and refurbishing of halls in Yangzhou necessitated by the imperial visits provided Yuan Jiang with new inspiration while well-to-do merchants proved eager customers for his paintings. Whatever their intent may have been the palace paintings are a special feature of the Yuan school, and the period of their production corresponds roughly with the decades of the Kangxi and Qianlong emperors' southern tours.

Far from the refined world of gardens and palaces was the business of trade, a theme close to the daily experience of the Anhui and Yangzhou merchants. Yuan Jiang and his colleagues gave heroic proportions to



Figure 2. Yuan Jiang, *The Palace of Nine Perfections*, dated 1691, detail.
The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

trade in a pictorial theme that appears with unexpected regularity in Yuan school painting while it is virtually absent in those of contemporaries. In ox-cart paintings by Li Yin, Yan Yi, Yuan Jiang, Yuan Yao and the obscure Tan Song, transport carts ply their ways over impossibly steep terrains, fording streams and pausing at remote mountain inns.¹⁸ The popularity and persistence of this subject may be linked to the transport necessitated by the salt business. It was the responsibility of merchants holding lucrative salt franchises to supply the frontier garrisons with arms and essential provisions. Besides seeing to the distribution of salt, the franchise-holding merchants had to transport goods to the northern borders.¹⁹ Anhui merchants had learned to deal



with the logistics of shipping local products from mountainous southern Anhui to cities of the Yangtze delta. The Yuan school's colorful paintings romanticized this frequent and constant travel. Just as the lone scholar-official on horseback travelling to a new post appealed to the educated elite, these pictures of caravans of carts moving supplies to far-flung regions seem to have been irresistible to the merchant class. When depicting ox carts on mountain tracks, it was the custom of Yuan school painters to identify the Northern Song monumental painter Guo Xi (ca 1010 - ca 1090) as the source of their inspiration, and indeed a painting attributed to Guo Xi on this theme is in the Palace Museum, Beijing. But the subject matter is atypical of Guo Xi, and, as

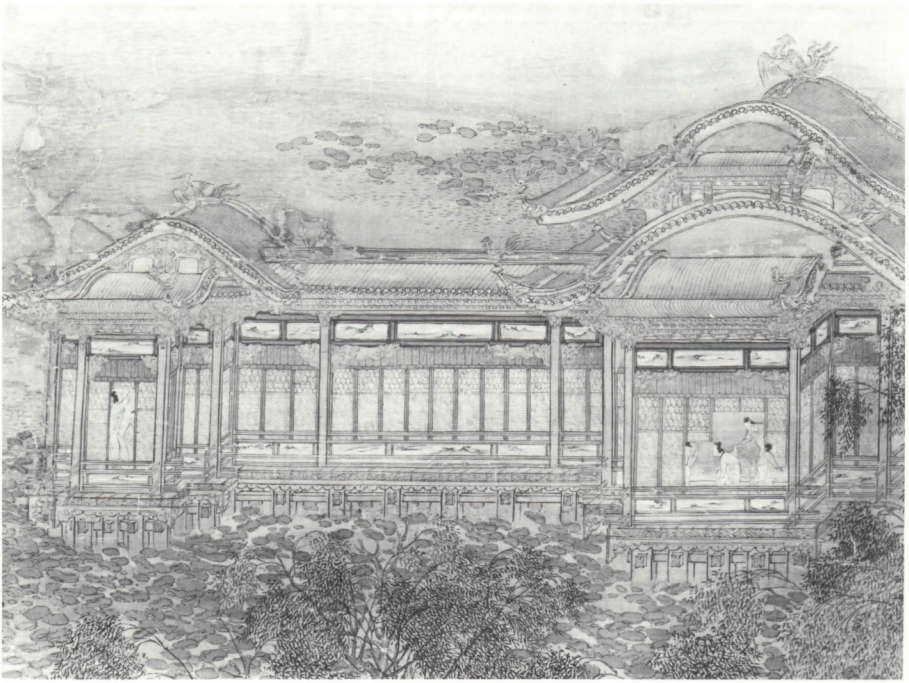


Figure 3. Yuan Jiang, *The Palace of Nine Perfections*, dated 1691, detail.
The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

with other credits given to Northern and Southern Song masters, the connection is loose, a convenient credential of antiquity rather than a genuine stylistic source.

Reclusion

If, amid all of this commerce and pictorial extravagance, an image of political protest was desired, the *Peach Blossom Spring* by Tao Qian (Tao Yuanming, 365 - 427) might have provided it. Tao's famous account describes a fisherman whose attention was arrested by banks of blossoming peach trees. Pausing to look around, he happened upon a grotto which led to a secluded valley. Passing through the grotto, he accidentally discovered a utopian community of a past regime, oblivious to the cataclysmic political changes outside. Having enjoyed the peace and security within the valley, the fisherman returned to the capital to report to the magistrate his exciting discovery. A search party explored the stream but never again located the Peach Blossom Spring.

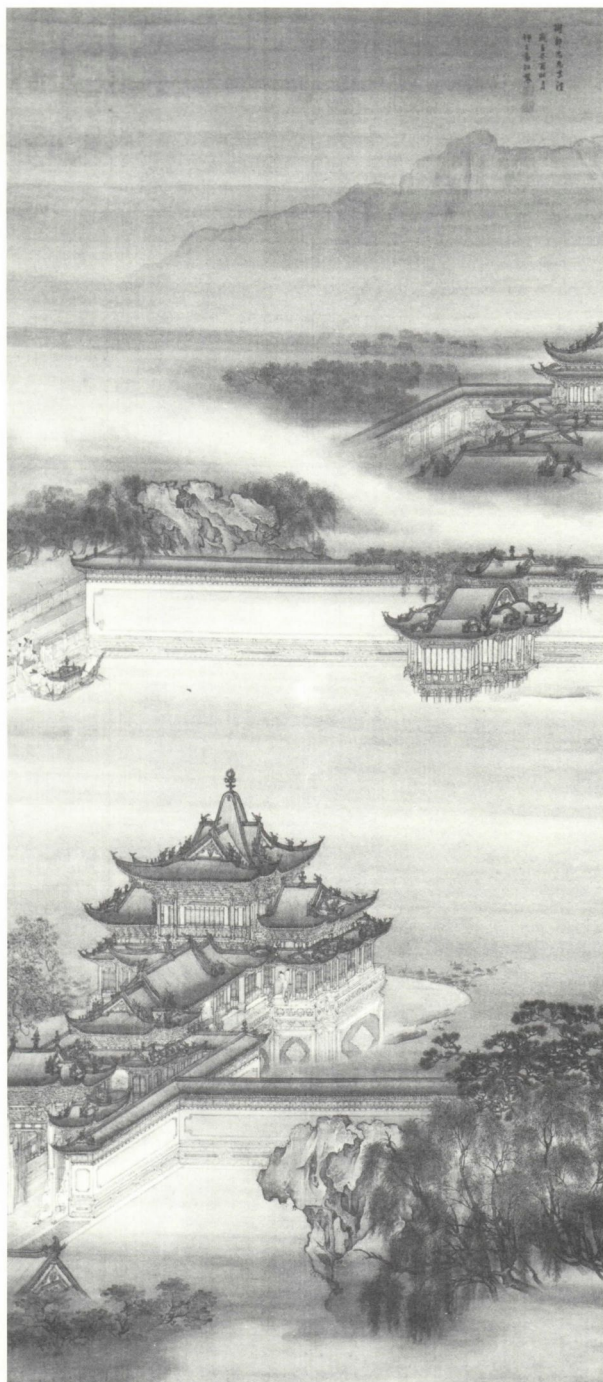


Figure 4. Yuan Jiang,
Evening Palace Scene after Guo Zhongshu, dated 1693.
Collection of Mr and Mrs Oscar L. Tang.

Over the centuries in essays and illustrations some scholars interpreted the story as an immortals' paradise unattainable by normal humans; others treated it as a real but unreachable community within this world.²⁰

The standard iconography includes the grotto, a boat near bank of blossoming trees, and the fisherman, paddle in hand, approaching the entrance to the cave or encountering the inhabitants of the peaceful realm within the valley. Paintings of Peach Blossom Spring typically emphasized the other-worldly theme of an immortal's paradise through the use of malachite and azurite pigments. As this fanciful treatment continued into the Qing dynasty, the text was simultaneously used to demonstrate disaffection with the present. The Ming loyalist Zhang Feng (ca 1610-62) departed from the conventional imagery to convey his sense of disgust and dislocation during the chaos of the Manchu onslaught. On a leaf from an album done in Nanjing in the summer of 1644 he painted a fishing boat moored in a cove and a path leading into the trees that border the water (Figure 5). In his inscription at the upper left he wrote, 'The mouth of this stream resembles Peach Spring but it is not.'²¹ The inclusion of boat, trees and path raise expectations that Peach Blossom Spring may be near, but bands of mist bar the entrance, and the restrained, cool treatment, without a glimpse of the grotto, leaves us on the outside of the valley to share Zhang Feng's disappointment.

Although the potential for political dissidence was inherent in the theme, the paradisiacal interpretation of Peach Blossom Spring continued to be popular in the early Qing. At the same time the idea of the real world existing within the remote valley was explored. Yuan Jiang painted a hanging scroll of Peach Blossom Spring in 1718 and a year later expanded that visual structure to his most dramatic interpretation of the theme in a set of twelve hanging scrolls twenty-four feet wide. The story begins at the right and follows the convention of depicting the moored boat, the grotto and the bank of blossoming trees which originally caught the eye of the fisherman. On the left side of the rock-passage the story continues with the fisherman meeting the startled inhabitants. But this is neither an immortals' paradise nor an unattainable valley within the real world; to the left of the village lies a lake with a complex of buildings of aristocratic style, a gentleman's garden. The Peach Blossom Spring grotto as a symbol of physical and psychological transition to another state had long since been incorporated into garden designs in the form of gates and passage ways. The concept found expression in paintings such as Qiu Ying's *Thatched House in the*



Figure 5. Zhang Feng, *Peach Blossom Cove*, dated 1644.
The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Peach-Blossom Village in which a scholar's studio is nestled in a remote valley surrounded by mountains in the intense blue-green palate of paradise paintings.²² Yuan Jiang chose to paint with muted pale-green and pink tints. Qiu Ying's retreat is otherworldly; Yuan Jiang presents a garden of this world within Peach Blossom Spring which itself is comfortably located on a broad river where fishermen, farmers and a transport boat can be seen. Yuan Jiang further stretches the standard Peach Blossom Spring motifs to include sericulture, an activity that is mentioned in Tao Qian's account but rarely depicted in painting. The inclusion may have been calculated to deflect official criticism of ostentation by embracing a recent imperial admonition. The Kangxi emperor, who saw the function of art as largely didactic, commissioned the court painter Jiao Bingzhen (active ca 1689 - 1726) to produce a series of twenty-three paintings on rice growing and silk-weaving. In 1696 the designs were carved into five pillars in the palace as well as into wood blocks for distribution as prints. In his preface to the set called *Gengzhitu* ('Picture of Tilling and Weaving') the Kangxi emperor wrote, 'We hope that all in our land will be devoted to these primary tasks of agriculture and sericulture, and that they will be diligent to gain and frugal to accumulate; so that they may have more than enough food

and clothing and jointly achieve an era of security, peace, wealth and longevity. This is our sincere wish to benefit the people.²³ By incorporating sericulture as well as agriculture into the garden, Yuan implies that Peach Blossom Spring is no longer remote, and does not represent a subversive wish to withdraw from society. On the contrary, the benefits of diligence and frugality, as well as an idyllic world, can be found here. Yuan Jiang's panoramic composition takes us from the remote spring and grotto at the right to an increasingly spacious and contemporary world on the left. We move from the mythic elements of the original text on the right to increasingly familiar contemporary images on the left, from distant past to recognizable present. Yuan Jiang's painting thus compliments the garden owner on having created a harmonious Peach Blossom Spring within this world.

The imagery of the Peach Blossom Spring is taken one step further in the Qianlong reign, at a time when the emperor sought compliments on the quality of his government and court officials felt it necessary to offer them.²⁴ The notion that a utopian world could be created within a garden was, under the brush of court official, painter and calligrapher Dong Bangda (1699 - 1769), extended to embrace the empire itself. In an undated hanging scroll, Dong depicts a colorful landscape covered with blossoming trees. There is no solitary fisherman or grotto, but the title proclaims the rosy theme: 'Spring Dawn at Peach Spring.'²⁵ The message is clear: under the benevolent reign of the Qianlong emperor the entire empire had become the long-sought haven of Peach Blossom Spring. Dong's bold manipulation of the theme was subtly used by the court painter Xu Yang (active ca 1750 - after 1776) in the fourth scroll documenting the Qianlong emperor's Southern Tour.²⁶ The handscroll opens with pink blossoming trees along the dikes at the confluence of the Huai and Huang rivers. Approximately thirty-four feet later the scroll closes with a bucolic country scene with a fisherman, paddle in hand, in the far distance. The long visual treatise on river conservancy is thus bracketed by the motifs of Peach Blossom Spring, conveying to the emperor a flattering message of universal peace. The transformation of traditional symbols - whether to accommodate the Qing, to disguise dissent, or to delight wealthy clients - was characteristic of Qing painting. Yuan Jiang, both imaginative and pragmatic in his approach to subject matter, routinely incorporated contemporary references into his compositions. Indeed Yuan Jiang was encouraged to modify ancient themes to gratify the wishes and self-images of his clientele, wealthy merchants largely independent of the weight of scholarly tradition.

The Appeal of Literati Style

Yuan Jiang's robust personal style was originally formed during the 1670s and 1680s in contact with several innovative painters in Yangzhou. The most notable was Li Yin (active second half of seventeenth - early eighteenth century) who was a generation older than Yuan Jiang. Acclaimed in his circle as a modern master, Li Yin had a broad stylistic range from the lyrical to the fantastic. His most elaborate landscapes of writhing mountains, which sometimes border on the nightmarish, undoubtedly influenced Yuan Jiang's complicated peaks. In one particularly daring exercise Li Yin thought to turn upside down the conventional compositional formula of a flat recession at the bottom and mountains at the top.²⁷ In his *Landscape with Travellers*, traders with ponies and ox carts set out from an inn at the lower right. Viewed from a height, the road carries the travellers in serpentine curves around the foreground mountains and along a snaking river in the background. Justified by a long inscription, this innovative composition, still eccentric under Li Yin's brush, was adapted and used to great effect by Yuan Jiang.²⁸

What Yuan Jiang added to Li Yin's formula was a more realistic handling of space adapted from Western techniques. From his earliest works, a form of converging perspective can be found in Yuan Jiang's paintings, gracefully integrated with traditional approaches. A masterful treatment can be seen in the hanging scroll *Watching the Tide* dated 1716. In Yuan Jiang's interpretation this ancient theme of the Hangzhou bore is startlingly realistic, with boats swept along precariously by the roiling water. A dramatic diminution of scale across the estuary is reinforced by an aerial perspective of barely outlined distant mountains modelled in light wash and of pale boat masts obscured by mist. The foreground rocks, on the other hand, are as contorted as the whipped-up waves of the incoming tide. Fully in command of Western techniques of recession, Yuan Jiang combined a consistent progression into depth with his hallmarks of strange rocks, slashing brushwork, a high viewpoint, and an airy luminosity.²⁹

Ultimately Yuan Jiang and his patrons could not resist the draw of literati taste. Yuan Jiang's occasional dabbling in literati styles gained momentum in the late 1710s. Although silk was still his most frequent painting ground, he began more often to use paper, and to paint in the private formats of album and handscroll, his hanging scrolls were now sometimes of the tall, narrow proportions preferred by educated gentlemen. Washy peaks without outlines often replace deeply

cleaved mountains with jagged facets. Compositions tend to be less densely painted and color is occasionally replaced by monochromatic ink plays as in passages of the striking handscrolls of 1720 and 1721 of fruits and flowers, or in six of the leaves in the album of 1720. This incorporation of literati elements in his style may be the progress to which Zhang Geng refers in *Guochao Huazheng Xulu* cited above.

In 1719 Yuan Jiang painted a four-panel continuous landscape composition featuring figures in Manchu dress. Each of the scrolls was inscribed by one of four scholars who were residents of the Xiaoxing region of Zhejiang. The following year one of the inscribers, Lu Zengyu, earned the *juren* degree which qualified him to go on to the triennial Palace examination which he passed in 1721, earning the highest degree, *jinshi*. Another inscriber, Wang Binghe, earned the same degrees in 1729 and 1735.³⁰ Perhaps these new acquaintances encouraged Yuan Jiang to practice a more scholarly style.

In the fall of the same year Yuan Jiang painted a garden landscape; in an unusual departure from his custom, he indicated where he was painting, in The Hall of Green Wilderness (Figure 6). During 1719 he also painted a picture of the Hall of Green Wilderness and in the following year created a sumptuous multi-panel composition on gilded paper of the same title, formally including the Kangxi reign name in the inscription.³¹ A feature which is common to both the 1719 landscape painted in the Hall of Green Wilderness and the large screen composition of the Hall of Green Wilderness is a broad terrace overlooking an expanse of water.³² Green Wilderness Hall was a name used in the Tang and Song dynasties, but it was also adopted by several scholars of the Ming and Qing. Although the owner of the garden in which Yuan Jiang painted has not yet been identified, it is unlikely that Yuan's large panorama of the theme is merely a recreation of a famous historical garden. The number of paintings in succession and their shared features argue that he was portraying a contemporary garden at the request of the owner.

In the autumn of 1720 Yuan Jiang suppressed his own distinctive brushwork in an attempt to paint in the styles of Yuan dynasty masters such as Wu Zhen and Ni Zan. The resulting album on poetic themes is a provocative merging of professional and literati traditions. Yuan Jiang's handling of Su Shi's (1037 - 1101) prose poem on the Red Cliff (Figure 7) embraces some of the best features of both aesthetics: rich ink tones and strong brushwork combined with Yuan's penchant for dramatic presentation. Seen from a high point of view, the precipitous



Figure 6. Yuan Jiang, *Landscape Imitating the Ancients*, dated 1719.
From Kokka no. 584.



Figure 7. Yuan Jiang, *Su Shih's Prose Poem on the Red Cliff*, leaf from album dated 1720. The Fujii Yurinkan, Kyoto.

cliff and the vast expanse of river dwarf the small boat. The subject matter in this album ranges from lines of Tang poetry to topics of general interest like viewing the Hangzhou bore and a scholar playing a zither in his pine-shaded study, a leaf which comes closest to capturing literati aesthetics. Yuan Jiang was at home with large scale works and must have felt cramped on small pages, but albums like this gave him an opportunity to demonstrate his versatility. Financial incentives undoubtedly played a role as well. Having built a garden estate, an owner would naturally want to display within it some of the objects appropriate to a refined life; albums and handscrolls for private viewing were essential.

Yuan Jiang had a gift for painting. Whether simple album leaf designs or elaborate architectural murals, he gave his paintings an energy and originality which carries through even the many reworkings of a theme. Among professional painters of the Qing, Yuan Jiang stands alone in his ability to combine superb draftsmanship, harmonious color, and clear detail in large landscape compositions. Viewed from a distance, the huge paintings appear as airy landscapes. Seen up close they present a transporting vision of daily life, idealized and romanticized. Yuan Jiang managed to weave the contemporary dreams, aspirations and successes of the new economic elite with grand themes of the past. Proclaiming pride in a materialistic world, Yuan Jiang's paintings reflect their time and document the shifting concerns of late seventeenth and early-eighteenth century Yangzhou society.

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Year/ Lunar Month	Title	Format	Media	Collection	Source
1680	<i>Landscape with Storm</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Ching Yuan Chai	Cahill (1966), fig. 23
1681.1	<i>Landscape with Architecture in Northern Song Brush Idioms</i>	12-panel screen	Ink and color on silk	Rongbao Zhai, Beijing	<i>Rongbao Zhai</i> , 1987.1
1683	<i>River Landscape, Landscape after Guo Xi, Mt Peng-lai (Same as below?)</i>	3 of 12 album leaves or hanging scrolls		Former Manchu Imperial Household	Cahill (1966), figs. 24-26
1683	<i>Landscapes</i>	Large album of 12 leaves	Ink and color on silk	Not given; seals of Xiuquan in one leaf	Nie, p. 25 (listed as 1743)
1686	<i>Landscape after Mi Fu</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Palace Museum, Beijing	Nie, p. 25 (listed as 1746)
1691.7	<i>Landscape after Guo Xi</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on gold paper	Yabamoto #6953, Osaka	Suzuki, JP12-086
1691.10	<i>Palace of Nine Perfections</i>	Set of 12 hanging scrolls	Ink and color on silk	The Metropolitan Museum, 125a-1	Barnhart, no. 40
1693	<i>Night of Moon and Flowers on Spring River</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Guangdong Provincial Museum	Nie, p. 20
1693.8	<i>Evening Palace Scene after Guo Zhongshu</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Mr/Mrs Oscar L. Tang	Sotheby's, 11/19/86, lot 13

1694 Autumn	<i>Carts on a Winding Mountain Road after Guo Xi</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art	EDCP, No. 256
1694.12	<i>Sailing Through the Gorges after Guo Xi</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk		Sotheby's, 6/3/86, lot 72
1695 Autumn	<i>Wutong Tree and Autumn Hibiscus After Huang Quan</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Art Research Institute	Nie, p.20; <i>Meishu</i> , 1963.5; <i>Sekai Bijutsu Taikan</i>
1696.10	<i>Peach Blossom Spring after Yuan Masters</i>	Set of 8 hanging scrolls	Ink and color on silk	Shanghai Museum	<i>Zhongguo Tumu</i> , hu 1-3410
1697.3	<i>Landscape after Ma Yuan</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Guangdong Provincial Museum	Nie, p. 20; <i>Guangdong</i> , pl. 180
1698	<i>Yangtze Gorges after Li Zhaodao</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Palace Museum, Beijing	Cahill (1963), fig. 11; Nie, p. 20
1698	<i>Night of Moon and Flowers on Spring River</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	National Gallery, Beijing	Nie, p. 20
1699.2	<i>Landscape after Ma Yuan</i>	Fan	Ink and color on paper	Palace Museum, Beijing	<i>Zhongguo Tumu</i> , jing 1-5183
1700	<i>Returning Tipsy</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Lüshun Museum	Nie, p. 20
1701.5	<i>Landscape</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Yabamoto #6953, Osaka	
1702	<i>Escaping the Heat at Mt. Li</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Capital Museum	Nie, pl. 20
1703.10	<i>Landscape after Zhao Mengfu</i>	Handscroll	Ink and color on silk	Shanghai Museum	<i>Zhongguo Tumu</i> , hu 1-3411

1704.2	<i>Spring at Riverside Pavilions in the Style of Guo Zhongshu</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Shanghai Museum	<i>Shanghai</i> , pl. 82
1704	<i>Landscape</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Yantai Diqu Wenguan Hui	Nie, p. 20
1706	<i>A Secluded Dwelling</i>	Folding fan	Ink and color on paper	Ching Yuan Chai	Weng, no. 13
1706	<i>Landscape</i>	Handscroll	Ink and color on silk	Guangdong Provincial Museum	Nie, p. 20
1707.2	<i>Pulling Carts over a Mountain Pass after Guo Xi</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	National Museum, Stockholm	Cahill (1963), fig. 20; Suzuki, E20-004
1707.10	<i>Landscape after Liu Songnian</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Asian Art Museum, San Francisco B60D85	<i>Taipei</i> , pl. 171
1707	<i>Peach Blossom Spring</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Los Angeles County Museum of Art	
1708.4	<i>Penglai, Isle of Immortals</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Palace Museum, Beijing	<i>Zhongguo Tumu</i> , jing 1-5184; Cahill (1966), fig. 2; <i>FC</i> , VIII, p. 32
1708	<i>Mist and Rain over Spring River</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Yunnan Provincial Museum	Nie, p. 21
1710.5	<i>Watching Waves</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Shanghai Museum	Nie, p. 21
1710	<i>Landscape in the Style of Guo Zhongshu</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	The Art Gallery, Chinese University of Hong Kong	Suzuki, S17-007
1710	<i>Immortals' Palace in Spring Mountains</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Shanghai Museum	<i>Treasures</i> , no. 133.

1710	<i>Travelling in Autumn Mountains</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Liaoning Provincial Museum	Nie, p. 21
1710	<i>Eastern Garden</i>	Handscroll	Ink and color on silk	Shanghai Museum	<i>Wenwu</i> , 1973/1, pp.70-72
1711.8	<i>Landscape with Villa</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Museum of Fine Arts, Boston	Cahill (1966), fig. 5
1711.10	<i>Landscape with Architecture</i>	Album of 8 leaves	Ink and color on silk	Palace Museum, Beijing	<i>Yangzhou</i> , no. 16 (2 leaves only)
1711	<i>Flowers</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Hunan Provincial Museum	Nie, p. 21
1712.3	<i>Pine and Eagle</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and pale color on silk	Shanghai Museum	<i>Zhongguo Tumu</i> , hu 1-3414; Li
1712.10	<i>Travelling among Streams and Mountains after Guo Xi</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Hashimoto collection, Takatsuki	Cahill (1963), figs. 21, 27
1712	<i>Lotus Pond, Willow Shade after Ma Yuan</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Yabumoto collection, Osaka	
1712	<i>Hall of Reading among Thick Willows</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Shanghai Museum	<i>Zhongguo Tumu</i> , hu 1-3415
1712	<i>River Village</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Shenyang Palace Museum	Nie, p. 22
1713	<i>Pavilions between River and Sky</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Chongqing Museum	Nie, p. 22
1714.6	<i>Fishermen on River in Spring</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Los Angeles County Museum of Art, M85.152	

1714	<i>Mount Lu</i>	Set of 12 hanging scrolls	Ink and color on silk	Palace Museum, Beijing	Nie, p.22
1715.4	<i>House on Mt Lu (Lushan Caotang)</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Former Yuan Shuqu collection	Cahill (1966), fig. 8; Nie, p. 22
1715.10	<i>Clear River, Happiness of Fishermen (Qingjiang Yule)</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Shandong Provincial Museum	Nie, p. 22
1716.2	<i>Spring Snow</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Harvard University Museums, 1968.73	Suzuki, A10-022
1716.3	<i>Landscape</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Anhui Provincial Museum	<i>Anhui</i> , pl. 90
1716.3	<i>Watching the Tide</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Palace Museum, Beijing	<i>Yangzhou</i> , no. 17
1716	<i>Coolness from Pure Lotus</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Capital Museum	Nie, p. 22
1717.11	<i>Landscape with Villa</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Art Institute of Chicago, 44.437	Cahill (1966), fig. 7
1718.5	<i>Peach Blossom Spring</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	The Art Museum, Princeton University	Cahill (1966), fig. 6
1718.6	<i>Flavor of the Southeast (Dongnan Fengwei)</i>	Fan	Ink and color on paper	Palace Museum, Beijing	Nie, p. 22
1718	<i>Fording in Autumn</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Rongbao Zhai, Beijing	Nie, p. 23
1718	<i>The Road to Shu</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Unknown	Cahill (1966), fig. 10; Nie, p. 23

1719.2	<i>Pavilion of the Drunken Old Man</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk		Sotheby's, 6/2/87, lot 66
1719.5	<i>Peach Blossom Spring</i>	Set of 12 hanging scrolls	Ink and color on silk	Private collection, Canada	Sotheby's, 6/15/83, lot 25
1719 Summer	<i>Landscape with Figures, Buildings and Goats</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	The Art Museum, Berkeley	Suzuki, A30-021
1719 Autumn	<i>Landscape Imitating the Ancients</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color		Cahill (1966), fig. 13; <i>Kokka</i> , no. 584
1719 Winter	<i>Wind and Rain on Double Nine</i>	Fan	Ink and color on paper	Palace Museum, Beijing	Nie, p. 23
1719	<i>Landscape with Figures</i>	Set of 4 hanging scrolls	Ink and color on paper	Tianjin Cultural Bureau	Nie, p. 23
1719	<i>Hall of Green Wilderness</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Palace Museum, Beijing	Nie, p. 23
1719	<i>Pavilions in Landscape</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Unknown	Nie, p. 23; <i>Sekai</i> , XX
1720.1	<i>Flowers</i>	Handscroll	Ink and pale color on paper	Shanghai Museum	<i>Zhongguo Tumu</i> , hu 1-3416
1720 Summer	<i>Flying Snow in Liang Garden</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Palace Museum, Beijing	<i>Zhongguo Tumu</i> , jing 1-5185
1720.8	<i>Hall of Green Wilderness</i>	8-fold screen	Ink and color on gold paper	Unknown	<i>Sekai</i> , XVII, pl. 15
1720.8	<i>Deep Fragrance Pavilion</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Tianjin Museum	<i>Tianjin</i> , pl. 21; Nie, p. 23

1720 Autumn	<i>Poetic Themes</i>	Album of 12 leaves	Ink or ink and color on paper	Fujii Yurinkan, Kyoto	
1720.11	<i>After Rain</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on paper	National Palace Museum, Taipei	<i>Huang</i> , pl. 14
1720	<i>Mountain Beneath Moon</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Shanghai Museum	<i>Zhongguo Tumu</i> , hu 1-3417
1720	<i>Afang Palace in Snow</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk		Nie, p. 23
1721.4	<i>Fruit and Flowers</i>	Handscroll	Ink and color on paper	Palace Museum, Beijing	<i>Yangzhou</i> , no. 18; <i>Zhongguo Tumu</i> , jing 1-5186
1721.4	<i>Summer Trees, Deep Shade</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Rongbao Zhai, Beijing	<i>Zhongguo Tumu</i> , jing 11-096
1722.2	<i>Landscape</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on paper	Sakuragi Shunichi, Nagoya	Nie, p. 24; Harada, p. 340
1722 Spring	<i>Landscape in the Style of Fan Kuan</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on paper		Christie's, 6/5/85, lot 72
1722.3	<i>Miscellaneous Paintings</i>	Album of 8 leaves	Ink and color on paper	National Gallery, Beijing	<i>Zhongguo Tumu</i> , jing 3-089
1722.3	<i>Wind Fills the Hall</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and pale color on silk	Nelson Wu collection	Suzuki, A26-002
1722.4	<i>Palace at Dawn</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Freer Gallery of Art, 11.257	Cahill (1966), figs. 14, 16
1722 Winter	<i>Lotus Pavilion, Retreat from Summer Heat</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Guangdong Provincial Museum	Nie, p. 24
1722	<i>Bamboo Hall</i>	Hanging scroll	Colors on silk	Sichuan Provincial Museum	Nie, p. 24

1722	<i>Three Rams</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on paper	Beijing Cultural Relic Store	<i>Zhongguo Tumu</i> , jing 12-255
1722	<i>Laden with Chrysanthemums</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Beijing Arts & Crafts Import-Export Co.	<i>Zhongguo Tumu</i> , jing 10-047
1722	<i>Mt Penglai</i>	Hanging scroll		Nuwazhai	Cahill (1966), fig. 17
1723.2	<i>Landscape with Pavilions among Pines and Bamboos</i>	Set of 12 hanging scrolls	Ink and color on silk	Palace Museum, Beijing	<i>Yangzhou</i> , no. 19; Nie, p.24
1723 Spring	<i>Landscape with Garden</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and pale color on silk	Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 14.82	
1723.4	<i>Landscape with Palace</i>	Set of 12 hanging scrolls	Ink and color on silk	Palace Museum, Beijing	Cahill (1966), fig. 18; Nie, p. 24
1723.5	<i>Spring Thunder, Insect Awakening</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	National Gallery, Beijing	<i>Zhongguo</i> , I, 49
1723 Summer	<i>Penglai: Isle of the Immortals</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	British Museum, 1953.5.9	Suzuki, E15-163
1723	<i>Birds and Flowers</i>	Pair of hanging scrolls	Ink and color on silk	Palace Museum, Beijing	<i>Zhongguo Tumu</i> , jing 1-5187
1724	<i>Landscape</i>	Hanging scroll			Nie, p. 24
1724	<i>Snowscape</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Murakami Yoshiro collection	Suzuki, JP27-007
1725	<i>Winter Landscape</i>	Hanging scroll		Private collection	Cahill (1966), fig. 19
1726.8	<i>Landscape</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Palace Museum, Beijing	<i>Yangzhou</i> , no. 20; Nie, p.24

1726	<i>Landscape</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Yunnan Provincial Museum	Nie, p. 24
1730	<i>Spring Dawn over Lake and Mountains</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk		Nie, p. 25
1756?	<i>Landscape with Architecture</i>	Hanging scroll	Ink and color on silk	Former Kinoshita collection, Tokyo	Harada, p. 139

Zheng Xie's Price List: Painting as a Source of Income in Yangzhou

Ginger Cheng-chi Hsü

In the twenty-fourth year of the Qianlong era, 1759, the retired-official painter Zheng Xie (1693 - 1765), better known by his style name Zheng Banqiao, wrote a price list for his paintings. In this price list he speaks openly about the sale of his own paintings, and informs his customers that they are to pay according to the size and format of the work, and that the form of payment is to be straight cash:

A large hanging scroll costs six taels, a medium-sized one is four, a small scroll costs two. Couplet and streamer are one tael a pair, while fan and album leaf are a half tael each. Those who bring gifts and food are certainly not as welcome as those who come with silver, because what you give is not necessarily what I desire. If you come with cash, my heart will be filled with joy so that paintings and calligraphy will be excellent. Gifts cause nothing but trouble, not to mention deferred payment. Furthermore, in my old age, I get easily tired, therefore, please excuse me from accompanying you gentlemen in unprofitable conversations.

The list is followed by a poem of seven-character lines which reads:

One earns more from painting bamboo than planting bamboo;
A painting six feet tall costs three thousand cash.
However much he may talk about old friendships or connections,
It is like the autumn wind blowing past my ears.

Again, Zheng stresses the cash transaction and asks to be exempt from engaging in social niceties. At the end of the list, Zheng explains his motivation for putting together such an unusual document: 'Following Monk Zhuogong's suggestion, I wrote this so as to decline visitors.'¹

I would like to explore in this paper some of the implications of Zheng Xie's price list. Its first and most obvious function was sheer practicality. Earlier in his life, he found it difficult to sell his calligraphy for a

living; later, as an official, he must have experienced the burden of social obligations and the trouble of coping with increasing demand. And five years after Zheng had retired from his official post, his paintings had become such sought-after items that he was compelled to invent some kind of device for self protection.

What annoyed Zheng Xie was an incident that occurred shortly after he retired. In the autumn of 1753, a visiting friend had asked him for a painting and did so in such a forceful manner that the artist felt reluctant to move his brush, and yet could not refuse the request because of a sense of obligation. The best Zheng could do was to write a mocking colophon on the picture to release his frustration.² As in the case of exchange of poetry, such a request, coming from a respected individual, could be taken as sign of appreciation or of mutual admiration. However, when this practice was pushed to the extreme it could become unwieldy and downright awkward. For instance, Dong Qichang (1555 - 1636) encountered such a situation when he served his official term in Beijing. As witnessed by the younger painter Cheng Zhengkui (*jinshi* of 1631), Dong was once visited by a high official who came unexpectedly and ordered his attendants to set up a table and paper for the artist. Grinding ink with one hand, the official literally dragged Dong to the table with another, forcing him to do a painting right on the spot.³

The practice prevailed that one could request painting and calligraphy from literati artists without paying. Unlike professional painters who treated painting as a source of income, scholar-official-painters like Zheng Xie and Dong Qichang were considered amateurs and were supposed to consider painting a leisurely activity, not a means of earning income.

On the other hand, selling one's literary work had a long tradition, especially regarding funerary inscriptions, biographical accounts, eulogies or farewell essays. Under the term *runbi*, 'moistening the brush,' the practice may have begun as early as the Han dynasty and was well established by Tang times. For writing a funeral essay for his friend, the poet Bo Juyi (772 - 846) is said to have received valuable goods such as horses and carriages, silk and wool, jade and silver. Han Yu (768 - 828) demanded high monetary payments for his writing. With his skill in prose writing, Han Xizai (902-70) accumulated substantial wealth, sufficient for him to acquire more than forty concubines. Su Shi (1036 - 1101) received enough reward from one piece of writing to pay for a friend's funeral. Zhao Mengfu (1254 - 1322) once acted as a go-between

in getting a commission for a needy friend. Tang Yin (1470 - 1523) put together a whole album of his own writing for sale, naming it *lishi*, 'profit.'⁴ In other words, the practice of 'moistening the brush' became standard in later periods and was taken as a source of income among Chinese literati. In Zheng Xie's time, the poet Yuan Mei (1716 - 1797) was well known for having received very large sums for his writings; among his patrons was the Yangzhou salt merchant Bao Zhidao (1743 - 1801). In Yuan Mei's case, his reward for a single biographical account of four pages or a tomb inscription of eight hundred characters could bring as much as one thousand taels of silver.⁵ Zhao Yi (1727 - 1814), an historian and poet of similar stature though not so flamboyant, is reported to have enriched himself by selling writing after he retired.⁶

When this practice, so well established in literary circles, was transferred to the sphere of literati painting, it acquired a negative connotation. Only artists of craftsman origin were supposed to sell their paintings - not the literati. Thus, they, as well as their biographers, were reluctant to record sales, even though the practice existed. For instance, Wen Tong (1018 - 79) is said to have been paid for his bamboo painting. Zhu Yunming (1460 - 1526) refused to do calligraphy without a fee to 'moisten his brush.'⁷ In fact, the scarcity and brevity of documents concerning this aspect of Chinese painting reflect not the rarity of sale but the negative attitude toward it. This attitude may have relaxed during the eighteenth century, when the frequency of records of this type increased and more details were revealed in contemporary writings. Nevertheless, a price list written by the artist himself and requiring monetary exchange must still have been considered eccentric at that time, especially coming from someone with Zheng's social status. He was a *jinshi* degree holder, a retired seventh-grade official, and one who had previously been known as a non-professional painter.

In eighteenth century Yangzhou, painters found more opportunities to acquire patrons for their works. While professional painters, such as Huang Shen (1687 - 1766) and Hua Yan (1682 - 1756), were allowed to sell their paintings openly and to negotiate payments in public, literati painters were subject to a different set of conventions for their transactions. For example, the popular Orthodox landscape painter Fang Shishu (1692 - 1751), who was a lower degree holder and member of an established family of Shexian in Anhui, was invited to stay in the Yangzhou salt merchant Wang Tingzhang's household as a guest of honor. That was after he had failed in the family salt business and given up attempting a career in the civil service. Host Wang not only

welcomed him as a honored guest but treated him as an equal. In addition, he invited Huang Ding (1660 - 1730) to come and paid him a thousand taels of silver to serve as painting instructor for Fang.⁸ Under this arrangement, Fang was expected to fulfill his obligation as a painter-guest, participating in social gatherings and accompanying his host in all kinds of literary activities. In this context, painting became a means of discharging the artist's obligation, a tool for him to perform his duty. Although the duties of such private employment were usually not well-defined, Fang was more than aware of his obligations. He felt, for instance, pressure from not finishing a long-overdue painting while staying in his host's household.⁹

By gaining access to the elite group of Yangzhou high society, Fang Shishu was essentially making painting a profession and a source of income. At the same time, Fang's case typifies the traditional form of private patronage, in which the relationship between painter and patron was basically built on friendship or connection and the reward was an unspoken agreement of mutual obligation. In the case of the painter Wang Hui (1632 - 1717) in the previous century, after he had stayed with Wang Shimin (1592 - 1680) and finished making copies of old paintings for his host, the nature of the reward was neither discussed in front of him nor negotiated in advance.¹⁰ Wang Hui, of course, came from a family of professional painters and held no academic degree.

Thus, if a painter with Zheng Xie's background wanted to sell his own painting, it would normally have taken the form of a private transaction, with no prior discussion or negotiation of the reward involved. Looking back at Zheng's price list from this aspect, one realizes that he was breaking the rule as a scholar-official-painter. He admitted sales of his paintings to the public and disclosed the prices, in a detailed and commercialized manner. One may credit this to his romantic and eccentric temperament and one can also argue that he was either following the literati tradition of selling writing or adopting the practice of the craftsman-painter. In any case, the existence of such a document breaks down the myth that high-minded literati took painting only as an amateur activity, a tool of self-cultivation, and a vehicle for self-expression. It also reveals the hypocrisy of those who in effect sold their paintings and yet feigned indifference toward the monetary value involved. Having made painting a source of income, Zheng Xie was essentially renouncing his social status as a retired official to become a professional painter. One may also argue that, in doing so, he was showing his respect for those who made painting their profession.

More specifically, although the art of painting was not the most desirable profession for an educated man, it nonetheless could be an alternative during times of hardship. So argues Zheng Xie in one of his famous family letters:

Calligraphy and painting are considered fine arts, but are also vulgar occupations. Is it not a vulgar thing for a man who cannot do some service to the country and improve the lives of the people to occupy himself with pen and ink for the amusement of other people?¹¹

In his opinion, the ultimate goal for an educated man should be public service. When this goal could not be maintained then one could turn to painting and calligraphy as an alternative. Private patronage, the so-called *menke* ('guest under the gate') or *qingke* ('pure guest') status in which Fang Shishu and many other eighteenth-century scholars had found themselves, was simply not a decent option. As a matter of fact, Zheng despised those who depended on their talent and served in private households in exchange for board and room as a way of life. To him, 'the talent of protégés in officials' homes and the skills of friends of leisure are good only for trimming flowers, building pavilions and terraces, and examining curios and tasting tea. They are worthy to give orders to the doorman and butlers, but what are they?'¹² To Zheng their position was essentially no higher than that of the servants.

On the whole, as the road to officialdom became narrower in later Imperial China, many talented men of letters chose private patronage, especially in Yangzhou, the resurgent cultural center in the Jiangnan area. With its unmatched wealth amassed by those of the newly-risen merchant class eager to add some cultural flavor to their riches, Yangzhou provided a nurturing environment for those who sought financial support and literary accomplishment. The extensive lists of guests following each garden and household recorded in the *Yangzhou Huafang Lu* reveal the scale and the popularity of this practice. Among them were scholars of national fame such as Li E (1692 - 1752), Quan Zuwang (1705-55) and Dai Zhen (1723-77), as well as men with special talents in landscape architecture, music, poetry and painting. Yangzhou painters such as Jin Nong (1687 - 1763) and Fang Shishu sought such patronage for given periods of time.

In retrospect, those of whom Zheng Xie was contemptuous probably served their hosts in nothing but social functions. Typically, besides being holders of lower academic degrees, such guests were equipped with the talents of writing good calligraphy, playing chess, singing *kunqu*, composing poems on a moment's notice, and drinking.¹³

Concerning scholars who associated with merchants' households, a fashionable trend of his time, Zheng expressed his disapproval in these words:

A scholar should be independent. It is all right to listen to merchants' advice concerning trivial day-to-day matters, but I have never heard that one should seek their opinions regarding literature and scholarship. Our scholars from Yangzhou, however, flock to their homes and react with undue seriousness to their pronouncements. I cannot reiterate how this has damaged their scholarly integrity and destroyed their scholarly spirit.¹⁴

Even teaching, a legitimate alternative for the educated in the Confucian system, was hardly rewarding. When Zheng Xie reviewed his own experience as a private tutor teaching beginning level students earlier in his life, he considered it a stain on his career:

A private tutor is truly low in class,
Clinging to others' doorways for a living.
Half full and half hungry, he is a vagrant guest;
Without handcuff or lock, he is a prisoner with freedom.
Fewer classes brings the complaint of laziness;
More homework arouses the hatred of the students.
Fortunately, I am on the way to 'blue clouds' now,
Most of the shame can be covered by success.¹⁵

In this poem, Zheng Xie describes the pathetic life of a village teacher and his dilemma, keeping a balance between the wishful parents and their unmotivated children.

Between public service and private patronage, Zheng Xie found his place as a freelance artist. After more than ten years in an official career, he treasured the simple and enjoyable life of a painter. He no longer had to bow to his superior or beg at the doorway of the powerful, but could simply enjoy life in solitude and ease. Even though painting was not considered a high occupation, it had been a source of extra income during his early difficult years. After having held office, Zheng felt secure enough to admit this fact. In a letter dated 1745, Zheng told his brother:

Your stupid brother had no profession in youth, achieved nothing in middle age and lives in poverty in old age. I have therefore been forced to earn a living by my writing brush, but in reality it may be regarded a shame and disgrace. I hope you will have some higher ambition and not fall into my footsteps.¹⁶

To Zheng Xie, the career of a freelance artist was equal to that of a farmer. He saw plowing with one's brush in the literary field as no less decent than the plowing of a farmer in the rice field; he respected farmers and felt that they should be placed higher in the social hierarchy than the literati. 'Instead of plowing the field, I sell paintings and earn one hundred cash daily. Refinement is but an excuse, saving myself from poverty is the truth.'¹⁷

It is acceptable then for an educated man to engage himself in a lowly profession for the purpose of supporting himself and becoming independent. Sharing this attitude was another Yangzhou master, Jin Nong. When Jin Nong was involved in lantern and inkstone making, traveling around the country to seek clients for his products, he compared himself to ancient people who could not help but engage in lowly professions before making a name for themselves.¹⁸ Jin repeatedly lists groups of 'ancient sages' to support his view and comes to the conclusion:

It was not that I meant to stoop so low and demean myself. It is important for one to be independent. As long as one is supporting himself, whatever his profession may be, it is neither lowly nor disgraceful.¹⁹

Not only was Jin Nong involved in the making of handicrafts, but he also engaged in antique dealing throughout most of his life and sold his paintings in Yangzhou during his late years. In other words, painting was only one of the sources for his income. Using ancient sages and Zheng Xie as his role models, Jin made bamboo paintings into a commodity. Looking back at the age of sixty-five, Jin viewed his own life without regret and felt proud of himself for having been able to achieve self-sufficiency and financial independence.

Zheng Xie's price list, in this context, can be seen as a document intended to defend those who sell their paintings and to stress the idea of professionalism. With the price list and the ideology behind it, Zheng, in a sense, was trying to define a legitimate social status for those freelance artists whose role was far from clear within the traditional social classification of scholar, farmer, craftsman and merchant.²⁰

Notwithstanding the dramatic way Zheng Xie announced his change of social role, one wonders whether he really needed to depend on painting as a major source of income after retirement. The study of his financial situation can provide us with a better perspective. According

to his own words, Zheng's life can be divided into three stages. The first pertained to those extremely impoverished years before his advancement to the second degree in 1734, when teaching was his major source of income, supplemented by selling paintings and calligraphy. During this period, Zheng appeared to be constantly in debt. In the second stage, having served two terms as a magistrate in Shandong, his financial status improved enormously. Houses and resorts were built and several hundred *mu* of land were purchased as an investment, as was a piece of funerary property for his future use. In addition, Zheng Xie was able to publish his own writings. His retirement in the year 1754 marked the beginning of the third phase, which Zheng refers to as a time when he was comparatively poor after having been modestly rich.²¹ In other words, Zheng was on the whole financially secure, not counting the extra income he received occasionally. For instance, on a trip to Hangzhou in 1754, he gathered fifty-six taels of silver in addition to other valuable gifts from local officials. Apparently, once one had been an official, one lived the life of an official and enjoyed its privileges for the rest of one's life. Zheng Xie was thus in a financially sound position, unless he were inclined to conspicuous consumption.²² He wrote while making his retirement plans at the end of his first term of office:

There is nothing to be afraid of in being a poor official; [on the contrary,] one should be worrying about being a wealthy official. If I were to retire, I would have extra money and would be free from worry. People would not find fault with me, ghosts would not stare at me. I am not greedy, and you are in good health. If I hesitate, then I will lose the timing. It is wise to make up my mind now!²³

Taking these factors into consideration, one begins to realize that painting was not the major source of income that Zheng Xie depended on for his retired life. The price list, among other functions, served more as a gesture. The sale of paintings implied that he was to live modestly after retiring from officialdom. Retroactively, this could further serve as an indicator of his honesty and incorruptibility during his service, distinguishing him from other officials who amassed great numbers of possessions. In disclosing the need to sell his own paintings, Zheng Xie sought to disperse the rumor of his having retired rich, of hiding his properties in Shandong.

A poem inscribed on a painting dated 1765 best explains Zheng's concern:

Coming back from officialdom with two empty sleeves,
I paint fresh breeze and sell bamboo [paintings].
Why should I be worrying about defending myself with words,
Yet vainly, for not having hidden possessions all over Eastern Shandong.²⁴

The metaphors of empty sleeves and fresh breeze are conventional terms suggestive of an incorruptible official who lives in poverty after retirement. At the end of the inscription Zheng, with pride as well as sarcasm, signs himself as the 'Old man Banqiao Zheng Xie, self-complimenting and self-mocking.' In this context also, the aforementioned price list served Zheng as a self-evident document addressed to his contemporaries.

In addition to these ideological aspects, Zheng Xie's unique price list also sheds some light on the practical problem of patronage, and the identity of those 'consumers' of paintings in eighteenth-century Yangzhou. It is generally accepted that the rich salt merchants of Yangzhou were responsible for making the city a cultural center. Therefore, it is usually assumed that cultivated merchants like the two Ma, Ma Yueguan (1688 - 1755) and his younger brother Ma Yuelu (1697 - after 1766), and Jiang Chun (1724-93) were the major patrons of art in their time. However, in assessing the affordability of Zheng's painting, one realizes that his price range indicates the existence of another level of patronage, one which is neither the very rich nor the poor in Yangzhou society. It is recorded in the *Yangzhou Huafang Lu* that a very popular actor from a Suzhou theatrical troupe earned only about ten taels of silver annually,²⁵ not much more than Zheng Xie's price for a hanging scroll.

However, looking from the other end of the spectrum, at extremely wealthy merchants such as the Ma brothers, Jiang Chun, or those whose penchants for conspicuous consumption are amply described in *Yangzhou Huafang Lu*,²⁶ Zheng Xie's price list was clearly not directed at them either. Those merchants frequently donated hundreds of thousands of taels of silver to the court and local government. For instance, to finance Emperor Qianlong's trip to the South, the salt merchants of the Lianghuai district contributed almost one million taels of silver for each visit. Jiang Chun, along with several other merchants, donated 200,000 taels for the Emperor's mother's eightieth birthday in 1772.²⁷

Ma Yueguan was recorded as responsible for the total expenses of restoring a local Yangzhou school in 1734.²⁸ They also invested in antique collecting and sponsored literary activities in lavish style.²⁹ Patronage on this high level often took forms other than direct monetary payment. For instance, the two Ma brothers hosted a number of poets and scholars in their household, providing them, besides board and room, with intermittent favors of gifts, such as paying for Li E's expenses for acquiring a concubine or for Quan Zuwang's funeral. In a well-known anecdote, Jin Nong saved a merchant from embarrassment over a poorly phrased poetic line by fabricating a literary source for it. So appreciative was the latter that the next day he delivered a thousand taels of silver to his savior.³⁰ In other words, what these patrons paid in the form of gifts was usually much more than any work of art would have cost. And the value system on this level could not be measured in cash. Jin Nong's plum blossom painting dedicated to Jiang Chun on the occasion of his acquiring a concubine, now in the Freer Gallery of Art, was probably more a token marking their long relationship than a commissioned work. The fact that Jiang sponsored the publication of Jin's writing indicates that their relationship was more complicated than that between client and painter.³¹ It is also recorded that Zheng Xie and the older Ma initially met without knowing each other's identity. Mutual admiration for poetic skill led to an invitation for a brief sojourn. However, after Ma Yueguan learned of his friend's financial difficulty, he secretly sent two hundred taels of silver to Zheng's family.³² In this relationship, painting probably served Zheng more as a tool to discharge an obligation than as a source of cash; he dedicated several paintings to the Ma. Another painting, dedicated to Jiang Chun with an extensive colophon, is likely to have had the same function.³³

From scattered bits of information, one realizes that the prices Zheng Xie set for his paintings reflect a new level of clientele. Wealthy patrons like the Ma brothers and Jiang Chun played the role of promoters; the new patrons were the principal consumers of eighteenth-century Yangzhou painting. They were engaged in direct monetary transactions with the artist and purchased paintings from him with cash. In terms of economic status, they were neither people of the lower class nor were they the wealthy elite of Yangzhou; instead, they would have been his fellow officials, lower-level gentry, smaller-scale merchants and monks. This was the market to which Zheng Xie aimed his price list. The patrons were likely to remain anonymous. For them, one suspects, were produced a number of Yangzhou paintings which bore standardized subject matter, for instance, Zheng Xie's bamboo and

orchids, Jin Nong's plum blossoms and Li Shan's flowers, and which contained no dedications but repetitive, non-specific inscriptions. A series of letters by Jin Nong in the Tokyo National Museum confirms that the recipients of his commercial paintings were usually anonymous, rather than identifiable, patrons.

If we use two important indicators, wealth and education, to show the cross section of the social structure, then this anonymous group falls into the middle section, excluding the extremely wealthy at one end and the poor and illiterate at the other. It included a wide range of people who appreciated works of art or admired the artists, who had enough knowledge of reading and, most importantly, enough leisure and money to acquire cultural products of this sort. In other words, the spread of literacy in late Imperial China produced an appreciative audience for works of literary and artistic merit, painting included. In Yangzhou, intense commercial activity served as the setting for commercializing the production of painting. Similarly, the residents of Yangzhou, along with visitors to the city, provided opportunities for a group of freelance artists and stimulated their growth. In this aspect, Zheng Xie's price list underlines the popularity of literati painting in the city of Yangzhou during the middle of the Qianlong era.

Jin Nong: The Eccentric Painter with a Wintry Heart

Marshall P.S. Wu

One of the most outstanding of the Yangzhou Eccentrics, Jin Nong (1687 - 1763) began painting late in his life. A precocious poet, he received approbation from elders such as Mao Qiling and Zhu Yizun. The publication of *Jingshen Ji* (1718), now lost, and *Dongxin Xiansheng Ji* (1733) made known poems of his early and mature phases. His poetic insights and imageries, cultivated for so many years, contribute not only to the writing of inscriptions' accompanying his paintings, but also the shaping of pictorial images.

Overlapping his poetic success, though later in time, was Jin Nong's emergence as a calligrapher, with a style unlike any other master's during or before his time. His accomplishment in that art is nothing short of stupenduous. By studying calligraphic styles obtained from rubbings of bronze vessels and stelae, a practice which had profound impact on the nineteenth and twentieth century calligraphers and painters, he paved the way for a revolution in the clerical script. As Jin Nong had no prior pictorial training, his sure handling of brush and ink came from the art of calligraphy. Indeed, the heavy, powerful brushwork of his paintings was so derived, and contributed to the development of a personal style. Along the way, Jin Nong developed as a connoisseur. An early exposure to art perhaps was a key factor, for years later he still remembered *arhat* images with vividness.² Before he reached his thirties, he had accumulated hundreds of rubbings and old paintings. His horizon further widened when he came into contact with Yangzhou collectors and when he travelled to the North and became acquainted with collectors there.³ The opportunity of seeing rare works in these private collections must have stirred in him a hidden desire to paint.

Another source of Jin Nong's art comes from his association with Yangzhou eccentrics, especially Wang Shishen (1686 - 1759) and Gao Xiang (1688 - 1753). Both had been established artists even before Jin

Nong launched his painting career. Through the years Jin Nong must have watched them work and have become familiar with their styles as well as with the technical sides of painting and the actual process of creation. These are vital to a beginner.

Once Jin Nong took up the brush, his fame in painting began to overshadow that in poetry and in calligraphy. When did Jin Nong begin to paint? On the surface, it seems that this is a simple question that can be settled easily. Due however to a series of contradictory claims regarding this matter, the situation becomes far more complex. It may be that we need to determine, first, when he actually began to paint, and second, the onset of his painting career.

Most would place Jin Nong's first painting in his fifties, though others may favor his forties.⁴ There are indications that Jin Nong could have tried his hand in painting as early as 1723, when he was in his late thirties.⁵ Besides, we know of two attributions dated to 1736, testifying that he would have had sufficient experience prior to his fiftieth *sui*.⁶

Regardless of these incidental trials, the true onset of a painting career is another matter altogether, as it requires dedication and persistence. For that, we must rely on Jin Nong's own testimonial. As he himself put it, this took place in his sixtieth *sui* (1747), some ten to twenty years after the first experiments. He said:

Master Wintry Heart started to learn how to paint bamboo after the age of sixty...⁷

As innocuous as it sounds, Jin Nong's confession is important for at least two reasons. The first involves the beginning of a concentrated effort. Unlike those infrequent and intermittent trials of the past, this is the beginning of a steady involvement and exploration of painting subjects. The persistence and continuity so exhibited in the following decade signals a seriousness of purpose. The second reason is the growing confidence Jin Nong displayed from then on in his successful mastery of pictorial idiom and the praise he received from his peers. Replacing the earlier sense of insecurity, we now find Jin Nong glowing in his own achievements:

Mr Xu Bin, from Danyang, whose style name is Jiangmen, can paint narcissus with garden rocks... Hua Yan, style name Qiuyue, lived in my hometown [Hangzhou] for years. They are all old now with white hair... Whenever these two old men got together in the woods for tea, they took out their paintings and bragged about them. I hated myself for not being able

to follow in their footsteps. It was only during the sixth month of this year that I suddenly started to paint bamboo. As my works are not so bad after all, they were appreciated by these two old friends...⁸

That bamboo should be the first subject to launch his painting career seems only appropriate. Indeed, among the many painting subjects, bamboo is perhaps the easiest for a calligrapher to apply the skill already in his possession. After all, the brushwork in ink bamboo painting is inherently calligraphic. It also requires minimal expertise in verisimilitude and is simple in depiction. For Jin Nong, the subject served as a natural transition between the two disciplines. However, once the transition was made, he was able to go from subject to subject, switching from bamboo to vegetables and flowers, plum blossoms, figures, horses, self-portraits, and Buddhist images, as he himself acknowledged in a series of collectanea of inscriptions, which once had been attached to his paintings.⁹ The following presentation adheres essentially to this rough and sometimes overlapping chronology.

Bamboo

In 1747 or 1748, when Jin Nong was about sixty *sui*, he was ill and moved to his sister's home in the southern section of Hangzhou, near the city wall.¹⁰ There was no bamboo growing around his living quarters. He bought and planted bamboo roots from one of the temples near West Lake; soon there was a bamboo grove. In the summer, whiling away the long days during his illness, he started to practice painting bamboo.¹¹

It appears that *xiesheng* was his primary approach to bamboo painting. Instead of adhering to the style of earlier masters or even learning from a current expert, Jin Nong used the newly grown jade-green bamboo as his model and thereby created his own style. He said:

Master Wintry Heart started to paint bamboo after he was sixty years old. He did not pay any attention to the different types of bamboo paintings of the old masters. There are thousands of slender bamboo stalks around the house and he learned how to paint bamboo directly from them.¹²

On the other hand, there are plenty of clues in Jin Nong's writing to testify that he also sought inspiration from the works of at least ten early masters, ranging from Tang to the Yuan periods.¹³ A preference for earlier masters appeared to be the rule; rarely did he pay attention to painters of the Ming and Qing dynasties.¹⁴

The brushwork in Jin Nong's ink bamboo painting was wet, dark and forceful, derived directly from his calligraphy (Figure 1). He liked to compose these paintings with two or three long stalks tilting to the right, sometimes with overlapping shorter stalks at the lower left corner. The two major elements, the joints of the stalks and the shape of the leaves, are all rendered in his own unique manner. While the stalks are light in tone, his leaves are dark, almost triangular. These he described as 'the broken-off tips of bronze blades found in a forgotten ancient battle field.'¹⁵ The intention undoubtedly was to instill an archaic pathos to his bamboo paintings.

By examining his extant bamboo painting, we learn that 1750 was one of his most productive years. There was an immediate market for Jin Nong's paintings, once his latent talent blossomed. Nevertheless, in the following year, he suddenly gave up bamboo as his subject. It is reasonable to assume that competition, in the person of Zheng Xie, was the chief cause. At that time, Zheng Xie had returned to Yangzhou to become a professional painter. Since in personality Zheng was just as colorful as Jin Nong, and since Zheng's bamboo paintings, which often included rocks and orchids, could be even more substantive and captivating than Jin Nong's, the decision to retreat might have been as wise as it was timely.

In later years when Jin Nong occasionally painted ink bamboo, the vigorous, distinctive characteristics found in his early paintings were less evident. He arranged bamboo with small sparse leaves as the background for his flower, landscape or figure paintings, or he resorted to contour-outline ('double contour') as a method of rendition.¹⁶ The best example was done in 1762 for his student Xiang Jun (Figure 2).¹⁷ Painted on Ming dynasty paper, Jin Nong tinted the whole background with light brown washes except for white edges along the bamboo leaves, thus suggesting the presence of snow. The stalks and leaves were drawn with the so-called 'golden file' calligraphic strokes after Li Yu (937-78), the last monarch of the Southern Tang dynasty (937-75). These twisted strokes, powerful and expressive, have gnarled, uneven edges, demonstrating the vigor and strength of Jin Nong's brushwork in his old age.

Miscellaneous Subjects

Having put aside ink bamboo for a time, Jin Nong started to paint flowers, vegetables, figure and landscapes. Most of these were done in the format of album leaves. Whereas his ink bamboo was weighty and



Figure 1. Jin Nong, *Ink Bamboo*,
dated 1750. Collection of
Mr Goro Sakamoto, Kyoto.

substantial, these newer paintings were lively and light. The earliest example, dated 1754, is a set of album leaves entitled *Ink Play* now in the Wango Weng collection, New Hampshire.¹⁸ The first leaf shows a young boy standing at a pavilion by a pond. With a banana-leaf fan, he is trying to catch dragonflies drifting above the water. Jin Nong must have liked this composition because he used it more than once.¹⁹ The inscription in the upper right corner reads:

The lotus are blooming.
 The silvery pond so silent.
 In the cool early morning,
 Who knows how many green-winged dragonflies
 are flying?
 The breeze from my fan
 Drifts through the two six-paneled windows
 facing the water.
 I remember that we once sat [closely]
 together.
 With delicate fingers, you peeled the lotus
 seeds [for me].

One must admire Jin Nong's ability, enhancing the painting with this evocative poem. The whole picture is exquisitely drawn, an outstanding example of originality and taste. The casually composed forms are resplendent with color. It not only reminds one of a childhood experience, but through the implied tranquility refreshes a sensibility dulled by age. On the tenth leaf, Jin Nong painted a young woman sewing in a hut. He inscribed the title on the left edge as *Lüchuang Pinnü Zhi Tu* or 'A Picture of a Poor Maiden by a Green Window.' Here he represents the sorrow and grief of all indigent women in China. Young girls from poor families rose before dawn and toiled the whole day. In the evening light, they worked at extra tasks such as sewing for wealthy customers. Their bitterness and drudgery touched Jin Nong's heart at a tender age. This picture relates to the night thirty-eight years before when Jin Nong was ill in his home town. Cold and lonely, unable to sleep, Jin Nong decided to adopt the style name of Wintry Heart, borrowed from the verse of a Tang dynasty poem about a poor young woman sewing clothes on a cold autumn night.²⁰ A vivid picture of that miserable woman must have imprinted itself on his mind, to be materialized much later in this album leaf.

Another well known album, dated the first day of autumn in 1759, is owned by the Shanghai Museum.²¹ Included are twelve landscape leaves in color. Nine of these feature figures, two feature boats, and one



Figure 2. Jin Nong, *Double-lined Bamboo after Wang Wei*, dated 1762. Sichuan Provincial Museum.

a flock of white egrets, all loosely composed and sparsely defined in thin lines against large areas of wash. At first glance, they seem somewhat weaker than Jin Nong's ink bamboo and calligraphy, in which the heavy linear strokes prevail. A change was taking place, perhaps due to his desire for elegance. From a painter's point of view, achieving the airy lightness as demonstrated in this album is a challenging task. Of this album, the best known and the most memorable image is the eighth leaf, *Gathering Water Chestnuts*, which is reminiscent of Shen Zhou's (1427 -1509) rendering of the same theme.²²

One month later Jin Nong painted a similar album of twelve leaves, now at the Palace Museum, Beijing.²³ It is likely that, upon completing the previous album, a patron saw it and liked it so much that he commissioned Jin Nong to produce a new set. In the first leaf a kneeling middle-aged man is worshipping a small Buddhist image on a table inside a pavilion. From the inscription on the right, one learns that the image is Bizhi Fo, or Pratyeka Buddha, who taught that by seeking the cause of common affairs in one's daily life, one could attain enlightenment. This religious touch reflects Jin Nong's espousal of Buddhism late in life to escape from the snares of the mundane world. One wonders whether this picture is actually a representation of Jin Nong himself. Tinged with melancholy, a leaf in the second album portrays a young woman in a blue dress sitting on a large rock under a tree. Holding her left knee, she gazes into the distant void. Her intensity suggests complicated feelings known only to herself, an example of Jin Nong's ability to evoke mood and inner dimensions.

In view of the technical, stylistic and thematic diversity found in his paintings, one senses Jin Nong's constant effort to revitalize his art. For example, Jin Nong chose a common clump of sweet flag plants as a subject for a hanging scroll.²⁴ Drawn in the linear *baimiao* manner, he used neither washes, shading nor color of any sort to detract from his long, thin ink line. The multitude of unique compositions and subtle variations provide considerable visual pleasure.

With an approach that was sometimes playful, Jin Nong was not adverse to use his superb skill to depict people in the temple where he lived in his old age. An example is the lively painting now at the Fuji Yurinkan, Kyoto (Figure 3).²⁵ It depicts a tonsured cleric, a young monk, with chin resting in hand, dozing off under the banana trees. The features are quite handsome, with eyebrows shaped like crescent moons. The protruding lips are full of seductive suggestion. A viewer not only senses the youthful vigor but is teased by the half closed eyes.



Figure 3. Jin Nong.
A Sleeping Young Monk.
Yurinkan Museum, Kyoto.

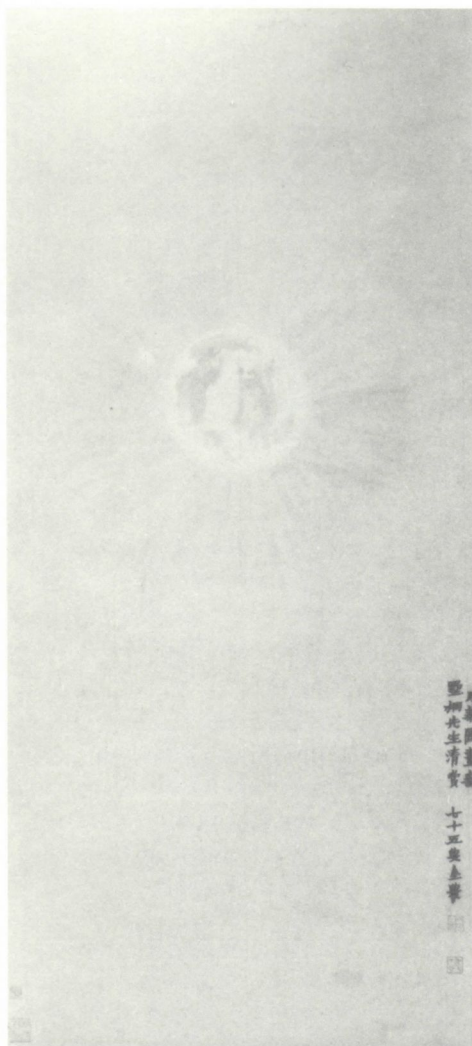


Figure 4. Jin Nong,
Radiant Moon,
dated 1761. Collection
of the Palace
Museum, Beijing.

Adding to this provocation is that, beneath the priestly white robe, the tips of a pair of red shoes are showing, shoes hardly suitable for a cleric. In this presentation, Jin Nong's mischievous thought is disguised but evident.

The most extraordinary piece produced late in his life, in 1761, is the *Yuehua Tu* ('The Radiant Moon'), now at the Palace Museum in Beijing (Figure 4).²⁶ In the center of this hanging scroll hangs a bright full moon. Wet washes are used to form surface shadows, suggesting the legendary hare and cassia tree. The silvery lemon of soft radiant moonlight has been evenly applied, against a background of hazy sky, treated with light blue washes. The tranquility is impressively real and its uniqueness, in the history of Chinese painting, is beyond question.

Plum Blossoms

Jin Nong started to produce plum blossom paintings around 1756 when he was in his early seventies.²⁷ He seems to have adapted the styles and skills of earlier plum blossom masters, plus those of his two artist friends, Wang Shishen and Gao Xiang, whose artistic careers had come to an end.²⁸ As a result, his plum paintings lack the stylistic distinction found in works of other subjects, as his rendition of flowers, calyxes and stems are very traditional indeed. So is his tendency, like early poets and painters, to use the theme to symbolize the fragile beauty of an elegant young woman. In a playful mood, he inscribed on a painting of red plum blossoms:

By the window of my room at the lodging-house, I created this plum-blossom painting. To tint the flowers I borrowed the rouge of a beautiful lady who lives in a jade pavilion. I hope she will not be vexed at this old man who stole her cosmetics. When she tries to apply her morning makeup, she will be unable to mark a red dot on her lips. I could not stop from laughing.²⁹

His personal traits become apparent only when one analyzes the way in which the composition is organized. One first notices his thick, ink-washed tree trunks (Figure 5), which begin from the right corner and extend diagonally to the opposite edge. Also notable is his tendency to focus on the middle section of the tree. Both aspects recall his bamboo paintings and are extensions of the same approach.

A more pronounced departure from the accepted pattern lies in his willingness to deal with the plum blossoms as components of pictures which included other images. Thus he would, at times, add human figures to the scene or arrange the plum blossoms against a landscape setting for the purpose of instilling a lyrical mood.³⁰

In the context of plum blossom paintings, it may be useful to address the question of authorship and authentication. In 1755, Jin Nong accepted a student, Luo Ping (1733-99), who, as one of the Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou, was almost his equal in fame and accomplishment. The following year the master accepted a second student, Xiang Jun, probably also from Yangzhou.³¹ Many of Jin Nong's later plum blossom paintings may have been painted by his pupils and only inscribed by him. He himself admitted this.³² As a result, ascertaining authorship becomes a formidable task. Fortunately, works by these disciples are still available for comparative purpose, many more by Luo Ping than by Xiang Jun. The latter is represented by a handscroll, the only known work by Xiang Jun; in spite of bearing a poorly executed inscription and signature



Figure 5. Jin Nong, *Blossoming Plum*, dated 1760.
The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri
(Nelson Fund).

purportedly by Jin Nong, it can be reattributed to the disciple since the end of the scroll is found to contain two small seals that read: 'Jun' and 'Gongfu.'³³ Both refer to Xiang Jun.

Comparing works of the teacher and students, one finds similarities but also fundamental differences. Jin Nong liked to paint his main tree trunks with heavy black ink. When the trunks are intersected by

thinner branches, white spaces are left to define edges. He also liked to bend his small branches in sharp angles. In contrast, Luo Ping's tree trunks are usually formed with drier brushwork. His blossoms tend to be more realistic and his compositions are fuller, with twigs and flowers crowding against one another. Of the three, the least talented was Xiang Jun. From the handscroll cited above, one sees that his branches are generally long and straight, lacking the twist and turn of the other two painters. The presence of thick ink lines and dots on top of the finished boughs may be Jin Nong's, attempts to rectify the perceived weakness or deficiencies in a student's work. In addition, while Jin Nong and Luo Ping preferred to paint with *zhongfeng*, with the tip of brush kept at the center of the brushstrokes, Xiang Jun used *pianfeng*, or 'the side of the brush.' The *taidian* ('ink dots') on Jin Nong and Luo Ping's tree trunks and branches are round; in contrast, Xiang Jun frequently resorted to flat dots. According to Jin Nong's own writings, Luo Ping was the bolder of the two disciples, favoring large trunks and thick branches in his plum blossom paintings. Xiang Jun was more careful, drawing only thin trunks and looser branches.³⁴ After having studied their works, we can vouchsafe the credibility of Jin Nong's analysis.

Horse Painting

Jin Nong began painting horses around 1757-58 after the age of seventy. According to *Dongxin Huama Tiji* ('Mister Dongxin's Inscriptions on Horse Paintings'), the choice of the subject stems from his conviction that he himself is like a fine horse without due recognition. Half of the twelve entries in that text deal in one way or another with failed hopes and dreams. It seems that Jin Nong's failure to pass the civil service examination was a source of pain and frustration, which intensified during his later years. In this sense, the horse paintings were a vehicle for expressing long pent-up resentments. In one of the inscriptions he wrote sarcastically:

I now paint horses in cold and deserted atmospheres. Gazing at my painting I seem to see myself, filled with pity for my toiling and rootless life. There is no Bo Le (the legendary horse expert) in the human world. Even if there is and I can meet him now, he probably would reject me due to my old age. Besides, amid the wind and dust in the wilderness, I no longer wish to be recognized.³⁵

His unique horse paintings were inspired by old paintings which Jin Nong had seen in his early days.³⁶ Thus these horse paintings display an archaic overtone beyond reflecting a melancholy and desolate mood.

Unlike his tradition-bound plum blossom paintings, Jin Nong's horses are different from any previous attempts. Intending to express the noble nature of the animal, most of his predecessors would favor verisimilitude as an essential goal. Accordingly, they utilized fine brush lines to define the form of stallions and to render the mane and tail by drawing each long hair one at a time. In contrast, Jin Nong, being the first one to rebel against this practice, used thick calligraphic strokes to draw his subjects. His modulated, expressive brush lines are energetic and powerful, swift and free, showing his consummate skill.

One of Jin Nong's favorite modes of rendering the horse shows it standing in the lower portion of the painting, facing left, with its hind-quarters touching the right edge. Bulky in bodily form, the horse's legs are made slender, with large joints, and the pointed hooves are drawn in the shape of clamshells. The arrangement of the four legs also follows a special pattern: the right hoof is raised slightly above the ground and the left legs are stretched forward. The tail is heavy and tousled, sweeping from right to left, resulting in a 's' shape. Furthermore, the left eye, which is the only one showing, is half hidden by a disorderly mane. Over all, in his predilection for drawing the head big and heavy, the animal looks more like a mule than a horse. The remaining space is left empty, providing plenty of room for his long inscriptions.

As a subject, the horse is more difficult to render than other genres such as bamboo and plum blossoms. In terms of anatomical detail and organic structure, the variety of poses and appearances, it takes effort and discipline before one can capture the form and spirit of the animal. Since Jin Nong lacked formal training, it was necessary for him to choose a standard portrayal. Once he managed to establish a satisfying pattern, he tended to use it continually with only slight modifications. This is why his extant horse paintings resemble one another.

The two best known horse paintings by Jin Nong are the *Dayuan Ma* ('A Ferghana Horse') and *Hualiu Tu* ('The Horse, Hualiu'), respectively in a private collection in Taiwan, and the Osaka Municipal Museum.³⁷ The first work exhibits a great white stallion drawn with heavy ink lines. According to Jin Nong's inscription, the animal is fashioned in the way of a Ferghana horse, a rare and speedy breed in ancient times. The exalted stallion, head lifted high, displays a fearless and dignified bearing. With a long didactic inscription at the upper portion, it alludes to the bitter and cruel campaigns fought in the desolate wilderness in the past. One must admit that Jin Nong's painting is infused with heavy emotions.

When Jin Nong's *Dayuan Ma* is compared to the small pony in *Hualiu Tu* (Figure 6), the latter is perhaps even more expressive and laden with sentiment, the size notwithstanding. In this work, the artist drew a bony, under-sized black horse with a white saddle-cloth. *Hualiu* is figured among the eight legendary horses owned by King Mu (reigned ca 947-928 BC) of the Zhou dynasty, powerful animals with meritorious achievements in the battlefields.³⁸ However, this small horse could hardly be that. Instead, it is a shabby, docile and miserable beast, such as those used for daily chores on a farm in Northern China. Head down, it seems to have lost its will. Partially covered by an untrimmed mane, the eye that peeks through is large and sad, filled with indignation and bitterness.

Before the Qing dynasty, few Chinese painters made use of animals and birds to express human feelings. It was not until the seventeenth century that Zhu Da (or Bada Shanren), one of the *yimin* painters, depicted fish and birds with eyes which conveyed anger, isolation and hostility; that was reflective of the artist's resentments towards the ruling Manchu court.³⁹ One or two generations later, Jin Nong followed suit, though his purpose was quite different. There was no anti-Manchu feelings, but a cry against the indifference of a time when talented men were laid waste.

Jin Nong's Self-Portraits

If Jin Nong's horse paintings were used to vent his resentments, then his self-portraits were his unparalleled way of extending friendship and human bonds. They were farewell gifts to close friends and students. By sending them his portraits, he asked to be remembered when he passed away. Thus his self-portraits were painted with specific recipients in mind.

Unfortunately, even though nine were recorded in his *Dongxin Zixiezhentiji*, only one example remains, that is, the self-portrait done for his hometown friend, Ding Jing (Figure 7 and Figure 8a).⁴⁰ Painted as a hanging scroll, it portrays Jin Nong in profile, a bald-headed old man in a white robe with a tiny pigtail hanging on his right shoulder. He has a thick mustache and long beard. Holding a staff in his right hand, the man stares into space, his beady eye sharp and alert. The emphasis is on lightness and clarity; thus it manifests economy of line, simplicity and absence of any background. These further strengthen Jin Nong's own dignified and lofty bearings. The long inscription on the right side not only balances the figure but also summarizes the history of Chinese portrait painting based on Jin Nong's own knowledge.

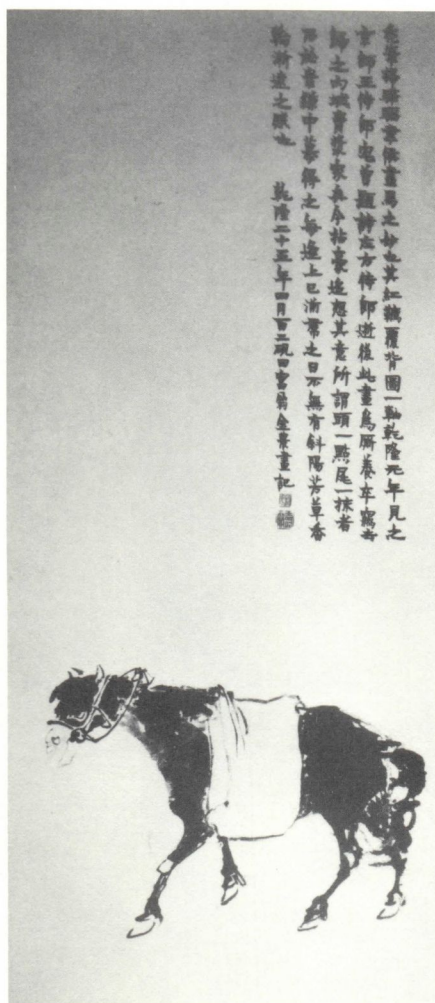


Figure 6. Jin Nong, *Hualiu Tu*, dated 1760.
The Osaka Municipal Museum.

Although lacking in anatomical accuracy, this self-portrait confirms descriptions of his appearance found in his friends' writing.⁴¹ Further confirmation comes from Jin Nong's portraits painted by contemporary artists (Figure 8). The first known instance was by the Yangzhou painter, Gao Xiang and drawn when Jin Nong was at the age of forty-seven (Figure 8b). Reproduced as the frontispiece in his *Dongxin Xiansheng Ji*, it shows the frontal view of a middle-aged man with a bald head and long beard, not dissimilar from the figure in his self-portrait. Being a woodblock impression, the printed lines may lack the flexibility afforded by a brush; nonetheless, Jin Nong's features are clearly defined.

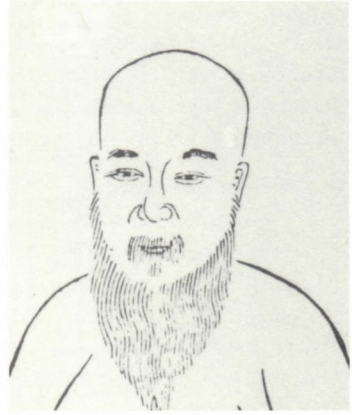


Figure 7. Jin Nong, *Self-Portrait*, dated 1759.
Collection of the Palace Museum, Beijing.

Two portraits were done by his student, Luo Ping. One is dated 1760 (Figure 8c) and depicts the teacher who, naked to his waist, is seated in an armchair with a large fan in his right hand, dozing off under banana trees on a hot summer day.⁴² A small boy-servant sitting on the ground behind his master is also asleep. Luo Ping undoubtedly has witnessed such a scene – a moment of relaxation in the life of Jin Nong in



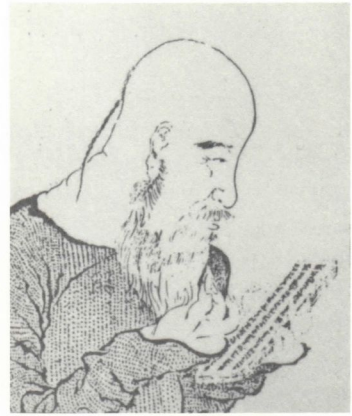
a.



b.



c.



d.

Figure 8. A Comparison of Jin Nong's Four Portraits.

Yangzhou, and his depiction has a ring of truth to it. Even though Jin Nong's image is rather small in ratio to the pictorial surface, one can discern those familiar features without fail. The second, undated portrait displays the master sitting on a rock, reading a palm-leaf sutra written in Sanskrit, with the bald head, small pigtail, heavy mustache and long beard intact (Figure 8d).⁴³ Signs of age are apparent, for example, small bumps of loose skin on the back of his neck and wrinkles around eyes, giving support to the theory that this must have been done during Jin Nong's last years.⁴⁴ The resemblance between the self-portrait and portraits is remarkable though they span more than a decade and are by different artists. They reflect Jin Nong's ability to achieve a measure of verisimilitude.

Religious Figures

Around the same time that he was painting horses, Jin Nong began to experiment with religious figures. A conversion to Buddhism had taken place, when he forsook his wanton ways for a life of purity. One inscription on his Buddhist paintings says:

...After my wife passed away, I lived alone and was celibate. I used to have a mute concubine but later I sent her away. Now I stay at a Buddhist temple in Yangzhou, and partake of food in its kitchen. Day after day, I eat only vegetables and actually have begun to enjoy this kind of meal. Aside from copying Buddhist scriptures, I dedicate myself to painting Buddhist images. A weak man of seventy years old like me dares not pray for any blessing. All I want is to have plenty of time to enjoy my peaceful life as well as to watch the beautiful scenery surrounding Buddhist temples in Jiangnan...⁴⁵

It appears that the old painter was experiencing an acute sense of the transience of life.

By the eighteenth century, Buddhist painting had lost much of its vitality. In their attempt to emphasize the divine nature of the Buddha and Buddhist deities, painters adhered strictly to the canonical prescriptions, for example, sacred attributes such as *ushnisha* or the topknot, the hair in snail-like form, the *urna* or the tuft of hair between the eyes, and the *mudra* or hand gestures. The unwillingness to deviate resulted in hardened patterns and further limited interpretation. On the other hand, Jin Nong sought a fresh approach, including an attempt to fuse the human and divine.⁴⁶ This approach is not entirely unique, since in the historic past the concept of the divine king often resulted in images which, in retaining the usual attributes of a deity, carried the visages of specific rulers. Nonetheless, it is far from being common when the case in point pertains to an individual less exalted than royalty.

In 1759, along with his experimentation with self-portraits, Jin Nong also painted a Buddhist painting for his friend, Zhang Geng (1685 - 1760).⁴⁷ It portrays a slender Buddhist figure holding a staff with both hands, standing under a *bo* tree - an arrangement that was to gain favor with Jin Nong in his Buddhist paintings.⁴⁸ The painting appears straightforward. However, as one reads Jin Nong's inscription on the upper left and Zhang Geng's at the lower left corner, one begins to grasp the significance of this work. Jin Nong's inscription reads:

On the 28th day, 11th month, the 24th year of Qianlong (1759), I drew fresh water from the Bodhisattva Spring and washed my fingers and nails. Then I burned excellent incense and painted a picture of the Buddha of Longevity

for the pure Master Mijia Jushi (Zhang Geng), so that he could worship and offer sacrifices to it forever and ever. Master Mijia's lean and graceful appearance looks rather like that of the Buddha of Longevity himself.⁴⁹

So this is an image of Amitayus, Buddha of Longevity, a subject with which Jin Nong was fairly familiar. From the comment, the resemblance between the image and Master Mijia seems to be incidental at best, except that there is a hidden angle about which the artist is reticent. Zhang Geng's poetic colophon, however, is more direct and forthcoming:

With all my exertions, I had taken care of
 my compassionate mother until she passed away.
 At the end of my own life, I recalled and recognized her face.
 I have tried to purify myself [for years],
 yet I still cannot attain this state.
 Ashamed and bewildered, I burn incenses in front of my mother's
 kind appearance.⁵⁰

It appears that, out of respect and in a touch of inspiration, Jin Nong had incorporated the facial features of his friend's mother into the Buddha image. If so, the resemblance between the latter and Zhang Geng himself should come as no surprise. Little wonder that the slender figure looks rather like a nun!

What this demonstrates, beyond his ability to capture the appearance and personality of an individual and to incorporate them into his religious images, is Jin Nong's conceptual boldness and subtlety. Indeed, by carefully going through his Buddhist figures, one may find that each has its own distinctive set of personal features and traits, possibly modelled after Jin Nong's patrons or their relatives. In this manner, he not only pleased his patrons but also could maintain a sense of liveliness in his religious *oeuvres*. The majority of his Buddhist figures are standing or sitting under a *bo* tree with large leaves. They wear robes defined by heavy ink lines. Only the facial features of the figures are carefully depicted, allowing individualized portrayal. The rest of the body, including the hands and feet, is usually covered by the garment. Most have intense, solemn expressions.

One of his Buddhist paintings bearing the first inscription in the *Dongxin Huafo Tiji* was still in existence forty years ago.⁵¹ The date on this work, 1760, no doubt stands for the beginning of his Buddhist phase. Here the Buddha is portrayed as a standing corpulent figure, with short curly hair, heavy beard and mustache. Most of the traditional

attributes such as the *urna* and mandorla have been omitted. Only a bald spot on the top of the head suggests the *ushnisha*, the protuberance that conveys the Buddha's wisdom. The down-cast eyes as well as the clasped hands inside the sleeves make the figure look more like a gentle, good-natured Chinese sage than a sacred deity from India. The composition, comprising a figure surrounded on three sides by a long inscription in Jin Nong's inimitable calligraphy, is utterly unique in the history of Buddhist painting. Jin Nong arranged his writing evenly around the figure, filling the whole background. This reminds us of the large, boat-shaped nimbus or body-halo behind the deities in early Chinese Buddhist sculptures. The narrow white space between the script and the contour of the figure looks like the shining light of a mandorla. Jin Nong's composition best demonstrates the ingenuity of merging an inscription into the painting, a novel practice favored by Yangzhou artists during the eighteenth century.⁵³ The text of this long inscription may be regarded as the finest survey of Chinese Buddhist painting ever written in the eighteenth century, as Jin Nong surveyed all the Buddhist painters and their recorded, representative works from the Han dynasty through the end of the Southern Song period. The inscription also indicates his awareness of the Buddhist caves at the Longmen site in Henan.⁵³

As a result of his knowledge, Jin Nong's religious painting has a peculiar, archaic quality. One of his works, depicting the vigorous Bodhidharma, found its way into the imperial collection, labeled as an anonymous Song painting (Figure 9).⁵⁴ The grave and earnest patriarch sits on a mat, legs crossed in a meditation pose. The black tree trunk and leaves form a strong contrast to the white robed figure in the foreground. Even though Jin Nong's signature and seals were cut off, perhaps by a cunning antique dealer, the thick linear work with uneven edges on the robe, the black tree trunk and four clusters of large leaves are typical of his style. There is little doubt that this picture is originally painted by Jin Nong. Emperor Qianlong inscribed it in 1769, six years after Jin Nong's death. As is well known, Jin Nong had been long obsessed by his failure to achieve recognition by the court. It was ironic that his work should posthumously reach the Emperor under a false attribution!

Summary

The productive period of Jin Nong's life as a painter spans roughly between 1747/8 and 1763. During these years he was able to garner the energy and produce his fine pieces. Toward the end, physical decay set in, as he was losing his eyesight as well as his hearing in the left ear. His



Figure 9. Anonymous Painter, *Damo under Tree*.

Collection of the National Palace Museum, Taiwan, Republic of China.

life was to drag on for several months longer. In the ninth lunar month of 1763, at the age of seventy-seven *sui*, he passed away, lonely and destitute in a small Buddhist monastery in Yangzhou, the Sanqiu An ('Shrine of the Three Autumns'). Left behind is a noble pictorial heritage, the scope and range of which are all the more astounding in view of Jin Nong's basic handicaps, that is, a belated start and the absence of formal training. One can only attribute this miracle to his talismanic mind, his latent talents and his sensitive touch. Under his handling, themes which to his contemporaries might simply be dismissed as commonplace or even frivolous had charm and novelty.

Indeed, so flamboyant and wilful was Jin Nong in painting that he could change without cease. Once he succeeded in tackling one subject he would proceed to another, charting a new course and direction, always seeking fresh ways to explore the hidden potentials. His works are never monumental in size or elaborate in composition. Rather, his is an art that was bonded intimately with his life experience and conveys a sense of immediacy or transiency.⁵⁵ During the eighteenth century, few can match his furious pace, the quickness and breadth of his imagination, let alone his penetrating and fiercely original vision. This original vision sets Jin Nong apart from his contemporaries as a crane among the chickens. When he referred to the works of the past, the tendency was to use them largely as a point of departure, or to extract essence and to gain or regain that primitivity which is the core of his brand of archaism. Both old and new, both traditional and individualistic, Jin Nong's art struck a meaningful balance, the very reason for its ready and immediate acceptance.

An Overview of Li Jian's Painting

Christina Chu

Li Jian (1747-99), whose ancestral home was Bajiao village in Shunde district, Guangdong province, was a descendant of scholars; both his grandfather and great-grandfather had been students at the National Academy. Li Jian's father, Li Zhenshan, however, took up rice trading as a profession. His business required him to take intermittent, but long, residences in Nanning, Guangxi, where Li Jian was born to his second wife, Madam Lei. The precocious child was reputed to be able to compose poetry and essays from ten *sui* onwards. As an adolescent, he immersed himself in the study of the classics and indulged in frequent travels to the fantastic caves of Guilin. The young Li Jian took with him paper and brushes to sketch landscape during those outings and during homeward journeys to the family's village in Guangdong.

Li Jian did not actively pursue an official career except for a belated attempt at the prefectural examination at 27 *sui*. On his return, he took up serious studies in classical learning from two masters, Huang Chao and Lu Songzhang. From this time onward, Li Jian confined his travels to Guangdong province, except perhaps for short trips across the province's northern border.¹

Although Li Jian acquired his fame early as an accomplished poet, his fame in painting eventually far outweighed that in poetry. It is not known from whom Li Jian learned to paint. There is also controversy concerning when he began to paint. An unidentified portrait painting (Figure 1) in The Art Gallery, Chinese University of Hong Kong, painted in the year 1789 when the artist was forty-three *sui*, bears the following inscription:

When I first started painting, I used to live in the villages. Big brother [name undecipherable] used to come over and watch me paint. Looking back, it has been thirty years and my painting has just matured. Now both our hair and our beards are white. Time goes by as the river flows; I contemplate its passage.²

分昭學而盡時恒居靜舍
 方兄弟時相過者擇言亦公
 過者三十年此道
 昭而相視者終終錄白戰月
 以爲是月也造治者之學通
 此同奉殿以示之君子知



Figure 1. Li Jian, *Figure*, dated 1789. Collection of The Art Gallery, Chinese University of Hong Kong.

This places the start of his painting career around twelve *sui*.

On the other hand, in 1794, when Li Jian was forty-eight *sui*, he wrote:

I have been painting for forty years. Before thirty *sui*, I was proud of my painting. After forty, I looked back and was ashamed. It was only in the last few years that I really grasped something close to the essence of nature and that which was in the spirit of Dong Yuan and Wu Zhen.³

If this is true, then he started painting as early as age eight. The differences in these recollections notwithstanding, the artist clearly had an early start.

That the youthful Li Jian was slow to gain a reputation in painting can be inferred from the writings of Weng Fanggang (1733 - 1818). Weng, who became Inspector of Education in Guangdong in 1764, knew neither him nor his poetic and painterly skills before he left the province in 1771.⁴ During these years, Li Jian was between age eighteen and twenty-five. Some twenty-five years later, after the two finally met in 1796-97, Weng reported that Li's mountain dwelling was thronged with admirers who had come to commission paintings.

The earliest surviving painting by Li Jian was recently discovered and published by Li Yuchun of the Guangdong Provincial Museum. An eight-leaf album entitled *Luofushan Youji* ('Travels at Mount Luofu'), dated 1768 when the artist was 22 *sui*,⁵ the work was signed Li Jin, a name he apparently began to use around that time or earlier. The album sheds new light on the early stage of Li Jian's development as a painter.

Prior to the discovery of the 1768 album, it was generally accepted that Li Jian's early style, as exemplified by works done in his thirties, showed a close resemblance to Ni Zan and Wang Meng, and that paintings showing strong Daoji (Shitao) influence were of later dates. The *Luofushan Youji*, however, reveals a close relationship to the works of such Guangdong artists as Zhao Tingbi and Lai Jing. Thus, in his formative years, Li Jian was under the influence of Guangdong painters who mainly continued the Wu school tradition. His paintings following Yuan styles were, then, of his middle period of development, though soon they were to take on Daoji's stylistic elements. The latter's influence was to prevail through the very end of his painting career and was instrumental in stimulating Li Jian's attempts to emulate various old masters.

The earliest sign of Daoji's influence came in 1781, when Li Jian was thirty-five *sui*. In that year, he painted a fan with an inscription declaring his indebtedness to Daoji.⁶ Although its resemblance to that master's style is remote, the painting signals the beginning of Daoji's impact, which intensified with time.

In the same year, however, he was also working in other manners, mingling the Dong-Ju tradition with the Wu school idiom. For example, *Cloudy Mountain*⁷ is done in the style of Dong Yuan and displays the characteristic hemp-fibre *cun* in delineating the folds of the mountains and the use of dots to suggest vegetation. The foreground rock, leading the eye movement through a gentle diagonal, condenses the middle ground tremendously. On the whole, it shows a rather stiff handling of the so-called Dong Yuan manner.⁸

Contemporaneous with the *Cloudy Mountain* is the painting *Travellers in the Spring Mountains*.⁹ The complex movements with overlapping landscape elements engender a rather smooth transition from the foreground through the middle ground into the far distance. In approach, it is reminiscent of the Wu school tradition, as seen in Shen Zhou's *Mount Lu* in the National Palace Museum, Taipei. Both display compressed space, characteristic of that school.

The next painting we encounter was done four years later. In *Solitary Boat on Misty Water* (Figure 2), we witness a loosening up of the brushwork. The Dong Yuan hemp fibre *cun* relaxes in a Wu school composition with a stark Daoji overtone.

The same kind of looseness can still be seen in the 1788 *Bamboo and Rock*.¹⁰ However, the following year saw an intensified effort to imitate Daoji. Five paintings are known to have been painted in that year, including a fan¹¹; three hanging scrolls: *Xiao Wufeng* ('The Little Black Peak'),¹² *Deep Autumn Colors*¹³ (Figure 3) and *Precarious Rock by a Babbling Stream* (Figure 4); and an album.¹⁴ Together, they illustrate his fervor in repeatedly copying Daoji, with the recurrent motif of a feathery tree for which Daoji was the source of inspiration. This effort continued until 1790 when he painted *The Great Black Peak*.¹⁵ Commenting on this preoccupation, Xie Lansheng observed in his *Changxingxing Zhai Shuhua Tiba* ('Collection of Inscriptions from the Changxingxing Studio'):

After his middle years, Qiaoweng (Li Jian) was extremely fond of Shitao (Daoji). He imitated Shitao meticulously and diligently to the point that every brush stroke looked like his.¹⁶



Figure 2. Li Jian, *Solitary Boat on Misty Water*, dated 1785.
Chongyizhai Collection, Hong Kong.



Figure 3. Li Jian, *Deep Autumn Colors*, dated 1789. Chongyizhai Collection, Hong Kong.

Figure 4. Li Jian, *Precarious Rock by a Babbling Stream*, dated 1789. Collection of the Hong Kong Museum of Art.



To shed additional light on this matter, we may consider Li Jian's repeated attempts to render a subject which Daoji had made famous, namely, the *Furong Wan* ('Hibiscus Cove'). *Furong* ('hibiscus') appears to have had strong personal associations for Li Jian. He came from Furong Village, his studio was called the Furongting ('Hibiscus Pavilion'), and his collection of lyrics was named *Furongting Yuefu* ('Lyrics of the Furong Pavilion'). *Afurong*, or opium, may also have figured in Li Jian's life. During his life, opium was imported in great quantity into China along the coast of Guangdong, with Guangzhou as a major point of entry. Thus, there has been speculation that Li Jian became an addict, particularly after forty-three *sui*, when he was so afflicted with breathing problems and frail health that he may have turned to opium for relief. This may be another reason for Li Jian's obsession with the *furong* image.

Despite these allusions, the first known instance of the theme among Li Jian's extant corpus occurs in the album of 1789 mentioned above. To the leaf *Hibiscus Cove*, Li Jian added a poetic inscription, which reads:

When the hibiscus flower blooms, the autumn colors are at their best.
 Their reflection flutters in the water and, shrouded in the mist, turns the
 color of purple jade.
 Who is listening to the chanting across the river?
 The song rises over the flowers to the immortal pavilion.

The Monk of Bitter Melon (Daoji) did a painting of *Hibiscus Cove*. It was the inspiration for doing this painting.

Although this is the earliest surviving example, we learn from literary sources that one year before, in 1788, at forty-two *sui*, Li Jian painted the same subject in not one but a whole series of paintings:

The Monk of Bitter Melon did a painting of *Hibiscus Cove*. I loved it dearly and made more than ten copies of it. On the seventeenth day of the eighth month in the year *wushen* (1788), I visited the monk Zhi in the Cidu Temple and I made one more copy.¹⁷

The theme of *Hibiscus Cove* recurred nine years later. In the 1797 album in the Guangzhou Art Gallery, Li Jian painted the second leaf in the spirit of Daoji under this same *Furong Wan* title. In his inscription, Li Jian contrasted Daoji's treatment with that of his own:

Shitao did a painting of *Hibiscus Cove*. The scenery depicted was that of Jiangnan in autumn. In Guangdong, we also have this flower in the summer time. Therefore, when I paint the *Hibiscus Cove*, it could be a summer scene. Early in 1794, I did a painting on this theme.

In the meantime, not only did Daoji serve Li Jian well as a source of pictorial motifs and themes, he stirred in the later artist a desire to investigate sources of greater antiquity. Li Jian came to see Daoji as the inheritor of the Dong-Ju style through the Four Masters of the Yuan period. This interpretation enabled him to take a great step forward by moving backwards in time, to study closely the styles of the Song and Yuan masters. Hence the wide-ranging styles of Li Jian, which include not only the close imitation of Daoji (Figure 5),¹⁸ probably done before 1794, but also an uncharacteristic effort to reconstruct Guo Xi's style through the Yuan masters, chiefly Ni Zan (Figure 6). Other related works from this period of Li's career include *Landscape* after Wang Meng of 1792,¹⁹ *Solitary Pavilion by An Old Tree* after Ni Zan of 1794,²⁰ *Silent Green Peaks and Cold Jade Spring* after Wu Zhen of the same year,²¹ *Landscape* after Ni Zan of 1795,²² and the *Heavenly Pond* after Huang Gongwang, dated 1796.²³

In this connection, Li's archaistic blue-and-green landscapes,²⁴ a perplexing and heretofore undatable series, may now be attributed to the 1790s. Representative of this group is the winter landscape *Journey to Shu* (Figure 7). Li Jian gave the style a regional flavor in *Red Kapok in Green Mountains*²⁵ with a grove of kapok trees in the foreground. Although distinctive of Guangdong, the red kapok leaves parallel the autumn scenery of northern China. A series of zigzags moves through the level distance of the middle ground, which is also characterized by a drastic tilting of the picture plane. Because of its rather systematic series of hemp fibre *cun*, the range of high rising mountains depicted there can be immediately associated with Huang Gongwang, harking back ultimately to Dong Yuan.

Li Jian's innovation, however, was to introduce the red kapok into the painting repertory. Xie Lansheng confirms this in *Changxingxing Zhai Shuhua Tiba*:

Among the painters of Guangdong, Erqiao Shanren (Li Jian) was the first one to introduce the red kapok into landscape painting. His distinctive technique uses vermillion dots exclusively without depicting individual leaves.²⁶

On a painting of this subject, Li Jian left the following commentary:

In recent years, when gentlemen from all over China have come to visit Guangdong and have requested my paintings, I have always resorted to this subject. A few dozen paintings like this have thus passed through the [Dayu] Mountains [to other parts of China].²⁷



Figure 5. Li Jian, *Landscape after Shitao*, 1794 or before.
Bei Shan Tang Collection, Hong Kong.



Figure 6. Li Jian, *Elegant Bamboo and Bare Trees*, dated 1794. Chongyizhai Collection, Hong Kong.

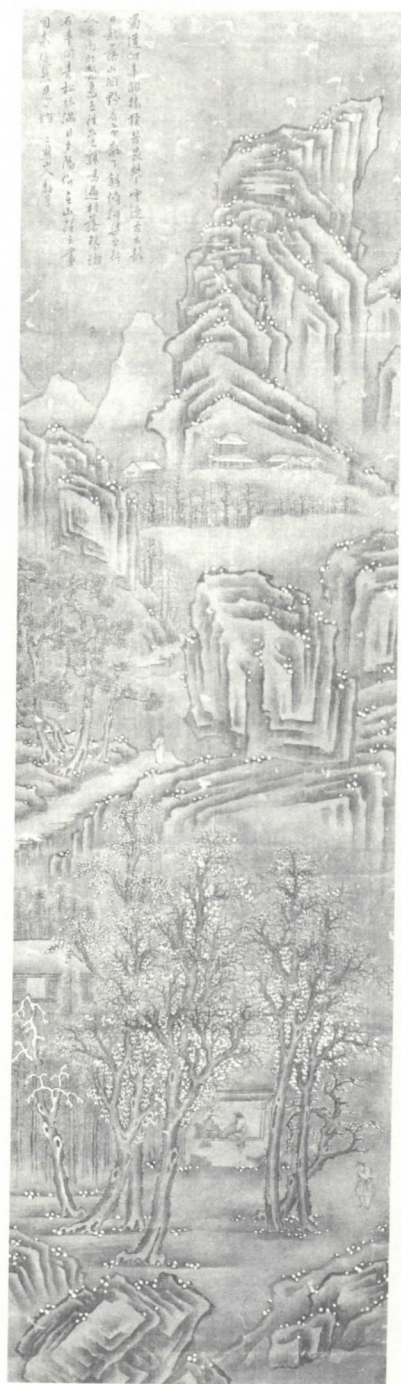


Figure 7. Li Jian, *Journey to Shu*.
Collection of P. T. Huo, Hong Kong.



Figure 8. Li Jian, *Landscape*, dated 1795.
Collection of The Art Gallery,
Chinese University of Hong Kong.

These paintings had a regional flavor which delighted those from outside of Guangdong, but it appears that such *gongbi*, blue-green works, appealed as well to the local connoisseurs and collectors. This is documented by the inscriptions on Li Jian's painting after Zhao Lingrang dated 1795, notable for the prevalence of rectangular rock forms as well as the red leaves (Figure 8),²⁸ features not seen in works earlier than 1794. The inscriptions by Huang Danshu (1757 - 1808),²⁹ Wu Rongguang (1773 - 1843)³⁰ and Xie Lansheng (1760 - 1831)³¹ acknowledge unanimously that this was considered one of the finest paintings by the master. Thus Huang Danshu wrote:

When Qiaoweng (Li Jian) painted casually, there is a kind of desolate and transcendent quality about his work. Judging from the brushwork of this painting, it seems to be quite deliberate. He used to say to me: 'In this painting, I tried to emulate Jing Hao, Guan Tong and the Four Yuan Masters.' Looking at it now, the brushwork and ink tones are harmonious. The spirit is quite lofty, truly grasping the untransmittable secrets of the ancients. There is not a trace of copying and imitation involved. Ye Menglong had many paintings by Qiaoweng. Regarding this painting, we should indeed cherish it!³²

This is followed by a short verse by Wu Rongguang:

His powerful brushwork is like that of Jing Hao and Guan Tong.
This painting does not disgrace such fine paper...³³

Wu appended the comment that: 'There are many paintings by Erqiao, but this must be the finest.' Xie Lansheng, too, wrote a poem to celebrate this work, and its owner, Ye Menglong, treasured it greatly. This archaistic, refined and elegant style by Li Jian clearly was much admired.³⁴ Corollary to this development, Li Jian increasingly tended to paint on silk, a support more appropriate to the rich blue-and-green landscape style.

How did Li Jian obtain concrete sources for his archaistic revival, and why did it occur in the 1790s? The answer lies in the fact that it was around this time that Li Jian's fame in painting was soaring. His paintings and his company were equally sought after by the Guangzhou socialites, including bureaucrats, salt merchants and *hong* merchants who had acquired their wealth through the prosperous overseas trade in that city. Many pre-Song, Song and Yuan paintings, some with dubious authenticity, were bought in Shanghai or Beijing by Guangdong collectors during their commercial or political travels to the north.³⁵ Surviving catalogs of the famous collections of Fengman

Lou of Ye Menglong (1779 - 1843) and Tingfan Lou of Pan Zhengwei (1791 - 1850) record a number of paintings bearing Li Jian's inscriptions. Both collectors were many years Li Jian's junior. Ye Menglong was twenty years old and Pan Zhengwei was only eight when Li Jian died. Paintings in their collections bearing Li Jian's inscriptions may have been acquired through family inheritance. Ye Menglong's father, Ye Tingxian, was a wealthy salt merchant and a close friend of Li Jian. Almost all of the paintings by Li Jian recorded in the Fengman Lou catalog were painted for Ye Tingxian personally. Among paintings recorded in Pan Zhengwei's catalog is a blue-and-green landscape attributed to Li Zhaodao and inscribed by Li Jian.³⁶ Such works no doubt provided sources for Li's archaistic works.

In the latter part of Li Jian's evolution, he pursued two paths. On the one hand, to please those patrons whose taste leaned toward the traditional and the colorful, he painted meticulous blue-and-green landscapes.³⁷ In particular, the frequent appearance of red kapok trees, a motif reminiscent of Lingnan, reflected his concession to his rich patrons, who would carry the souvenir paintings back to their respective native provinces. On the other, he pleased himself and his intimate friends with an approach derived from Daoji's literati flavor. These two styles are not, however, mutually exclusive. The sound technique he learned by studying Tang and Song masters gave him a good basis for exploring his own spiritual landscape.

In Li Jian's last years, the artist painted a number of significant works. Among them is the landscape painting which may be considered the best of Li Jian in existence. This painting, dated 1794, is in the collection of the Hong Kong Museum of Art and was lent to the exhibition, *The Elegant Brush: Chinese Painting Under the Qianlong Emperor, 1735 - 1795*.³⁸ Its compositional elements ease back into space in a comfortable, uncongested recession. This painting is truly a synthesis of all of the elements of its precursors: background mountains in the Dong-Ju tradition, foreground trees testifying to the Daoji repertory.

A landscape painted on silk, mentioned previously, indicates a Wu Zhen influence (Figure 9). This was done in the same year he painted the *Heavenly Pond* after Huang Gongwang, that is, 1796. Two years later, another painting shows a lingering presence of the familiar rectangular rock form (Figure 10), as does one of his last paintings, done in 1799, the year of his death (Figure 11). The spatial arrangement is tortuous but bears all the traces of Li Jian's characteristic style.



Figure 9. Li Jian, *Landscape*,
dated 1796. Chongyizhai Collection,
Hong Kong.



Figure 10. Li Jian, *Landscape*, dated 1798.
Chongyizhai Collection, Hong Kong.

Figure 11. Li Jian, *Landscape*, dated 1799,
Chongyizhai Collection, Hong Kong.



度崇遠春山光排亭平抱江賴
不知身入画中但覺且極塵外
正秋七月二日
堂世物

The last painting here discussed suggests indebtedness to Ni Zan (Figure 12). Even the style of calligraphy is written in the vein of the Yuan master. It is a somber painting, in which Li Jian made one more effort to explore the Yuan masters.³⁹ Unfortunately, he died that year. Were it not for this untimeliness, his early fifties would have been a good starting point to soar to even greater heights, as did many painters who enjoyed better health and greater longevity.

Li Jian was himself fully cognizant of his own approach and direction in painting. The initial change in his style, away from the Wu school, may be attributed to a growing distaste for that style. Thus, in an inscription on a 1787 album recorded in *Tingfan Lou Shuhua Ji*, the artist praised Kuncan for having escaped contamination from the Suzhou heritage:

Shiqi (Kuncan) painted after the style and method of Huang Gongwang. His use of the brush is very elaborate and particular. Among the Ming painters, this bald headed old man was the only one not contaminated by the Shen Zhou and Wen Zhengming school. I painted this painting with Shiqi (Kuncan) in my mind but the result still looks like Huang Gongwang.⁴⁰

He came to admire the Yuan masters, Huang Gongwang and others, particularly Ni Zan, whom he favoured over Wang Meng and Fang Congyi. In his choice of prototypes, he appears to have subscribed, in a general way, to the theory of the Northern and Southern schools. Li Jian regarded the Southern school as composed of Jing Hao, Guan Tong, Li Cheng, Dong Yuan, Juran, and the Four Yuan Masters. Being a man of the eighteenth century, however, he sought to add Daoji and Kuncan to this rank. On the other hand, he did not sweep aside the Northern masters as if they were unworthy of attention. Zhao Boju, for example, won his praise:

People who exerted themselves in painting but were not contaminated by the craftiness of the Song academy were few. If the painted scenery is not too elaborate, it can fire people's imagination. If the use of ink is sparse and vivid, then it attains the spirituality of the literati. Since the appearance of Zhao Qianli (Zhao Boju), only Qiu Shizhou (Qiu Ying) came close to being a painter of the Northern school who did not practice craftiness. He lacked the cultivation of a learned gentleman well versed in the ancient texts. This painting of mine may look exaggerated but it may be close to real landscape.⁴¹

There is one major lacuna in Li Jian's overview of historical sources in painting. Although he extolled the seventeenth-century individualists, he never once mentioned the six masters of early Qing in his



Figure 12. Li Jian, *Landscape in the Style of Ni Zan*, dated 1799.
Chongyizhai Collection, Hong Kong.

writings, namely Wang Shimin, Wang Jian, Wang Hui, Wang Yuanqi, Yun Shouping and Wu Li, nor, for that matter, did his painting echo theirs. The pervasive dominance of the Orthodox school in the Qianlong period could not have been overlooked. Possibly Li Jian resented this school as a continuation of the Ming tradition of literati painting taking up the line of the Dong Qichang heritage. Having rejected the Wu school, he could also do the same to these orthodox masters, by association.

From another angle, Li Jian's rejection of the orthodox masters and his preference for the monk painters, Daoji and Kuncan, may have had an historical root. The people of Guangdong put forth a very stiff resistance against the Manchu towards the end of the Ming dynasty. Two of the last Ming emperors, Zhaowu (Zhu Luyue) and Yongli (Zhu Yulong), were respectively enthroned in Guangzhou in 1646 and Zhaoxing 1657. When the Manchu took Guangdong, the massacre that ensued was no less severe in scale than those at Yangzhou and Jiading. Immortalized were the 'Lingnan Sanzhong' ('Three Patriots of Lingnan'), who were martyred in this province during the Manchu invasion. They were Chen Zizhuang (1596 - 1647), Chen Bangyan (1603-47) and Zhang Jiayu (1615-47), all of whom had served the Ming court. Other local anti-Manchu leaders included Yu Long and Wang Xing. The latter did not cease to resist the Manchu until 1659, when he and his family committed suicide by fire.

During Li Jian's life time, reaction to the Manchu holocaust was still alive. The *yimin* mentality was also strong. In fact, some scholars trace this *yimin* heritage back to the Southern Song, a source for the continuing anti-foreign sentiment in Guangdong that has never dissipated. That may explain the large proportion of monk painters mentioned in the *Lingnan Hua Zhenglue* ('Painters and Paintings in Lingnan'). Some even attribute to this inspiration the 1911 revolution, which was staged in Guangdong. This political attitude may account for Li Jian's rejection of the Four Wangs, whom he may have associated with the Qing court. His refusal to meet with the great poet, Yuan Mei, may further reflect his anti-establishment and headstrong nature. The frustration he encountered in the official examinations no doubt led to further bitterness.

In choosing to live as a recluse, Li Jian nonetheless had to make a living by selling his painting. This practical need put him in close association with rich patrons. By the Qianlong reign, Guangzhou had already developed into a prosperous seaport and Li Jian's patrons all accumu-

lated their wealth from overseas trading. The affluence of Guangzhou encouraged patronage of the arts, and landscape painting flourished as never before. Indeed, before Li Jian's time, there were only a few important landscape painters, Gao Yan (ca 1630-91) and Huang Bi (ca 1730). The best known Ming dynasty Guangdong painters are Lin Liang (ca 1416-80), a bird-and-flower specialist of the Zhe school, and Zhang Mu (1607 - after 1686), a horse painter in the Yuan tradition. Both of these artists followed the mainstream of the Jiangnan tradition of painting, and acquired their fame in part by taking official posts in the North. Other Guangdong painters active before the Qianlong era were literati who dabbled in bird-and-flower in the *xièyì* techniques that were but an extension of calligraphy.

It was Li Jian who founded the landscape tradition in Guangdong. It later prospered, consolidated by Xie Lansheng and Xie Guansheng, who, as sons of a close friend of Li Jian, were greatly influenced by him. From this point on landscape painting in Guangdong followed its own course. Although Guangdong painters drew inspiration from the Jiangnan tradition from time to time, their landscapes nonetheless established a distinctive flavor of their own.

Eighteenth-century Foundations in Modern Chinese Painting

Chu-tsing Li

One of the leading painters of the Yangzhou school in the middle of the eighteenth century, Zheng Xie, once attached a note above the entrance to his studio. The note, written in 1759, reads in part:

Large size, 6 taels of silver; medium size, 4 taels; small size, 2 taels; fan or album size, half tael. Gifts and food are not so acceptable as white silver, since what you send me may not be what I like to have. If you send me silver, it will please my mind, which will guarantee the excellence of both painting and calligraphy. Gifts are quite troublesome and accounts are hard to collect. I am sorry to say that being so old and tired I shall not be able to entertain you gentlemen with useless conversations.¹

Reading this, one finds a mercenary spirit, a certain pretentiousness, a sense of humor, some elements of sarcasm, some forms of satire, and also a proud, uncompromising spirit. All these, except the last, reflect an anti-literati spirit. Yet, Zheng Xie was regarded as one of the leading literati painters of that period. The style of his paintings of bamboo shows a freedom of the brush, a mixture of painting and calligraphy, and a concentration on ink that are all typical characteristics of literati painting.² His new type of literati approach in the eighteenth century anticipated the modern spirit in Chinese painting.

The eighteenth century, especially the sixty year reign of Emperor Qianlong (1736-95), in many ways laid the foundation for modern art in China. It was a period when the Qing dynasty was at its apogee, with control over an empire much larger than all the territories covered by the present map of China. Besides Manchuria, which was the homeland of the Manchus, the emperor was in control of Inner and Outer Mongolia, Xinjiang, Tibet, Yunnan, and a portion of Southeast Asia. With the accomplishments of the three emperors, especially Kangxi, before him, Qianlong ruled over a large empire that enjoyed a peace

and prosperity not seen during the several centuries before. So enjoyable was the life in China that the population tripled during the reign of Qianlong. At the same time, the emperor also enjoyed himself immensely on the throne.

This sense of well-being was very much reflected in the art connected with the court. Qianlong himself, who had come to the throne at the age of twenty-four, was a painter, calligrapher and poet with a tremendous appetite for the arts, especially painting. As a painter, he thought of himself as a literatus in the mainstream of that great tradition, especially as it was represented by the work of the Four Wang school, or the orthodox school, of early Qing.³ Since both Wang Hui and Wang Yuanqi, the two major figures of that school, had served under his grandfather, Kangxi, many of their followers enjoyed the benefits of the special favors they had received in the court.⁴

The fact that so many members of these two Wang families devoted their lives to art resulted in a curious reversal of the respective positions of the two major trends in Chinese painting. The tradition of literati painting – in particular the Ming tradition as reflected in the work of Shen Zhou and Wen Zhengming, which had been known for its eremitic spirit, and had stood apart from and opposed to the works of the court professionals – now became the art of the court and officialdom. In other words, literati painting, within the tradition of the Four Wang school, became academic and professional. Imperial sponsorship resulted in a school of painting that was overly imitative, repetitive and conservative, a school that was more interested in preserving its cultural hegemony at the court than in creative efforts. Thus, although the painters of this orthodox school dominated the court and the Jiangnan area, the so-called literati painting was definitely in a state of decline. This can be seen in the works of the so-called 'Four Little Wangs,' such as Wang Chen and Wang Jiu.⁵

The good life of the period can also be seen in another type of painting connected with the court, namely figure paintings by court artists recording the activities of the emperor and his retinue. These were paintings done in the tradition made important by the Ming artist Qiu Ying, who, though never a court painter himself, developed a style of painting that laid great stress on representation, attractive colors, meticulous details and beautiful figures. Some painters of Qianlong's court, like Xu Yang, recorded many of the emperor's activities, such as the emperor's famous visits to the Jiangnan region with elaborate details of various cities, towns, the countryside along the Grand Canal,

and all the ceremonies connected with the trip.⁶ These paintings give us an extremely vivid picture of the life of the common people in the most prosperous part of China.

The magnificence of this period can also be seen in another type of painting closely related to the last in function, though quite different in style. These were paintings in the Westernized style introduced by the Italian painter, Giuseppe Castiglione, who was sent by the Pope to the Chinese court.⁷ Because of his skill as a painter in the Italian style he was made a court artist, and served the same function as that of Xu Yang, although he worked with a greater sense of modelling based in his European training. Castiglione and several other European artists were assigned the tasks of painting portraits, rendering special activities of the emperor, his family and other court figures, as well as depicting birds, animals and other unusual objects brought to the emperor as tributes.⁸ The rich details of the figures and objects, the solidity of treatment, the gorgeous colors and the heightened sense of space were all delightful to the emperor and his courtiers. Indeed, the style of this group of European artists exerted a noticeable influence on the figure paintings of later court artists.

These three types of painting reflect the glories of the court of Qianlong. The last two types served the same function as official photography in the modern period, while in some ways reviving the functions of the court art of the Tang dynasty. The first type, literati painting of the orthodox school, demonstrated the emperor's appreciation of the great cultural tradition of China and his interest in becoming a part of that mainstream. However, by identifying himself with that tradition, and by his sponsorship of literati painting and artists, Qianlong inadvertently impaired its development as the most exciting tradition in Chinese art. It became stultified and lost its creative force.

All three types of court-related paintings served mainly the interest of the court and lost touch with the common people. Although court painting did have some influence on the art of the nineteenth century, it was not the major foundation for the development of modern Chinese painting. Of much greater consequence to the later development of Chinese painting was the emperor's avid taste for traditional painting and calligraphy. Because of his insatiable interest, thousands of paintings by great masters of the past, which had been in the hands of many well-known private collectors, gradually found their way into the palace. Many of the officials in Beijing and the provinces, knowing the emperor's desire, made special efforts to search for old paintings

and to present them to the emperor as a way to gain imperial favors, such as appointments and promotions. The imperial collection, as recorded in the two monumental catalogs, the *Shiqu Baoji* and the *Bidian Zhulin*, was the largest ever assembled in the history of China, containing works by famous masters from the Six Dynasties period all the way to the emperor's own time.⁹

This great collection had a tremendous effect on the development of modern Chinese painting, both negative and positive. On the negative side, the formation of this collection at court deprived many people, including artists, of contact with these masterpieces of the Chinese tradition. By the end of Qianlong's reign, most of the major surviving works by great masters of various periods had gone into the Emperor's collection. Whereas this was certainly good for the emperor and some of the courtiers close to him, it meant that all these masterpieces had disappeared from the world. In the days before photography and colotype printing, the result was that painters in China were quite ignorant of the great works of the past. Without access to the imperial collection, the only knowledge they had of the works of old masters was through copies and imitations made by some of the painters of their own period or shortly before. Although there were still major works in private hands, this lack of exposure made it difficult for many painters to receive direct inspiration from the masters, thus lowering the standards of traditional Chinese painting.

On the positive side, because of the loss of direct contact with the great works of Song and Yuan, many painters turned elsewhere for their inspiration. Paintings of the so-called 'Four Gentlemen' (plum blossom, orchid, chrysanthemum and bamboo) and 'Three Friends of Winter' (pine, bamboo and plum blossom), which had been somewhat neglected during the Ming and early Qing periods, became extremely popular during the Qianlong period. Whereas a few artists looked to some of the Ming and Qing painters, such as Chen Shun, Xu Wei, Daoji and others, as their models, none of them was so overburdened by the weight of great masters as to be essentially imitative, but were quite free to explore their own ways of expression. As a result, the creative energy of this period was not found in those works patronized by the emperor and his court but in the ones that were created at a distance from the court, such as those by Zheng Xie mentioned at the beginning of this paper.

Zheng Xie and a number of other artists were patronized by the newly risen merchants of Yangzhou, the most prosperous city in China during the eighteenth century. During this period, there was a great

change in the social structure, making the merchants and the cities extremely important. The rise of Yangzhou as the economic center of China during this period has been the subject of much study.¹⁰ In the long history of China, merchants traditionally ranked at the bottom of the four major professional groups, namely scholar, farmer, artisan and merchant. Although there were famous merchants in the past, they were at the mercy of scholar-officials. To protect their wealth, merchants would send their sons to be educated in order to pass the imperial examinations and become officials. Their social status had always been quite low, but because of their new wealth, they also became quite powerful in Chinese society. To show that they were people of status, they developed a taste for art and literature. Indeed, they became the new patrons of the arts.

During the eighteenth century, the richest merchants in China lived in the city of Yangzhou. Located on the northern bank of the Yangtze river, Yangzhou first became important during the period of the Six Dynasties. But its real importance began with the Sui dynasty, when the Grand Canal was first constructed, linking the rice-producing Jiangnan area with the capital Luoyang. In fact, Yangzhou at that time was more or less the southern capital of the empire. From that time on, since the Grand Canal became the link between the north and south, Yangzhou, located right at the crossing of the Yangtze and the canal, remained always an important city. However, it was during the Qing, with the new salt laws, that Yangzhou came to control trade in China. As a result, some of the merchants became fabulously rich, billionaires by today's standards. Yangzhou thus replaced Suzhou as the richest city of China. With new wealth came the heightened interest in culture. Scholars, poets, painters and others were attracted to the city, and great art collections and libraries were formed. Literary gatherings became one of the fashionable activities of Yangzhou.¹¹

Yangzhou was also the forerunner of Shanghai, which became the new cultural center during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. During the middle of the nineteenth century, with the opening of the seaports to foreign trade after the Opium War of 1840-42, the north-south traffic, due partly to the deterioration of the Grand Canal and partly to the introduction of the steamboat, was shifted to the coastal route. Shanghai thus emerged as the new seaport for both domestic and foreign trade, gradually reducing the importance of Yangzhou. With its new wealth Shanghai began to attract artists and scholars and major art collections. In the city of Shanghai, the merchants enjoyed a new importance unmatched even in Yangzhou. This new importance

came with the development of the foreign concessions, or settlements, in Shanghai and other cities as a result of the Opium War. Under the terms of the treaty, China opened up five seaports for foreign trade, with areas in them especially designated for residence by foreigners who enjoyed extraterritorial rights, immune from the control of the Chinese authorities. At first, these settlements were mainly for foreigners, and their populations were quite small. However, during the 1850s, with the Taiping Rebellion causing great upheavals in the southern part of China, wealthy Chinese from the Jiangnan region flocked to these settlements by the thousands for safety. As a result, Shanghai, which had a rather small population during the period of the Opium War, suddenly grew to a city of half a million. Once its position as a haven from all the Chinese turmoil was known, the city grew at a fast pace. Under the protection of foreign governments, the Shanghai merchants were able to avoid all the vicissitudes of Chinese political, military and social changes and to prosper in their businesses. Thus they became independent, free from the control of the court in Beijing and the regional officials. Since in these foreign settlements the merchants from abroad were the most influential people, Chinese merchants living in these areas also enjoyed a great sense of importance and prestige, which they had never had before in Chinese history. With their wealth and position, they became great patrons of the arts.¹²

With these social changes came a new sociology of art. In Shanghai, which was primarily a commercial city, many artists simply came to seek their fortunes without any pretense of being high-minded literati of the past. Whereas literati painters traditionally looked at the arts as a pastime or amateurish activity, the new painters had no qualms about working for money and they regarded painting as a full-time job. Some of them, such as Ren Bonian, went so far as to try to sell his paintings in the streets.¹³ This was never done before in China, but in the business dominated society of Shanghai, it became a common practice. With this change also came new developments in subject matter, style and ideas in painting. All of these changes can be traced back to eighteenth century Yangzhou.

Let us take a look at some of the major aspects of painting during the eighteenth century and see how they affected the art of modern China. We have mentioned above the three major types of paintings related to the court in Beijing. Although those types were continued into the nineteenth century they were definitely not the most influential. The only one of any consequence was the Orthodox school, which,

because of the favoritism of the court, continued to attract generations of painters in the Jiangnan area. Perhaps the best of these painters was Dai Xi (1801-60), a high official and a loyal subject to the Qing government. However, even in his case, he did not try to follow Wang Hui very closely, but wanted to develop in his own way, less grandiose in his compositions, simpler in his brushwork, fresher in his insight into landscape.¹⁴

The most important group in the eighteenth century to influence modern Chinese painting was undoubtedly the Yangzhou painters. Although the leading artists there were known as 'The Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou,' their number was not limited to eight and they were not necessarily eccentric. They included such painters as Wang Shishen, Jin Nong, Zheng Xie, Li Shan, Li Fangying, Huang Shen, Gao Xiang, Luo Ping, Gao Fenghan, Hua Yan, Min Zhen, and a number of others. Some of them were native to the Yangzhou area, but most of them were attracted to the city because of its reputation for wealth and patronage. As a group, they showed certain characteristics that led to the formation of modern Chinese artistic practices.¹⁵

Most of the painters in Yangzhou were full-time painters. Some of them, having passed the governmental examinations, served as officials in some parts of China or even at the court in Beijing. But when they came to Yangzhou they had already become frustrated with public life. In Yangzhou they were seeking two things. One was patrons, who were usually quite wealthy people interested in having poets and painters stay in their houses or villas, as an indication of their good taste and high prestige. This was quite a common practice in Yangzhou. The other was money. Either they worked like Zheng Xie and simply set standard prices for their paintings, or they painted for patrons who sent them gifts as compensations. These practices became quite common during the nineteenth century, especially in Shanghai. Many painters, especially the so-called 'Four Rens,' belong to this category. Thus the tradition of literati painters as amateurs was changed. Many of them openly sought patrons and money.

Another major attribute of the Yangzhou painters was specialization in subject matter. In order to establish a reputation for themselves and to sell their works, it seemed necessary to be identified with a special subject. Thus Wang Shishen first and Jin Nong later were known for their plum blossoms.¹⁶ Zheng Xie was most famous for his bamboos and orchids.¹⁷ Li Shan and Li Fangyin were specialists in flowers and plants and pine trees.¹⁸ Huang Shen was mainly a figure painter.¹⁹ Luo Ping

caused a sensation when he painted ghosts.²⁰ Hua Yan though versatile was well known for his birds and flowers in colors²¹ as well as in historical subjects and personages. Gao Fenghan, after his right arm was handicapped in the middle of his life, became known for his left-handed paintings.²² This specialization, characteristic of Yangzhou painters, became a part of the modern tradition. Some painters, such as Ren Bonian and other Rens, specialized in figure paintings, while others, such as Zhao Zhiqian and Wu Changshuo, painted mainly flowers and plants. In modern periods, Qi Baishi's shrimps and crabs, Xu Beihong's horses, water buffaloes and cats, Wu Zuoren's camels and pandas, Huang Zhou's mules, Ye Qianyu's minority dancers, and Cheng Shifa's young girls of Shishuangbana in Yunnan are all very typical, not to mention those landscape painters with specializations of Huangshan (Dong Shouping, Liu Haisu, Song Wenzhi and many others), Guilin (Bai Xueshi, Li Keran and others), the Three Gorges (many painters) and other famous sites. Although some of the modern painters, especially those active after 1949, did not specialize for mercenary purposes, the practice came from the Yangzhou painters.

There was a sharp departure among Yangzhou painters from the high and noble subjects of the literati. While many Yangzhou artists did paint the traditional subjects of the literati, such as the 'Four Gentlemen' and 'Three Friends of Winter,' others explored areas seldom touched upon before. These new subjects included common people in their everyday surroundings by Huang Shen, the ghosts of Luo Ping, the informal portraits of Luo Ping and Hua Yan, and the depiction of familiar places by Huang Shen and far-away regions by Hua Yan. The treatment of these subjects was also quite different from that of early periods. There is greater informality, such as *Master Dongxin Taking a Nap under the Shade of Banana Plants*, Shanghai Museum,²³ a sense of humor in many portraits,²⁴ some elements of self-pity in many poems by artists on the paintings, an extremely personal way of treating their objects like Zheng Xie's blending of poems with his bamboos²⁵ and many others. All these are parts of the modern spirit in Chinese painting. In the works of Ren Bonian, Qi Baishi and other modern painters, we find something quite similar in expression.

There was also a change in the attitudes of the artists towards society. In the past, literati painters often expressed concern for cultural values or philosophical thoughts, attempting to identify their personal situations with cultural crises and social changes. However, most of the painters in Yangzhou seemed to be far less concerned with broad, general issues than with their own personal feelings and tragedies.

Many of the poems written on their paintings express a deep sense of self-pity, lamenting some of the adversities in their lives. In some ways it was a social protest through their own personal lives. This kind of personalization became quite usual in the modern period.

All the characteristics mentioned above can be said to be the result of a business-dominated society, first found in Yangzhou and later in Shanghai. These changes in the artists' position in society, in their relationships to their patrons, in their money-making practices, in their specialization of subject matter, in the depiction of the more mundane aspects of everyday life, and in their interest in humor, satire and even social protest, are all part of the modern urban life. Added to these are paintings of beautiful ladies in their daily activities, such as those of Fei Danxu and Wang Su, and of historical and legendary figures in their typical episodes, such as those of Ren Bonian and Qian Hui'an. These were works produced to attract the interest of the new middle class in these cities.

Other eighteenth-century developments which affected modern painting were the emergence of calligraphy in the northern stele style and seal-carving as art forms. During the eighteenth century, as seen in the calligraphy of Jin Nong, who collected a large number of rubbings of stelae, there was a change in calligraphy, namely, the turning away from the tradition of Dong Qichang whose roots were in the works of Wang Xizhi, Yan Zhenqing, the Four Great Masters of Northern Song (Huang Tingjian, Su Shi, Mi Fei and Cai Xiang), and Zhao Mengfu, to the more formal and monumental approach of the northern stelae. The impact of the stone rubbings turned the taste for calligraphy from the free, elegant and vigorous style of the first half of the Qing dynasty to the formal, dignified and monumental style of the second half.

In their development, many calligraphers also became painters. Besides Jin Nong, there were Xi Gang, Huang Yi and others who were well-known as calligraphers as well as painters. The best known examples from the modern period are Wu Xizai, Zhao Zhiqian and Wu Changshuo, all known for their calligraphy in seal and clerical scripts, and in the twentieth century, Wang Zhen, Chen Hengke and Qi Baishi. This interest in calligraphy and seal-carving can also be seen as the result of some of the literati artists turning away from the court taste, which still favored the tradition of Dong Qichang. They felt a freshness in the rubbings and a new sense of antiquarianism that distinguished them from the stuffy practice of the court.

Also apart from the court taste was the interest in some local traditions of figure painting. Huang Shen and Hua Yan, both from Fujian, brought some figure paintings of folk traditions from the south. Figures from everyday life, anecdotal narratives and others were quite common among their works. They anticipated the emergence of the Four Rens. All native of Xiaoshan, close to the home of the late Ming painter Chen Hongshou, the Rens took up Chen's style but expanded his range to include all kinds of figure subjects, such as historical figures, legendary personages, literary episodes and many others. Among them Ren Bonian was the outstanding painter of this new genre.

Another aspect of painting in the nineteenth century was Western influence. The several Jesuit painters from Europe in the court of Emperor Qianlong had laid the foundation stone of this direction. Although they did not have many followers outside of the court, the impact from the West continued. However, the opening of the seaports to foreign trade exposed many more painters to Western influence. Late in the nineteenth century, there was a new interest in the West, undoubtedly spurred by Japan's turn in that direction following the Meiji Restoration. Wu Qingyun, a Shanghai painter, explored some of the effects of Western watercolors with his extensive use of washes. Gao Jianfu of Canton was deeply influenced by the 'New Japanese Painting,' which blended traditional Japanese elements with European ideas. All these developments had their antecedents during the Qianlong period.

The departure from the court influence of Beijing found its best expression in the art of Canton. Since the sixteenth century, Canton had been the most Westernized city in China after the Ming government designated Macao, less than one hundred miles to its south, as the only place in which Western traders were allowed to stay. Trading with the West made Canton a prosperous city and by the eighteenth century Canton was the center of south China culture. With prosperity, a large number of young people in Canton received good educations, passed governmental examinations, and served as officials in both Beijing and the provinces. As a result some wealthy merchants began to build up collections of painting and calligraphy. From late Ming on, there were some notable painters active in Canton. By the eighteenth century, some of them, such as Li Jian, began to gain a national reputation.²⁶ Because of its distance from Beijing, painters in Canton were the least affected by the prevailing styles of the court. Even the style of the Orthodox school, which dominated not only Beijing but also the whole Jiangnan region, did not seem to have much

influence in Canton. Indeed, to the end of the eighteenth century painters in Canton were still working in the Ming tradition. The influence of Shen Zhou and Wen Zhengming persisted into the Qianlong period; the art of late Ming and early Qing masters still loyal to Ming (*yimin* painters) was quite extensive. This was partly due to the political impact of the fall of Ming in 1644. Even after the Manchu army had taken Nanjing in 1645, remnants of military forces loyal to Ming still resisted here and there in south China, with many intellectuals joining them during this time. However, following a number of military defeats they gradually retreated to the south, eventually reaching the Canton area. Some of them became monks in temples while others took up permanent residence there. Since some of them were painters, they still retained the late Ming style. A number of the *yimin* painters, whose influence came to an end during the eighteenth century due to literary persecutions, seemed to have more impact in the Canton area than in all other regions of China. For example, the influence of Daoji was particularly strong in Canton, as reflected in the works of the foremost Cantonese painter of the eighteenth century, Li Jian.²⁷ Although it is not easy to trace the history of the collecting of works by Daoji in the Qing period, it is known that there were quite a number of his paintings in Cantonese collections. Certainly his works in this area must have found quite a number of followers, such as Xie Lansheng in the early nineteenth century.

Some Cantonese painters developed bold departures from the literati tradition. Some of the most original painters, such as Su Liupeng, Su Renshan and Li Kui, all of them active in the nineteenth century, were able to form styles entirely their own. Of these, the most important was Su Renshan, who, in his rather short life, left a body of works that has no parallels in the history of Chinese painting. Learning some of his ideas from the *Mustard Seed Garden Manual* and other model books, he was mainly self-taught. With no restriction from teachers, he was able to release his imagination and create some startlingly fresh works. Similarly Su Liupeng and Li Kui, to a somewhat limited degree, had their own individual achievements.

From what has been mentioned above, it is clear that during the eighteenth century, the changing social, cultural and artistic climate in Yangzhou laid the foundations for the development of modern Chinese painting. Although changes during the nineteenth century came about slowly, the pace quickened during the twentieth century. Indeed, during the last thirty years we have seen many of the most radical changes in Chinese painting.

Rubric and Art History

The Case of the Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou

Ju-hsi Chou

In the history of Chinese painting, numerical rubrics occur with a degree of frequency. The Four Yuan masters, the Four Wangs, the Eight Friends of Nanjing, Nine Painter-Friends and the Two Stones are examples that easily come to mind. In some of these instances, the intent appears simply to provide an easy handle. Some stem from friendship among those so grouped. Often it contains a hint of the achievement level of the artists involved, such as the Four Yuan masters, or those within a notable and noble heritage, for example, the Four Wangs. Sometimes, a rubric such as the Two Stones evokes a common bond, stemming from perception of priestly identity and rebelliousness.¹

On the whole, these numerical rubrics, while useful in highlighting groups of artists, should be treated with a degree of caution. It would not be prudent to impart to them any more group identity or solidarity than intended. The Nine Painter-Friends never assume much historical significance, perhaps because the friendships involved were not so much among the painters themselves but between the creator of the rubric and the painters.² The Four Wangs are united by their surname, and by their common approach and heritage. They are however separated in time, in generation (three), and in style - the gap being particularly noticeable in a dynastic and thus conceptual vein. The Two Stones came to be when the pairing of Daoji (Shitao) and Kuncan (Shixi) was thought to be sensible, but was actually based on *perceived*, not real, affinities. Ostensibly, both appeared to be *yimin*, Chan priests, and rebels. Today we are ever more aware of the fact that while Kuncan's *yimin* identity is assured, Daoji's life betrays ambiguities that defy simple dynastic allegiance. Whereas Kuncan's association with Chan is beyond question, Daoji's ended with an open apostasy. In another way, while Daoji's art is still revered for its 'rebelliousness,' Kuncan's passionate devotion to Dong Qichang may cast himself right

in the midst of the mainstream. Only the rough texture of his works affords a surface contrast with the orthodox paintings, such as those of the Four Wangs. The rubric survives, but it is clear that, once fashionable, it is no longer current in art historical circles.

The Eccentrics of Yangzhou

Let us come to the central issue: the utility of the rubric, Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou. First, it is important to note that, like most if not all of these numerical clusters, the rubric emerged after the fact. To date, no evidence of its earlier usage comes to light prior to the Guangxu period.³ It was Wang Yun (1816 - ?) who, in his *Yangzhou Huayuan Lu* (preface date: 1883), first presented to us this concept; however he tantalized the reader by naming only two masters, Li Shan (1686 - 1762) and the little known Li Mian (active 1840-60).⁴ Others soon followed suit.⁵ Li Yufen proposed, under the entry Luo Ping (1733 - 1799) in his *Ouboluoshi Shuhua Guomu Kao* (1897), a full list.⁶ They are: Li Fangying (1695 - 1755), Li Shan, Jin Nong (1687 - 1764), Huang Shen (1687 - 1772), Zheng Xie (1693 - 1765), Gao Xiang (1688 - 1753), Wang Shishen (1686 - 1759), plus Luo Ping himself. Other listings are also suggested, with overlaps and occasional unique choices. The word *guai*, meaning 'eccentric,' 'unusual,' 'unique,' 'extraordinary' and 'strange,' is thought to allude to both the life patterns and artistic practices of these artists.⁷

The time gap of roughly a century makes the rubric of Eight Eccentrics a 'distant' perception. By then, none of the eccentrics were living. They were history. Their lives had either become legends or cautionary tales. Those who coined, or subscribed to, this rubric are themselves from different generations. They can be either casual or judicious, either whimsical or serious, either condemning or worshipful - depending upon their attitudes and their affiliations. Overall, with a single, but important, exception, the Eight Eccentrics were approached with a growing sense of awe. To an ever-increasing degree they came to symbolize the best that Yangzhou in its heyday could offer, the avant-garde of the time.

But as hinted, the term, the Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou, has its share of problems. Ideally, if we can come to a clear understanding of the commonality underlying them, *guai*, and then apply it to the artists, the task should be complete. In the current usage, however, the 'eccentricity' of these eccentrics is far from certain. It means different things to different people, and it shifts in mysterious ways between art and life.

In a number of cases, one senses that it is not so much that the artists fall under its imperative as it yields to the varying individualities of the artists. That is to say, if the identity of the eccentrics is contingent upon the core criterion of *guai*, then conversely the concept of *guai* is also dependent upon who the eccentrics were. Given the varying lists hinted above, each compiler has his idea of the Eight Eccentrics, *who* they were as much as *what* they were.

The Identity Crisis

Regarding the 'who' factor, the discordance among the lists of Eight Eccentrics has an unsettling effect. No other numerical rubrics display the same degree of fluctuation. Would we question the identity of the Four Wangs, the Eight Friends of Nanjing, or the Two Stones? Of course not. They are fixed from the outset. True, in the case of the Four Masters of the Yuan period, some changes did take place. However, once settled, it leaves little room for debate. They cannot but be Huang Gongwang, Wu Zhen, Ni Zan and Wang Meng. To recall Zhao Mengfu to their midst, as he was initially, would be quixotic at the best. The un-certain identities among the Eight Eccentrics are exceptions to the rule.

Given that, we may note that, among the known lists, Wang Yun's choice of Li Mian is not shared by others. As popular as it is, the *Ouboluoshi Shuhua Guomu Kao* proposal faces a challenge from Lin Xia, who omits Wang Shishen, Gao Xiang and Luo Ping and replaces them with Gao Fenghan (1683 - 1748), Bian Shoumin (1684 - 1752) and Yang Fa (active 1830 - 1850).⁸ That, one could argue, is nothing short of dramatic, involving no fewer than half of the eccentrics. While Lin Xia's list avoids the dangling of Luo Ping at one end of the temporal spectrum - Luo clearly was of a different generation than the rest - the inclusion of the little known Yang Fa is just as puzzling as Li Mian in Wang Yun's case. Both are practically unknown. Still others would insert Hua Yan (1682 - 1756) into the group although, from the very start, it was Wang Yun's premise that the Fujian master and the Eight Eccentrics stood on opposite sides.⁹ In the words of this Yangzhou native, Hua Yan rose to correct what he considers to be the 'excess' of the Eccentrics:

Fortunately, there came the Fujian master (Shinluo Shanren), who rose to turn back the decline. At a swing of his brush, the demons and obstacles vanish. As [his brush] descends onto the paper, the mist and cloud rise from four quarters. His artistry is shown even where the surface is empty and it leaves no visible trace where it is filled to the hilt...¹⁰

To go back to these lists, it appears that up to the 1960s, Li Yufen's proposal upheld a general tide of popularity.¹¹ Lin Xia's was the least known; his still had to be discovered. And Wang Yun, with his incomplete list, stood ostracized for having entertained unfavorable views towards the Eight Eccentrics, in spite of his having been the possible originator of the term. The consequence is that the vision of the seven eccentrics plus a dangling Luo Ping assumes a critical *gestalt* in the art of the Qianlong reign. Scholars in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and abroad have long accepted it. Publications and exhibitions of the eccentrics generally adhere to the Li Yufen's proposal.

However, as interest in the Eight Eccentrics mounted, new attitudes began to surface. Particularly in China, in the 1970s and 1980s, the concept of the Yangzhou eccentrics faced much debate.¹² A degree of elasticity was thought to be useful. The Eccentrics did not have to be eight in number, some contended. They could be ten, twelve, or fifteen. All the names mentioned above could be included under the umbrella of this nomenclature, be it Li Mian or Yang Fa, Zheng Xie or Bian Shoumin, Gao Xiang or Gao Fenghan. That, however, only served to muddy the water. A parallel tendency is to advocate the disbanding of the concept by enlarging it to include not just some but all the Yangzhou artists and schools, owing to which rises the notion of 'Yangzhou Huapai.' But more about this later.

The Cause

Elasticity comes at the expense of precision. Without precision, the cohesiveness of the grouping is called into question. The conflicting or overlapping identities of these eccentrics are thus symptomatic. They signal the likelihood of numerical primacy in the usage of the term, the Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou. Somewhere along the line, even if it was not from the very start, the numerical 'eight' took on a greater degree of urgency than whomsoever was used to fill it. There were eight slots, and someone, be he Li Yufen, Lin Xia, Huang Binhong or Chen Hengke, had to take the trouble of filling them.¹³

That being the case, the varying identities and overlapping choices become at least understandable. When assigned the task of filling in these slots, one is likely to seek out the most desirable candidates first (according to one's own rules and judgement) and to fill the remainder by resorting to the lesser ones. Thus, taking the four lists which are complete with all eight eccentrics one will find, first of all, a core group

of three, namely Zheng Xie, Li Shan and Li Fangying, whose names appear on all four lists.¹⁴ In comparison, Jin Nong, Huang Shen, Wang Shishen and Luo Ping are in the second tier since they are found in three lists only. Gao Xiang and Bian Shoumin are further down the ladder, whereas Li Mian, Gao Fenghan, Yang Fa, Chen Zhuan (1686 - after 1748) and Min Zhen (1730 - after 1788), each receiving only one vote, are but peripheral.¹⁵

The above analysis is useful only to the extent that it depicts a gradation of *guai* or eccentricity. It does not define the precise nature of *guai* itself, but it encourages us to take a closer look into the alignment of the group. Shall we construe our own list, perhaps to focus upon what we consider to be the more eccentric of the eccentrics and discarding the lesser ones? That would only add to the existing confusion by interjecting a 'modern perspective'! Another danger, made apparent by the above compilations, could be the undue apotheosis of the role of statistics in an historic study. A more plausible way is to eliminate, through a rational analysis, a couple of contenders, as a corrective to the past excess. In short, we can show our mettle but, in doing so, we do not need to go all out and wipe away the past.

The Non-Yangzhou Eccentrics

In this exercise of elimination, two artists come to mind: Gao Fenghan and Min Zhen. One is a left-handed painter and ostensibly unique; another falls into the spontaneous mold, sharing with other eccentrics an 'apparent' expressiveness. As artists, they may deserve the label of eccentric. The question is: should they be associated with Yangzhou?

Indeed, from our perspective, neither Gao Fenghan and Min Zhen is suitable as a serious contender for the title of Eight Eccentrics. The duration of their stay in Yangzhou was either limited or, surprising enough, unknown. Let us deal with Gao Fenghan first.¹⁶ A Shandong native, Gao Fenghan's contact with Yangzhou began with an official assignment to the neighboring Taizhou in 1733-34, when he was already in his fifty-first *sui*. Between this and 1736, he may have had several opportunities to visit the metropolis to become acquainted with its painters and patrons like the Ma brothers and Lu Jianzeng (1690 - 1768), the salt commissioner of Lianghuai in the region. The likelihood is that official duties would have curtailed Gao Fenghan's movement, so much so that his actual residence in Yangzhou proper could not have begun until 1737, that is, after his brief imprisonment that caused a decline in his health and the paralysis of his right arm. Even then, it appears that he was in a constant state of agitation. Unable to stay put,

he moved about in Suzhou, Huzhou and Jiaxing. By 1740, he was more than ready to return to his native province and did so in the following year. The total sum of his years spent in Yangzhou could not be more than four; other eccentrics were on the scene for decades. A perfect contrast is supplied by Wang Shishen, who, a native of Shexian, made his home in the city in the 1720s and stayed until his death in 1759.

In retrospect, Gao Fenghan arrived as a matured Shandong painter and departed a left-handed artist. The latter aspect imparts an impression of eccentricity, but Yangzhou and its environment were not the cause; imprisonment and the subsequent physical disability were. It can be argued of course that Yangzhou was one of the few cities in China that would provide a ready reception of his left-handed approach, a weakness turned into strength by the contemporary taste for novelty. On the other hand, given Gao Fenghan's colorful personality, his boundless energy and ego, his flair for art and literature and his official status, he would have found receptive audiences no matter where he went. Certainly he fared well in his native province upon return, where he once had found his initial niche as a posthumous student of the great poet, Wang Shizhen (1634 - 1711).

Indeed, one may logically inquire: if the four years Gao spent in Yangzhou make him into a Yangzhou eccentric, then the twenty years that Luo Ping, a Yangzhou native, stayed in the Qing capital should also make him a Beijing eccentric. If the latter proposition sounds ludicrous, so, shall we say, does the former.

As for Min Zhen, his Yangzhou connection is best described as ephemeral.¹⁷ No documents exist to testify to the length and duration of his stay. Wang Yun did not even mention him when compiling the *Yangzhou Huayuan Lu*. Pushing the scenerio to an extreme, we could possibly find him in the metropolis after his lengthy Hankou and Beijing sojourn. In short, Yangzhou would have to have been his last stop in his constant and continual flight from pursuing officials and dissatisfied clients. A tantalizing glimpse into his Yangzhou connection lies in the album of 1788 in the Cleveland Museum of Art where one of his figures reveals a strong resemblance to Huang Shen.¹⁸ Since by that time Huang Shen had been dead for more than a decade, and since his style was unknown in Beijing except perhaps in a tangential way, the contact could only have come about if Min Zhen descended from the capital to pursue his career in Yangzhou, where Huang left a sizable artistic legacy. Like Luo Ping, Min Zhen belonged to a new generation, active at a time when the rest of the eccentrics had passed into history.¹⁹

This simple exercise points to the inherent weakness in the concept of the Eight Eccentrics as known today. To reiterate, the rubric of Eight Eccentrics came on the scene a century late. In its present usage, the numerical primacy requires the filling of the quotas. The guideline may have once been there, but its arbitrary application and its seemingly unending elasticity have turned the rubric into a source of mounting confusion. To sustain it would require not a solution, but a miracle.

***Guai* and the Nature of 'Eccentricity'**

Looking from another angle, it is apparent, just as the identity of the eccentrics is questionable from list to list, that the nature of *guai*, likewise, is varied. Some of the Eight Eccentrics were quite eccentric indeed, others only marginally so, and still others not at all. The numerical primacy has played havoc with all of us. At that, we do not even need to probe the precise meaning of *guai* except in reference to the eccentrics that are being presented. It could be any and every shade of it, even including *kuang* ('crazy'), *ci* ('foolish'), *ye* ('uninhibited'), etc. This is essentially what Lin Xia has done in his *Ode to the Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou*. He sings to each and every one of the eccentrics, and extracts individual eccentricity from each. His is an *ad hoc* approach, compelled perhaps by the numerical urgency mentioned above and exhibiting a tendency to splinter into many sharply carved, seemingly unrelating and unrelated fragments. In this approach, *guai* is not a single concept; its scope and breadth admit all. It can take on any shade of meaning with tolerance and ease.

Perhaps it is reasonable to ask: how much *guai* is *guai*? That is: how eccentric can, or must, an eccentric be? Or its inverse: when or how does an 'eccentric' cease to be an eccentric? As a starter, perhaps we can turn to the four-tier hierarchy discussed above. In the first tier are Zheng Xie, Li Shan and Li Fangying, whose eccentricity, defined in the broadest possible terms, can be easily sustained. They also appear to share, among themselves, a similar approach to the art of painting: stark images, robust forces and effervescent temperament. Beyond that, Zheng Xie is an eccentric because of his outspokenness, his refusal to abide by the nicety of conventions, his bisexuality, and his calligraphic anomaly (the *liufenban* or 'Six and a half style'). Li Shan's riches-to-rags life reflects a disregard for the practical and the conventional. And the defiant Li Fangying displays quick tempo, and is uncompromising to the end. The charming episode of his making a deep bow to an ancient plum reinforces an image of eccentricity even though it recalls a similar one of Northern Song, when it was Mi Fei who paid obeisance to a rock.

When dealing with the second tier, we can still carry the flag of eccentricity to a fair degree, though some of these do not share that stylistic affinity. Wang Shishen's art is closest perhaps to the first-tier artists but, unlike theirs, it encompasses the delicate and the tortuous. Jin Nong unveils a unique combination of lyrical images with curious block-like calligraphy, hitherto unseen and untried. The calligraphy of the Fujian master, Huang Shen, is as sure-handed and uninhibited as Huaisu. His bold rendering of figures commands a mass appeal, with themes drawn from folklore and popular myths, impressive because of size, speed and effortlessness. Having broken out of Shangguan Zhou's figurative mode, Huang startled and astonished the Yangzhou public and made a legend of himself. And mentioning Luo Ping, how can one forget his vaunted ability to see ghosts in bright daylight, not to mention the result in painting?

When we come to the third or fourth tiers, the eccentricity of some of the artists rapidly fades. Confronting such a painter as Gao Xiang and/or Bian Shoumin, we recognize that neither their art nor life is particularly unique vis-à-vis any number of eighteenth-century artists. Why were they chosen? Was it for their intrinsic merit or, as we proposed above, just for the sake of filling in the remainder of the slots?

But before we proceed any further, we should recognize that this process of inquiry does little more than uphold the conventional wisdom of enumerating eccentricities of the eccentrics who are already in place. One can always find some unusual traits and an episode or two in a man's life and label him as an eccentric. Does that make him an eccentric in the full sense of the term? Hardly. To call someone an eccentric, there must be an overall appraisal of character and behavior, artistic ones included, which defies traditional bonds and practices. The irony is that the Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou, as a nomenclature, lacks a steady core and is therefore in itself vulnerable. It easily crumbles when challenged. As a matter of fact, it can be demonstrated that any generalization made with respect to the Eight Eccentrics, whether it involves the primary facet of *guai* or some secondary attributes, can never be substantiated fully or in a meaningful way. There are always exceptions and notable ones at that.²⁰

There is a test one can perform. Let us simply compare the 'normal range' of works by the Eccentrics against, say, the album of plum blossoms by Qian Weicheng, an orthodox artist par excellence (*EB*, no. 24). By the quick bravura brushstrokes in rendering the bamboo and plum blossoms, the latter appears just as eccentric as some, if not all, of the Yangzhou Eccentrics. It appears as if this orthodox painter

adopted the spontaneous mode in this particular case. In comparison, even Jin Nong's version of the same plant (*EB*, no. 62) cannot muster any more force than this small album, whereas Li Fangying's (*EB*, no. 58) is Qian's twin in spirit. If an orthodox painter can so easily adopt the eccentric mode at will, then the solidarity of the eccentrics is thrown into question. It is as if we have driven a wedge into the core and found no hidden reserve there. The *ad hoc* approach has lost its edge of acuteness.

Not surprisingly, mainland Chinese scholars today, having become aware of the ambiguous nature of the term *guai*, are beginning to tear it down. Not only, as we mentioned above, are they eager to be rid of the numerical limitation, but some are on the verge of sinking the ship altogether. Openly skeptical, they pit these Yangzhou Eccentrics collectively against the eccentrics of the old, Gu Kaizhi, Mi Fei, Liang Kai, Xu Wei, Bada and Daoji, and came to the conclusion that the eccentricity of the former was mild by comparison.²¹

When these tendencies, freedom from the limitation of eight and the doubt on the nature of *guai*, are carried to a logical conclusion, the result is an emasculation of the concept itself. This is a course of action that displays itself strongly in the recent series of exhibitions and publications under the new rubric of *Yangzhou Huapai* ('the Yangzhou School or Schools').²² Under this new rubric, one can either extend the ranks of the eccentrics to include more (as seen above) or, going a step further, diffuse the focus in such a way as to require the full coverage of all the contemporary currents in the city of Yangzhou: Yu Zhiding in portraiture and figure painting, Yuan Jiang and Yuan Yao in *jiehua* or boundary painting, Fang Shishu in landscape, etc. Soon, we are no longer dealing with the eccentrics as a group, but rather individual artists in the circumstances of that burgeoning city. In a tentative way, we might describe this process as 'from rubric to art history.' Liberated from the former, we seek to uncover a complete view of Yangzhou art, and in turn we might evaluate the so-called eccentrics in terms of the larger picture, whether they are unique, exceptional, innovative or original. We can then either regroup the eccentrics or disperse them, as the situation warrants.

Given that so few of the so-called the Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou are Yangzhou natives, it was our contention in *The Elegant Brush: Chinese Painting under the Qianlong Emperor, 1735-1795* that a regional orientation may best be brought to suit the circumstance. Let us place Jin Nong in the Hangzhou environ and attribute his art to a Zhejiang source,

restore Huang Shen's Fujian root, and have Gao Fenghan carry the Shandong flag, for there was so much of Shandong heritage in him. In this way we are enabled to see the merging of all of these heritages in a city made rich by the salt-industry, with painters and scholars clinging to that wealth. From near and from far, the artists came. From Xinhua came Li Shan and Zheng Xie. From Huaiyin hailed Bian Shoumin. Li Fangying arrived from Tongzhou. Still more converged on it from more distant lands. As is well known, it was Yangzhou's socio-economic ambience, with its nascent, pre-capitalistic development, which made that mix possible.²³ There was not one style, not one eccentric grouping, but a multiplicity of styles that functioned along different socio-economic strata (such as Ginger Hsü has proposed in the article in the present volume). Fang Shishu carried the orthodox heritage and supplanted it with the Anhui tradition; he appealed to and was acceptable to all. Zheng Xie, Li Shan, Li Fangying and Jin Nong satisfied a certain range of patrons, primarily the gentry. Huang Shen's works embraced a broader spectrum, overlapping them in certain respects, but also aiming at a mass appeal. On the other hand, Yuan Jiang and Yuan Yao (see Alfreda Murck's 'Yuan Jiang: Image Maker' in this volume), with their intricate and polished *jiehua*, catered to still a differing set of patrons, Shanxi merchants included. In sum, the vitality of Yangzhou lay in its ability to absorb what the other cities and towns supplied, and integrate them into its existing socio-economic hierarchy. Like Shanghai during the nineteenth and twentieth century, it was the magnet that constantly enriched itself by embracing both the accepted and the novel, the traditional and the rebellious, the normal and the eccentric, the professional and the scholarly. The contemporary city of Beijing sorted and screened out the malcontent by imposing its ideal on the newcomers. Yangzhou had no set conventions, but thrived in the face of a continually expanding horizon.

Wang Yun and the Eccentrics

How did an innocuous concept of the Eight Eccentrics, about which scholars and laymen alike have shown such a fondness, result in a cacophony of discord? Shall we, as suggested above, renounce the concept of the Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou altogether? Is there validity to the term at all? If it fails to work for the Yangzhou painters during the Qianlong era is there any way it can? Can it, for instance, carry a different sort of meaning in the subsequent century, when the term first appeared? One may be reminded that the historical process lies not in one dimension alone, and the birth of the rubric, if not the phenomenon it covers, is indicative of some needs, however private, parochial or even whimsical these may be.

Rhetoric aside, we can wade through this series of interrelated questions and attempt to find answers. Let us suspend our disbelief for the moment and return to Wang Yun and his *Yangzhou Huayuan Lu*, in which the Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou made, as far as we know, its initial appearance.²⁴ That assumption, if true, is important in at least three respects. First of all, we must take him and his text far more seriously than hitherto. Second, we can understand better the chaos presented above by attributing it in part to Wang Yun's refrainment from making the full list of the eccentrics available. That was the start of the guessing game, where each advocate put his own selection of candidates into the existing slots. Finally, there is also the likelihood of a wrenching twist from Wang Yun's first conception along a critical line to one which showered applause on the Eccentrics. That could only magnify the confusion that was already present. Take a group which someone rejects, and then attempt to extract traits in order to gain a positive light, that is the task with which the later advocates of the Eight Eccentrics had to contend. The initial *raison d'être* needs to be discarded; but the new findings are by nature strained and therefore may not be able to supplant the old in terms of viability and coherence.

Indeed, in outlining his idea about the Eccentrics, Wang Yun comes closest to providing us with a coherent, albeit negative, explanation of the nature of *guai*. We may wish to disagree with his negative appraisal, but we cannot ignore his message, as has been the case. It deserves a close look. In time, we will also come to apprehend that he conjured up the term less for the Qianlong eccentrics themselves, but in relation to his own time and his own sensibility. He stated:

Regrettably, in our Yangzhou, there emerged a series of painters whose art lay outside of the mainstream. The eccentrics are eight in number (e.g., Li Shan and Li Mian), and their styles are different. They resemble Su [Shi] and Zhang [Xu] [in the cursive, calligraphic style] in their bombastic manner and oppose the vaunted rules of Xu [Xi] and Huang [Quan]. Their paintings are done with three or six slashes of brushstrokes, and the results are too coarse even for soy-pot covers. Their inscriptions are of the *dayou* variety, from which they derive none but self-satisfaction. While there was no lack of impact, they have ventured into the side tracks. Novelty for the time being, their work is known only within a hundred square miles.²⁵

The strength of Wang Yun's explanation lies in its focused nature. Against the *ad hoc* practice demonstrated above, it possesses the virtue of being simple, effective and clear. *Guai* suggests not the usual sort of

delight toward the unconventional in art and life. Instead, it is limited in application and concrete in substance. Applied to the Eight Eccentrics, it refers to those painters like Li Shan and Li Mian who 'ventured into the side tracks' and 'renounced the rules of Xu and Huang.' (That very mention of Xu and Huang hints at the range of themes these so-called eccentrics favored: flowers-and-birds or plants in general). It involves both the pictorial and inscriptional, and, as such, it describes those artists marked by a propensity for quick execution and a penchant for *dayou* poetry in inscriptions, roughly hewn, seldom conceived with care, and replete with colloquial expression. The former aspect suggests immediacy, perhaps casual or even slovenly in a technical sense. The latter indicates a less than accomplished poetic skill, which in turn reflects on a dubious level of literary cultivation on the part of the artist. The resultant work is not fitting for *daya zhi lin*, a refined ambiance and audience, according to the author of *Yangzhou Huayuan Lu*.²⁶

Due to his less than favorable appraisal of the Eight Eccentrics, Wang Yun's ideas have only been given a passing glance. Advocates of the eccentrics, who have been gaining in strength through the twentieth century, blame that on his 'conservative' and 'reactionary' outlook. They neglect to mention that Wang, while not opposing the orthodox school, reveals an edge to his taste by singling out Daoji and Hua Yan as two of the towering figures in the Yangzhou art scene.²⁷ Of the lesser known Yangzhou painters, he spoke highly of Yan Yi (1666 - after 1749), a student of Li Yin (late seventeenth - first half of eighteenth century), whose paintings, derived from Northern Song sources, show skill and aged sureness that 'even Yuan Jiang could not surpass.'²⁸ His own paintings are not what one would consider as 'conservative' in the academic sense, and certainly not in the Four Wangs' manner. An album of landscapes in the Tsun-ku Chai collection, Taipei, captures a calculated subtlety of the lean images and astringent brushwork, containing, shall we say, a hint of the Anhui lineage and recalling the art of Gao Xiang. Another painting, a figural theme, which appeared in a recent auction, suggests a degree of versatility and range. This is in spite of the fact that he was a student of Wang Tingru,²⁹ who followed in the footsteps of Dong Qichang in both calligraphy and painting, and Ni Can (1764 - 1841),³⁰ whose advice to him, in both painting and life, was *he* (meaning 'harmony,' 'moderation' and 'peace'). Let it also be mentioned that Wang studied under Wu Xizhai,³¹ one of the master calligraphers and seal-carvers of his days and an amateur painter of the flower-plant themes, sharing the subject matters and style with some,

if not all, of the so-called Yangzhou Eccentrics.³² Wu Xizhai was well known to the aspiring calligraphers and painters of the succeeding generations and could perhaps be considered as a catalyst for the art of Zhao Zhiqian, who in turn was an admirer of the Yangzhou Eccentrics.

Wang Yun lived through the nineteenth century in Yangzhou and observed the city's steep decline from its earlier heyday. The salt industry no longer supported the merchants in their lavish life style. At the heel of sudden financial collapses and bankruptcies, their ability to support the arts slipped precipitously. Also the Taiping rebellion, which swept through the metropolis in 1853, caused death and destruction. Many of Wang Yun's compatriots, men of scholarly and artistic temperament, perished during its fall. It was with a touch of poignancy that he dedicated *Yangzhou Huayuan Lu* to the memory of those who died in that year.³³

Ostensibly, the *Yangzhou Huayuan Lu* is intended as a survey of the city's art scene during the Qing dynasty. The dedication and also the content, however, show that the author's eye was focused on the contemporary situation and not a hundred years before. Were we to ignore chapter headings for the time being, we can differentiate within the text two clusters of artists: those who had been active earlier, prior to Wang Yun's time, and those who were his contemporaries. About the first group, the eccentrics included, he has little to say but to cull passages from such texts as *Yangzhou Huafang Lu*, *Molin Jinhua*, *Guochao Huazheng Lu*, as well as local gazetteers. As he himself confessed, born far too late (1816) he could meet but one or two surviving masters from the previous era; they were 'as rare as the morning stars.'³⁴ The portrayal of his contemporaries, on the other hand, is frequently done with personal knowledge and etched in sharp relief. Keen observations and insights abound, rendering the text into an invaluable source for nineteenth-century Yangzhou painting. A degree of regional consciousness also compels him to set the *liuyu* ('transplants') apart from the native-born, regardless the number of years the former might have resided in the city and regardless of their role in catapulting the city toward artistic preeminence. Thus the *liuyu* section of *juan* 3 contains such long-time residents of Yangzhou: Daoji, Huang Shen, Jin Nong, Wang Shishen, etc.

Wang Yun's local pride, as well as his awareness of Yangzhou's sharp decline, compelled him to evaluate the city's achievement in art against the standard set by the Four Wangs and Yun Shouping, symbolic of outsiders. He states:

Let me try to explain. In the past, our Yangzhou is noted for our heritage in painting. Since the establishment of the present dynasty, each generation has produced [some well known artists]. If we were to consider such factors as ability and circumstance, Wang Yun (Qingci) is a match for Wang Hui. In terms of knowledge and pictorial imagination, Guan Xining is on a par with Yun Shouping. Only because they have not received the support and praise of famous officials and scholars of the time, therefore their fame paled beside the masters from Loushui and Yushan. Before the creative forces were to diminish, there suddenly rose Fang Shishu..., who in no uncertain terms could measure up to the Four Wangs. Regrettably, there was but one generation of followers and none hence (of his students there were only Huang Zhen and Fang Song). Beside these, there was Qingxiang (Daoji), whose art was sweeping and forceful, innovative and unique. Potent it was, and also encompassing [in subjects and themes]... Wang Yuanqi lamented on the impossibility of surpassing this master, a sentiment which Wang Hui also confirmed and shared. These artists crystallized what may be considered as Yangzhou's best, and they were rightly the leading figures during the Kangxi and Qianlong periods.³⁵

Whether we agree with Wang Yun on this survey is beside the point. Few today would object to his apotheosis of Daoji and Hua Yan, as mentioned earlier, across the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. But to place Wang Yun (Qingci), Guan Xining and Fang Shishu³⁶ on a par with the Four Wangs and Yun Shouping, may raise a few eyebrows. This is in spite of the impact Wang Yun (Qingci) and Fang Shishu made locally and nationally, though the scope was nowhere near that of the Wangs. Today, outside of Yangzhou, Guan Xining is barely known, if at all.³⁷ And Wang Yun (Qingci) is noticed only because his art displays a kinship with the Yuan Jiang - Yuan Yao school.

But this lapse in judgement is not so serious as it might seem. One can attribute it to his local pride. Far more serious, even shocking, that is, to a modern art historian, and even to Wang Yun's contemporaries outside of Yangzhou, is his willingness, nay willfulness, to remove a row of commanding figures such as Zheng Xie, Li Shan and Li Fangying from the survey, leaving a gaping hole. It is as if the Eccentrics had never existed. Deprived of their presence, the city of Yangzhou suddenly was wanting in what we have come to consider the unsuppressible energy some of the eccentrics had brought to it. From Wang Yun's perspective, however, this was only just and fair. He even went a step further; in his eyes, the Eight Eccentrics, whoever they were, were the scourges who, in favoring a specific but limited approach in the act of painting and in adopting the *dayou* poetry in inscription, contributed to the slide in the

Yangzhou art scene. The denigration of the Eccentrics was therefore not only essential, but necessary. He was looking at the past through the lens of his present reality.

A facet which has so far escaped critical notice is that Wang Yun's comment on the Eight Eccentrics appears under the entry on his contemporary, Yu Chan, at the heel of the latter's biography.³⁸ Although a skillful artist, Yu presented to Yangzhou a style of landscape painting which is noted for quick brushstrokes, full of energy and visually overwhelming to the spectator. Lamentably, however, he was lacking in literary cultivation and, therefore, to Wang Yun, uncouth, *buwen*. Our critic also points out that, at the time when the Yangzhou patrons were partial to flowers-and-birds or portraiture, Yu Chan's specialization in landscape rendered him vulnerable. Without patrons to support his art and without a major literary figure to lend a helping hand, his fortune endured a series of downturns. In his eighties, he was stranded in his native land, destitute beyond hope. With an undercurrent of sympathy, Wang Yun comments on this ill-fated artist, apparently to serve a warning to aspiring painters:

Yu Chan, whose *zi* is Buqing and who is a native of Ganquan, is skilled in landscape. His brushwork is strong, bold and sweeping, causing people to wonder aloud. *People today do not appreciate this type of painting* [italics mine]. Indeed, when [a painter like Yu Chan] does not have under his name major literary works or fine calligraphy to lend himself [a measure of respectability], it is only fitting that he should be cast aside...

When [Yu Chan] paints, the speed is akin to the sudden gathering of a storm. Or it may be compared to the immense surge of the tidal waves. A quick wash, the brush lifts. Light and heavy, dark and bright: all of these happen simultaneously. Within a meal time, he can complete a huge painting, and does so in a single breath. When one looks at it, one feels the ink is boiling and churning, and hears the *sasa* sound breezing through the paper. Well versed in a variety of compositions, he can [with effortless ease] produce an infinite series of combinations. In addition, he is skilled in conjuring up a variety of scenes, so much so that, having gone through several dozens of works, none are ever alike... In his late years, his circumstance experienced a downturn and he became listless, unable to pursue matters with determination. Furthermore, he was not skilled in flowers-and-birds, subjects that were in fashion at the time...Lamentably, the older he got, the poorer he became.³⁹

Here is a man who clearly was not lacking in talent, even by Wang Yun's standard. His landscapes are awesome in a kinetic sense, change-ful and spontaneous. The effortless ease he displays, however, cannot

compensate for either the lack of culture (*wen*) or, of immediate consequence, the lack of patronage. To put in another way, it is his lack of culture that contributes to the lack of patronage. Owing to fickleness of taste, patronage in Yangzhou, as elsewhere, often was uncertain at the best; but, as Wang Yun seems to say, it required 'culture' (*wen*) to attract it. Take heed to cultivate oneself and also to expand one's repertory to cope with the unforeseen; these appear to be Wang Yun's counsels, which on the surface are more pragmatic than idealistic.

Next, Wang Yun springs to attack the Eight Eccentrics. He was apparently convinced, via Yu Chan, of the excesses that they had committed. In each of them, Wang Yun perceives a Yu Chan and the potential for disaster. Thus he points the finger at the eight painters from Yangzhou's past while serving notice that 'the number of eccentrics is eight, but their styles differ.' In other words, they were not a group, but eight individuals, with their own styles and modes. Their only commonality - or, shall we say, common fault - lay in speedy execution in painting and pseudo-literacy in inscription. These are the sole criteria of *guai*, the detection of a pattern across the varying spectrums of style. Novel and popular in their own day, they became a burden which Wang Yun thought he and Yangzhou could do without in the nineteenth century.

This reaction, private and personal on the one hand, or uncompromising and didactic on the other, is not simply spontaneous. It has a deliberate aspect. Implicit in it is a sense of purpose, that is, the revival of Yangzhou's artistic fortune. It comes about because of a number of factors. One of these possibly involves overexposure of the eccentric mode in the city itself. Surfeit of such bombastic works, bursting at the seams with speed and energy, and with inscriptions composed at the spur of the moment, without care and concern for rhyme, allusion and balance, could become tedious, less tolerable than the moderate and mild. It is as if Wang Yun were saying: We can only bear so many Li Shan's or Li Mian's at a given time before all these works begin to merge together in an awesome display of monotony!⁴⁰ Fatigue soon sets in, when year in and year out, one has to face an endless stream of the same by the masters and, then, replications by their disciples. Worse still, a trail of fakes and forgeries soon followed the eccentrics and extended the approach *ad nauseum*. 'People today just do not appreciate them.' This was a genuine outcry, which Wang Yun took to heart. Never mind that among his friends too there were those who espoused the eccentric mode.⁴¹ Never mind that outsiders might find it novel and stimulating. For a Yangzhou native, the novelty had worn off and the time was right for a change.

To this general portrayal we may add two familiar symptoms, which Wang Yun may also have observed. One is the occasional lapse of quality as a result of commercialization of the Yangzhou art. Zheng Xie's price list is a case in point; when the price is contingent upon size, and when the patrons have no say regarding the specifics of the commissioned work, the artist, assured of a level of revenue, may well be compelled by time and economy to reduce his paintings to a few well-spaced and well-chosen strokes, instead of laboring over them long and hard. By the same token, the *dayou* poems that accompany them could be the result of similar cost-cutting efforts. Viewed from another angle, it is the familiar *fanpiao* ('meal ticket') syndrome, through which the artist turns out a body of works for sale, conscious only of its monetary worth and makes little demand either on himself or on the works under production.⁴²

But the exclamation, 'people today just do not appreciate them' could also indicate a changing pattern in patronage. As said above, the city of Yangzhou endured a steep fall from the glory of the Qianlong period, and artists and patrons were likely to experience shifting alliances, especially as the old wealth vanished. In Yangzhou, if not elsewhere, the nineteenth-century patrons may have tended to be far more moderate in circumstance and, possibly also, in taste. The conspicuous consumption of the Qianlong era was gone for good and, with it, the craving for the novel and outrageous, which, from the artists' point of view, enabled them to attract immediate notice at the expense of 'transmitability.' As the tempo slowed, as the emphasis on moderation gained hold, artists like Yu Chan, who sought to continue some of the old manners, lost favor quickly and decisively. In a practical way, Wang Yun appears to be saying, this generation of artists would do well to avoid the eccentric mode if only for the sake of regaining social acceptance and well being. In that sense, Wang Yun was a *concerned* critic, and his view in combating the Eccentrics carried conviction in his own time, even if his agenda and solution remained at best private and not loudly proclaimed.

Glancing over the text and reading between lines, we may extrapolate the following steps which Wang Yun deemed as important for the revival of Yangzhou's artistic fortune. They are: a return to the *wenrenhua* ideal, from which, according to Wang Yun, the Eccentrics had strayed;⁴³ a reaffirmation of the Xu and Huang's rules in the subject of flora and fauna; a resurgence of landscape themes to offset not only criticism from other regional centers but to strengthen Yangzhou's weakest link; and a relegation of orchid and bamboo to the status of peripheral subjects.

Of the above, the return to the *wenren* ideal, clearly signals the desire to end the eccentric mode as defined above.⁴⁴ Neither quick sketches nor *dayou* poetry is tolerable. This runs counter to the current ideas about the Eight Eccentrics. Modern critics have proposed that the Eccentrics actually broaden the *wenrenhua* and extend its implication beyond the traditional sense.⁴⁵ They single out in particular such features as the every-day subjects, concern for the downtrodden, and the close interweaving of calligraphic, poetic and pictorial imageries to an extent unknown before. In the same way, modern critics would also protest Wang Yun's desire to reaffirm the classical foundation of the Xu and Huang in flower-and-plant themes. But Wang Yun's goal is essentially one that argues for a timelessness, a refusal to be swayed by current trends.

Regarding the landscape and the orchid-bamboo themes, perhaps we should elaborate further. The emphasis on landscape is directed at Yangzhou's weakest link. A major criticism of the art of that city, one which the rival centers must have instigated, and with which Wang Yun had to contend, pertains to the absence of a classical tradition in landscape painting during as well as after the Qianlong era. (This is in spite of our hindsight that Yangzhou's significance in the formation of modern art lies precisely in subjects other than landscape painting). What Wang Yun had in mind of course was not the landscape painting of Yu Chan, but something else. He wrote:

Regarding landscape, there are few practicing it. But among non-native [transplanted] artists, there are many. Native artists seldom showed much interest in the subject. In the recent years, only Yu Chan specialized in it; however, he was unimaginative and wanting in refinement. The venerable Chen Yuan pursued his own solitary path; he was even more awkward and stiff and lacking in a free spirit. Others were [still less accomplished]: a few simple brushstrokes or a couple of trees complete the painting. They are not in the proper and true mode of Dong [Yuan] and Ju[ran] but are only equipped to fill the background. It is these painters who attracted much criticism to Yangzhou, causing it to be deemed lacking in elegance and refinement (*daya zhi lin*).⁴⁶

The picture is clear. On the one hand, like Suzhou before it, Yangzhou in its days of decline was attracting criticism from rivalling centers. On the other hand, the legacy of the Eight Eccentrics survived into the nineteenth century, and steered art away from the landscape. In addition, when the eccentric mode invaded the landscape, Wang Yun contended, it could undermine the nobility of the subject. Yu Chan's case is an eloquent testimonial. Indeed, when the absence of landscape

paintings and painters was becoming a major source of embarrassment, the solution was to reintroduce a classical tradition of landscape, preferably in the Dong-Ju manner, or that of Daoji and Hua Yan, who by then were fully integrated into the mainstream and no longer just a couple of renegades.

The question is: would it have been advisable for Yangzhou to artificially inject a current of landscape painting? Hindsight, in view of the development of painting in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in China as a whole, would say no. Wang Yun's belief, then, is his own, stemming in large part from a traditional background.

Approaching from a different angle, one which is devoid of traditional backing, is Wang Yun's attempt to consign bamboo and orchid to the peripheral. He suggests that: these subjects or genres, while respectable and respected, are not the true testing grounds for a painter:

In such subjects as orchid and bamboo, heaven's will (innate endowment) matters more than human effort. There are those whose hand is able but whose mind knows little and there are those whose mind knows much but whose hand cannot take charge; they are the same. When both mind and hand are able, still one may not avoid the flaws of *ban* ('stiff'), *ke* ('contrived') and *ji* ('knotted together'). When the three faults are absent, then the work may still be plagued by being either too strong or abrupt, or too weak and sedate, either approaching chaos or stasis. Because of that, among painters of these subjects, there are but a few successful ones in a given generation, and for each, there are but a few handfuls of successful works in his corpus. I therefore hold that it is the heaven's will and not the result of human effort...⁴⁷

The argument here is at best strained. One can easily counter Wang Yun's claim by reversing the logic. Due to the rarity of fine bamboo and orchid paintings and painters, one should cherish more those that excel in these subjects, heaven's will or not. One also may wonder why did he not include plum blossom within this traditional category of virtuous plants. Was it because the author himself was fond of that subject and was noted to have painted it in at least a couple of occasions?⁴⁸ The only conclusion we can proffer is that he deemed these as the special provenance of the Eight Eccentrics, thus plotting a strategy for their removal.

In casting aside the bamboo and orchid, Wang Yun may have one particular Qianlong artist in mind, someone who, besides Li Shan and Li Mian, could be identified with these themes. The most plausible

individual is Zheng Xie, a specialist in these genres. One recalls that it was Zheng Xie who took pride in his own specialization:

Shitao (Daoji) was skilled at painting, capable of handling myriad subjects. As to orchid and bamboo, they were not his principal interest. I, Banqiao, specialize in orchid and bamboo, and for more than fifty years, I refused to depict other subjects. He aimed at breadth, I favor specialization. Who can say that specialization is inferior to breadth of scope?⁴⁹

And Zheng Xie had this to say about Li Shan, who in turn also took pleasure to repay the compliment:

Li Shan, who is also known as Futang, is an old painting master. A student of Jiang Tingxi and Gao Qipei, he is so marvelous at depicting such subjects as flowers and plants, birds, insects and fishes, but more specifically, he is exceptional in orchid and bamboo paintings. However, when I, Banqiao, paint orchid and bamboo, I refuse to follow his path. Futang was pleased: 'this is an artist who is to establish his own approach.'⁵⁰

We are not far from truth if Wang Yun's list of Eight Eccentrics also includes Zheng Xie, whose orchid and bamboo in his Yangzhou phase are known for the abbreviated mode and whose inscriptions occasionally approached *dayou* poetry.

The question is inevitable: who else, besides Li Shan, Li Mian and Zheng Xie, are on the Wang Yun's list of the Eight Eccentrics? Given his narrow definition of *guai*, his contenders are, or should be, painters with sparse images and *dayou* poems. Perhaps we can point to Li Fangying or Huang Shen.⁵¹ The drawback is that, without full concurrence from the author, we could not be absolutely sure. Given his historic survey quoted above in which the known eccentrics were pointedly excluded, his list is not likely to be full of surprises. The exception of course is Li Mian.

There is another way of dealing with this issue. That is, to spot those among the known lists of eccentrics who are not likely to be in Wang Yun's list. This pertains to artists whose works do not display speedy execution and whose inscriptions reflect a notable poetic achievement. Under this premise, should we not exclude Jin Nong and Luo Ping, Gao Xiang and Wang Shishen? Their respective approaches to art carry a studied and deliberate appearance, thus contrary to Wang Yun's definition of *guai*.⁵² We may also mention that Min Zhen never made it to the *Yangzhou Huayuan Lu* and therefore his exclusion is assured.

A Quixotic Quest

To return to Wang Yun's strategy for the revival of Yangzhou's fortune, was he successful? Did his message reach beyond the Yangzhou boundaries?

From hindsight, Yangzhou's loss of pre-eminence in the nineteenth century was a fait accompli. It never had a second chance. Time has essentially passed it by, save for clusters of bright lights, Wu Xizhai and Wang Su⁵³ at an earlier period and the priest Lianxi⁵⁴ of a later phase, painters about whom Wang Yun had fond memories. Meanwhile, critics and connoisseurs in or outside Yangzhou took to the eccentrics in droves. Lin Xia, Li Yufen, Feng Jinbo and Jiang Baolin - the latter's *Molin Jinhua* preceeded the *Yangzhou Huayuan Lu* and is frequently cited there - expressed appreciation of those Wang Yun sought to dismiss. In painting, the rise of Zhao Zhiqian in effect began from where the Eight Eccentrics had left off. In this artist's work, the powerful images, recast through the strength of northern stele calligraphy, are just as provocative as the eccentrics, and set off a trend that was to culminate in Wu Changshuo and Qi Baishi of the modern period. The emergence of Shanghai to the south, marked by foreign concessions and trade and a burgeoning middle class, offered painters a complex of patronage that Yangzhou once could provide, but no longer. In Shanghai, Ren Yi and others took the commercialization of art a step further, making it into a trade not unlike other trades, with no pretension of literary flair or substance. Even *wenrenhua* became little more than an ideal about which painters could only dream, as their practice no longer conformed to its lofty aspirations.⁵⁵

To sum up, there is just a touch of the quixotic in Wang Yun's writing, as in most historical quests. His taste contains sufficient breadth to go beyond the Four Wangs. He may accept Ni Can's advice on *he* (moderation and harmony) in both art and life. But he could also be bold in speaking his mind and expressing preferences when such preferences are not sanctioned, in spite of his belief that extremism is suspect, that novelty has no lasting value, or that the genre of flowers-and-birds are acceptable only if Xu and Huang's norms are maintained.⁵⁶ Conscious of attack by outsiders on the absence of landscape, he may have overlooked the trends elsewhere which, as exemplified by Zhao Zhiqian, emphasized matters which he considered unacceptable. Nor did he realize, even before the publication of *Yangzhou Huayuan Lu*, that the Eccentrics whom he deplored, were very much in vogue in the whole of China, not just Yangzhou.

Wang Yun's rubric, if he was indeed its original creator, did make a strong impact. Its power has been amazingly lasting, leaving an indelible impression, much as we attempt either to transform or even erase it. The resultant confusion is partly caused by his refrainment from revealing the full list and partly by the wrenching transformation from the negative to the positive. When suddenly the concept of *guai* alters from the unacceptably strange to the delightfully titillating, the tension between the desire to hold on to the rubric and the need to fill it with new ideas or masters proves to be costly. That, indeed, was the crux of the problem. The consequence is that the earlier precision is lost and the later guideline has to be re-invented each time one tries to pay homage to it by filling the slots, a task that defies the best mind. What follows are the vain attempts to search for a group cohesion and solidarity, attempts that could only leave one in the quagmire of hopeless entanglement and confusion.

Notes

Second references in the notes for each paper are generally given as short titles. Works frequently cited have been identified by the following abbreviations:

- EB Ju-hsi Chou and Claudia Brown, *The Elegant Brush: Chinese Painting under the Qianlong Emperor, 1735 - 1795* (Phoenix, 1985)
- YHFL Li Dou, *Yangzhou Huafang Lu* (Taipei, 1969 reprint)
- YHYL Wang Yun, *Yangzhou Huayuan Lu*, in *Yangzhou Congke* (Yangzhou, 1931)

Figure, Fiction and Fgment in Eighteenth Century Chinese Painting

The author is grateful to The National Endowment for the Humanities for an Independent Study and Research Grant in 1982-83, and to The National Academy of Sciences Committee on Scholarly Exchange with the People's Republic of China for support of travel and research in China in Fall 1982, during which periods the research on which this study is based was carried out.

1. See, for example, Osvald Sirén, *Chinese Painting: Leading Masters and Principles* (London and New York, 1956-58), V, 212-250, and especially 235-236.
2. For a discussion of some related issues, see Vicki Weinstein, *Painting in Yang-chou, 1710-1765: Eccentricity or the Literati Tradition?* (doctoral dissertation: Cornell University, 1972).
3. Among many examples, see Yang

Boda, 'The Development of the Ch'ien-lung Painting Academy,' paper presented at the *Words and Images: Chinese Poetry, Calligraphy, and Painting* symposium, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 20-22 May, 1985; also Kohara Hironobu, 'Kenryū Kōtei no Gagaku ni Tsuite' ('On the Qianlong Emperor's Connoisseurship'), *Kokka*, no. 1079 (January 1985), pp. 9-25; no. 1081 (March 1985), pp. 35-43; no. 1082 (April 1985), pp. 33-41; the essays by Howard Rogers, She Ch'eng and Yang Xin on aspects of court painting in the Qianlong period for the present exhibition catalog, EB, pp. 303-357; and Wai-kam Ho, Sherman Lee, Laurence Sickman and Marc Wilson eds. *Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting* (Cleveland, 1980), pp. xxxv-liv, introductory essays by Lee and Wilson.

4. Ho Ping-ti, 'The Salt Merchants of Yang-chou: A Study of Commercial Capitalism in Eighteenth-Century China,' *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, XVII (1954), 130-168.

5. See the papers presented at the pioneering American Council of Learned Societies 1980 Workshop on Chinese Painting organized by Professor Chu-tsing Li, *Artists and Patrons: Some Economic and Social Aspects of Chinese Painting*, Nelson Gallery of Art, Kansas City, November 20-30; note especially, in the present volume, Ginger Cheng-chi Hsü's paper, 'Zheng Xie's Price List: Painting as a Source of Income in Yangzhou.'
6. Andrew H. Plaks, *Archetype and Allegory in the Dream of the Red Chamber* (Princeton, 1976).
7. Lucien Miller, *Masks of Fiction in Dream of the Red Chamber: Myth, Mimesis, and Persona* (Tucson, 1975).
8. See also F. W. Mote, 'The Intellectual Climate of Eighteenth-Century China: Glimpses of Beijing, Suzhou and Yangzhou in the Qianlong Period,' *Phoebus* 6, no. 1 (Tempe, 1988), pp. 17-55.
9. James Cahill, *The Compelling Image: Nature and Style in Seventeenth Century Chinese Painting* (Cambridge, Mass., 1982), pp. 110-115.
10. For discussion of the Qianlong portrait, see Nelson I. Wu, 'The Toleration of Eccentrics,' *Art News*, LVI (1957), 53; also Harold L. Kahn, *Monarchy in the Emperor's Eyes: Image and Reality in the Ch'ien-lung Reign* (Cambridge, Mass., 1971), pp. 184, 260; also Kahn's essay, 'A Matter of Taste: The Monumental and Exotic in the Qianlong Reign,' *EB*, p. 290. For the portrait of Yuan Mei by Luo Ping, see James Cahill, 'A Rejected Portrait of Lo P'ing: A Pictorial Footnote to Waley's *Yuan Mei*,' *Asia Major*, n.s., VII, 32ff; and the abstract of my paper, 'Role and Representation in Later Chinese Portraiture,' *College Art Association of America, 73rd Annual Meeting, Abstracts for Art History Sessions* (Los Angeles, February 1985), p. 100.
11. Kahn, *Monarchy*; also Arthur Waley, *Yuan Mei* (London, 1956).
12. Kahn, *Monarchy*, p. 260.
13. For a translation of Yuan Mei's inscription, see Cahill, 'A Rejected Portrait,' p. 32.
14. Kahn, 'A Matter of Taste,' pp. 280-302, for illustration of some of these roles.
15. Ho, *Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting*, no. 275, pp. 372-376; also the entry in *EB*, pp. 133-138.
16. Ho, *Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting*, p. 375.
17. Ho, *Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting*, p. 373.
18. Ho, *Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting*, pp. 373, 375.
19. Ellen Laing's study, *Scholars and Sages: A Study in Chinese Figure Painting* (doctoral dissertation: University of Michigan, 1967).
20. The Chinese text of the inscription is transcribed in Kao Mayching ed. *Paintings by Yangzhou Artists of the Qing Dynasty from the Palace Museum* (Hong Kong, 1984), no. 57, p. 190.
21. James Cahill, *Chinese Painting* (Geneva, 1960), pp. 90, 98.
22. Jan Fontein and Money L. Hickman, *Zen: Painting and Calligraphy* (Boston, 1970), pp. xxx-xxxi.
23. Fontein and Hickman, *Zen: Painting and Calligraphy*, p. xxx.
24. See the summary of recent scholarship in *EB*, pp. 211-213.
25. See Howard Rogers, Fukunaga

Takehiko, Nakata Yūjiro and Iriya Yoshitaka, eds. *Kin Nō* [Jin Nong], *Bunjinga Suihen*, IX (Tokyo, 1976), text fig. 10, p. 125 for Huang Shen's *Beggars*.

26. See Ju-hsi Chou's discussion in *EB*, pp. 12-13; compare the attributed images reproduced in Yonezawa Yoshiho, et al, ed. *Hachidai Sanjin, Yoshu Hakkei* ('Zhu Da and the Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou') in *Suiboku Bijutsu Taikai*, XI (Tokyo, 1978), figs. 88-89; as well as in Rogers et al, *Kin Nō*, pls. 50, 52, and 54.

27. See the accounts of his stylistic changes and career strategies in *EB*, pp. 12-13, 212.

28. Reproduced in an album of plates titled *Huang Yingpiao Renwu Ce* (Shanghai, 1982), with an essay by Liu Gangji. I am grateful to Mr Marshall Wu of the University of Michigan Art Museum for bringing to my attention some problems regarding the attribution of this work to Huang Shen, and for pointing out to me its relationships with an album in the University of Michigan Art Museum.

29. See the discussion of Tang Yin in James Cahill, *Parting at the Shore: Chinese Painting of the Early and Middle Ming Dynasty, 1368 - 1580* (New York, 1978), pp. 194-195.

30. For Cai's career, see *EB*, p. 139.

31. For a transcription of the poem and inscription, see Rogers et al, *Kin Nō*, no. 58.

32. Zhang Qiyun, et al., ed. *Zhongwen Dacidian* (Taipei, 1973), IX, 998.

33. For Hua Yan's painting, see the *Osaka Exchange Exhibition: Paintings from the Abe Collection and Other Masterpieces of*

Chinese Art (San Francisco, 1970), no. 49, pp. 96-97; for a translation of *Sound of Autumn*, see Cyril Birch, ed. *Anthology of Chinese Literature: From Early Times to the Fourteenth Century* (New York, 1965), pp. 368-369.

34. Reproduced in *Yiyuan Duoying*, no. 8 (Shanghai, 1980), p. 3.

35. The painting is reproduced and discussed in Yonezawa Yoshiho and Kawakita Michiaki, *Chūgoku Bijutsu* (Tokyo, 1965), III, fig. 84, p. 149; text on p. 204. There is no firm identification of the subject, other than as a figure after Daoji, with a notation of the Chan Buddhist flavor of the accompanying poem. I have discussed the iconographic question in greater detail in an unpublished lecture, 'The Image of Sakyamuni in Later Chinese Painting,' presented at the symposium, *Light of Asia: Buddha Sakyamuni in Asian Art* at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 13-15 April 1984. Some related images include a Japanese painting attributed to Soga Jasoku (d. 1473?), reproduced and discussed in Fontein and Hickman, *Zen: Painting and Calligraphy*, no. 53, pp. 126-29, as well as Yuan dynasty sculptured images in Sherman Lee and Wai-kam Ho, *Chinese Art under the Mongols: The Yuan Dynasty (1279 - 1368)* (Cleveland, 1968), nos. 18, 19 and 20.

36. See Helmut Brinker, 'Shussan Shaka in Sung and Yuan Painting,' *Ars Orientalis*, IX (1973), pp. 21-39.

37. Luo Ping's *Sleeping Monk*, reproduced in Sirén, *Chinese Painting*, VI, pl. 464; also a sleeping or meditating Buddha by Jin Nong, reproduced in *Yiyuan Duoying*, no. 24 (Shanghai,

1984), pp. 22-3; see p. 24 of the same issue for Jin Nong's dreaming figure, related to Luo Ping's *Portrait of Jin Nong's Noon Nap*, the subject of a forthcoming study by this writer.

38. Miller, *Masks of Fiction*, pp. 211, 218.

39. Plaks, *Archetype and Allegory*, pp. 223.

40. For some of these images, see *Yiyuan Duoying*, no. 6 (Shanghai, 1980), pp. 21, 27 and 35.

41. See James Han-hsi Soong, *A Visual Experience in Nineteenth Century China: Jen Po-nien (1840-1895) and the Shanghai School of Painting* (doctoral dissertation: Stanford University, 1977), pp. 85-87.

42. See the translation of some of his tales in Pu Songling, *Selected Tales of Liaozhai* (Beijing, 1981).

43. See the study by Chuang Shen, 'Lo P'ing and the Kuei-ch'ut'u,' *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica*, XLIV (1972), 403-433.

44. See the account of Luo Ping in *EB*, pp. 201-202.

45. For intellectual trends in the period, see Mote, 'The Intellectual Climate.'

46. See the often quoted statements of Zheng Xie on the artist's situation, discussed in *EB*, pp. 168-9.

47. For *The Scholars*, see C. T. Hsia, *The Classic Chinese Novels* (New York, 1968), pp. 203-244; see Kahn, 'A Matter of Taste,' pp. 290-291 for scholastic orthodoxy and disillusionment in the Qianlong reign. See also Wm. Theodore de Bary, Wang-tsit Chan and Burton Watson eds. *Sources of Chinese Tradition* (New York, 1960), pp. 612-629 for eighteenth-century intellectual trends.

48. See Kahn, *Monarchy*.

49. Luo Ping, *Woxin Lu*, published in *Huaibin Zazu Congshu* (1908).

50. See Miller, *Masks of Fiction*, and Plaks, *Archetype and Allegory*, pp. 178-211.

Yuan Jiang: Image Maker

1. Ho Ping-ti, 'The Salt Merchants of Yang-chou: A Study of Commercial Capitalism in Eighteenth Century China,' *Harvard Journal of Asian Studies*, XVII (1954), 130-168. See also F. W. Mote, 'The Intellectual Climate in Eighteenth-century China: Glimpses of Beijing, Suzhou and Yangzhou in the Qianlong Period,' *Phoebus* 6, no. 1, pp. 33-39. My thanks to Jonathan Hay and Maxwell Hearn for many interesting discussions about painting in the Kangxi era.

2. Zhang Geng, *Guochao Huazheng Xulu* (*Huashi Congshu* edition), III, 1347. An unrecorded *hao* Xiuquan appears on a pair of square seals on a landscape album dated *guihai* (1683).

3. *Huaren Buyi*, ca. 1790, reprinted in *Qing Huazhuan Jiayi Sanzhong* ('Biographies of Qing Dynasty Painters in Three Collections') (Beiping: Harvard-Yenching Supplement, 1934), VIII. See also n. 6 below.

4. In his 1938 list of Chinese paintings in Japan, Harada Bizan (Kinjiro) records a painting signed and dated the twenty-first year of the Qianlong reign, corresponding to 1756. Formerly in the Kinoshita collection in Tokyo, the present location of the unpublished painting is unknown. The authenticity of the work is doubtful; if Yuan Jiang was painting

accomplished works in 1681, the probability of his working in the 1750s, at an age of over ninety, is slim. James Cahill published a hanging scroll, probably from a larger composition, with a cyclical date of 1680/1740, and an album with cyclical dates of 1683/1743. These two works stylistically fit better in the early period of Yuan's career; therefore they have been assigned here to the 1680s. See James Cahill, 'Yuan Chiang and His School,' *Ars Orientalis*, V (1963), 259-272, and VI (1966), 191-212. Following the assumption that Yuan Jiang did not begin painting until 1693, Nie Chongzheng placed an album with a cyclical date corresponding to 1683/1743 (which may be the same as that listed by Cahill) and a hanging scroll with a cyclical date of 1686/1746 to the later period. Here they are dated to the 1680s. See Nie Chongzheng, *Yuan Jiang yu Yuan Yao* (Shanghai, 1982) in the series *Zhongguo Huajia Congshu*.

5. According to Nie, *Yuan Jiang yu Yuan Yao*, p. 5, Guo Wei-qu listed the painting in his *Song Yuan Ming Qing Shuhuajia Nianbiao*, p. 329. As far as I know, the painting is unpublished.

6. The discovery of this seal and the realistic quality of the river scene led Richard Barnhart to the hypothesis that the phrase 'outside the Yangxin Dian' in *Huaren Buyi* may have meant that Yuan served Prince Yi on his northern trips to inspect river conservancy in Zhili province. See Richard M. Barnhart, *Peach Blossom Spring: Garden and Flowers in Chinese*

Paintings (New York, 1983), pp. 104-118. The undated landscape is in the Ahern collection in East Providence, Rhode Island. Howard Rogers points out that Prince Yi was the director of the government office which supervised court artists and 'outside the Yangxin Dian' may have meant something closer to the court: the artisan-like task of decorating the Yuan Ming Yuan, Yongzheng's favorite palace. See Howard Rogers, *Masterworks of Ming and Qing Painting from the Forbidden City* (Lansdale, PA, 1988), p. 187.

7. The painting which stylistically dates to the early 1720s is in the collection of Roy and Marilyn Papp. See *Heritage of the Brush* (Phoenix, 1989), no. 23. To Howard Rogers I am grateful for providing information.

8. Nie, *Yuan Jiang yu Yuan Yao*, pp. 3-4, citing Li Zhizhao, 'Jiehua de Fazhan he Jiehua Goutu de Yanjiu' ('Research on the development and structure of boundary painting'), *Zhongguo Hua* (Beijing, 1957). Qin Zhongwen says that most of the 100 paintings left China for foreign collections. See Qin Zhongwen, 'Qingdai Chuqi Huihua de Fazhan' ('Development of Painting in the Early Qing'), *Wenwu Cankao Ziliao*, no. 8 (1958), p. 56. Yuan school paintings with odd measurements or shapes were probably originally created for lanterns or architectural panels.

9. Translation by Jonathan Hay, 'Daoji's Late Work (1697 - 1707): A Thematic Map,' (doctoral dissertation: Yale University, 1989), ch. 2,

'Garden Mountains,' section 1. The Chinese text is transcribed in Zheng Wei, 'Lun Shitao Shenghuo Xingjing Sixiang Dibian Yishu Chengjiu,' ('On Shitao's life, intellectual development and artistic achievements'), *Wenwu*, no. 12 (1962), p. 47.

10. Mote, 'The Intellectual Climate,' p. 35. Mote compares the enormous wealth of the merchants to that of district magistrates who 'received salaries and supplementary emolument from the state in the range of 500 to 1200 taels per year' and to a laborer who 'could support his household of five persons on about twelve taels per year.'

11. The twelve-panel *Peach Blossom Spring* of 1719 is preceded by a hanging scroll with many of the same elements dated 1718. *The Hall of Green Wilderness* panoramic screen of 1720 is preceded by the hanging scroll of 1719. (Please refer to appendix).

12. The painting is published in *Zhang Yuejun Xiansheng, Wang Xueting Xiansheng, Luo Zhixi Furen, Juanzeng Shuhua Tezhan Mulu* ('Illustrated Catalogue of the Special Exhibition of Painting and Calligraphy Donated by Messrs. Zhang Yuejun, Wang Xueting, and Madame Luo Zhixi') (Taipei, 1978), no. 4.

13. Palaces do of course appear in Ming painting, but in small numbers and generally in minor works. *Life inside the Palace of Emperor Ming Xuanzong*, an anonymous narrative handscroll in the Palace Museum, Beijing, uses the architecture as a setting for the figures. The architecture in *The Daming Palace*, an early Ming handscroll in the John M.

Crawford, Jr. collection at the Metropolitan Museum, is fanciful and structurally illogical. The large hanging scroll by Wang E, *Gazing Afar from a Riverside Pavilion*, in the Palace Museum, Beijing, is a rare and beautiful example of complicated architectural detail combined with a poetic landscape.

14. See Jonathan D. Spence, *Ts'ao Yin and the K'ang-hsi Emperor, Bond-servant and Master* (New Haven and London, 1966), for an historical perspective; and Maxwell K. Hearn, 'Document and Portrait: The Southern Tour Paintings of Kangxi and Qianlong,' *Phoebus* 6, no. 1, pp. 91-131, for the visual documentation of the tours.

15. Hearn, 'Document and Portrait,' n. 32.

16. For color reproductions of the entire composition see Barnhart, *Peach Blossom Spring*, pp. 105-111.

17. Oral comments by Professor Mote at the Phoenix Art Museum symposium, October 1985. See also Mote, 'The Intellectual Climate,' especially pp. 33-37.

18. Some examples are Li Yin's *Landscape with Travellers* in the Palace Museum, Beijing, in Kao Mayching ed. *Paintings by Yangzhou Artists of the Qing Dynasty from the Palace Museum* (Hong Kong, 1984), no. 2; Yuan Jiang's *Carts on a Winding Mountain Road* of 1694; his hanging scrolls of 1707, two of 1718, and an undated hanging scroll in the Guangzhou Art Museum; Yuan Yao's huge hanging scroll of 1741 in the Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst, Köln, his *Oxcarts in Landscape after Guo Xi* of 1767 in a

private collection, Osaka, a 1770 hanging scroll *Road to Shu, Distant Clouds*, Beijing Handicrafts Import-Export Co., and his undated *Transport Carts after Guo Xi* in the British Museum. Yan Yi painted the theme (hanging scroll of 1716 in the Palace Museum, Beijing) as did Tan Song (hanging scroll of 1748 in the Metropolitan Museum of Art).

19. See Mote, 'The Intellectual Climate,' p. 34.

20. For a review of the debates and imagery of Peach Blossom Spring see Susan E. Nelson, 'On Through to the Beyond: The Peach Blossom Spring as Paradise,' *Archives of Asian Art*, XXXIX (1986), 23-47. In *Peach Blossom Spring*, Barnhart explores the theme as it relates to gardens, particularly in reference to Yuan Jiang's large 1719 painting.

21. See Mote, 'The Intellectual Climate,' particularly pp. 45ff, for a discussion of the implications of scholars honoring Tao Qian in 1743. The Zhang Feng album is in the Metropolitan Museum (1987.408.2).

22. See Rogers, *Masterworks*, no. 17.

23. Daphne Rosenzweig, *Court Painters of the K'ang-hsi Period* (doctoral dissertation: Columbia University, 1973), p. 38.

24. Mote, 'The Intellectual Climate,' pp. 28-31.

25. The painting, in ink and color on silk, is in the collection of Yabumoto Sogoro, Amagasaki, Japan.

26. The scroll, dated 1770, is in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum (1984.16) and is fully described in Hearn, 'Document and Portrait.'

27. The undated hanging scroll in ink

and color on silk is in the Palace Museum, Beijing. See Kao Mayching ed. *Paintings by Yangzhou Artists*, no. 2.

28. This statement assumes that the influence flowed from the older to the younger painter. It is also possible that Yuan Jiang, as the strong artistic force, influenced Li Yin, in which case Li Yin's long discussion of painting style was a verbalization of what Yuan Jiang practiced.

29. Many other stylistic relationships are yet to be explored including those with Yan Yi, Wang Yun and Xiao Chen. I cannot consider here the obvious affinity between the paintings of Yuan Jiang and the younger Yuan Yao. Whatever the familial relationship, the two had a working relationship so close that many of their paintings are easily confused. In general, one can see in Yuan Yao's work a slightly more intense use of color, less interest in portraying vast distances, and a more formulistic approach to familiar subjects.

30. Nie, *Yuan Jiang yu Yuan Yao*, p. 4. The others were Meng Shikai (who earned a regional *zhusheng* degree) and Zhu Peiqin, unidentified.

31. The painting, now an eight-fold screen in a Japanese collection, ends abruptly at both right and left edges, and originally was probably a full twelve-scroll composition. Yuan Jiang painted another tall hanging scroll of *The Hall of Green Wilderness* known to me from a slide which is too fuzzy to allow a reading of the date. Yuan Yao painted the theme at least three times.

32. There are other shared motifs

such as stands of pines growing out of rocky soil and a waterfall tumbling from distant mountains, but these figure in many of Yuan Jiang's garden landscape paintings. I have not seen the 1719 hanging scroll in the Palace Museum, Beijing, which may have been the model for the large screen of the following year.

**Zheng Xie's Price List:
Painting as a Source
of Income in Yangzhou**

1. Zheng Xie, *Zheng Banqiao Ji* (Hong Kong, 1979), p. 195.
2. *Zheng Banqiao Ji*, p. 237.
3. Cheng Zhengkui, *Qingxi Yigao* (1809), *juan* 26, pp. 9b-10a.
4. Zhao Yi, *Gaiyu Congkao* (preface dated 1791), in *Zhao Oubei Quanji*, *juan* 31, pp. 19b-23b.
5. Arthur Waley, *Yuan Mei* (London, 1956), p. 108.
6. Du Weiyun, *Zhao Yi Zhuan* (Taipei, 1983), p. 261.
7. See Saeki Tomi, 'Shitafu to Junpitsu,' in *Uchida Gimpu Hakase Shoji Kinan Tōyōshi Ronshū* (Tokyo, 1978), pp. 200, 215.
8. YHFL, pp. 748ff.
9. Fang Shishu, *Tianyongan Biji*, p. 17 in Yang Jialuo ed. *Yishu Congbian* (Taipei, 1962), XXVI.
10. Victoria Contag, *Ch'ing Masters of the Seventeenth Century* (Rutland, 1970), p. 13.
11. *Zheng Banqiao Ji*, p. 25; translated by Lin Yutang, 'Family Letters of a Chinese Poet (Cheng Pan-ch'iao)' in *The Wisdom of India and China* (New York, 1942), p. 1081.
12. See Lin, *The Wisdom*, p. 1081.
13. Liang Zhangju (1775 - 1849), *Guitian Suoji* (preface dated 1845), in *Liangshi Biji* (Shanghai, 1918), *juan* 7, pp. 4a-b. The phenomenon was so popular that there were some maxims about such guests under the gate, in which the qualification of a guest was described by counting from one to ten, in a rather ironic yet realistic manner. As quoted by Liang: 'good calligraphy of the first rate, talent of the second rate, drinking capacity of three *jin* (unit of measurement), clothes to cope with the four seasons, five moves of *wei* game, six sets of *kunqu* repertory, seven character poems, eight pieces of *majiang* (mah jong), ninth-grade title and ten points of agreeable temperament.' The maxim was elaborated later and became even more descriptive: 'Calligraphy of first rate without mistake, talent of second rate without deliberately showing off, drinking capacity of three *jin* without vomiting, four seasons' clothing without going in and out of the pawnshop, playing five moves of *wei* chess with no regret, being able to sing six sets of *kunqu* without hesitation, composing seven-character playful poems without delay, playing eight games of *majiang* without checking, obtaining the ninth grade of title but not intending to take office, ten points of agreeable character without a trace of vulgarity.'
14. *Zheng Banqiao Ji*, p. 202. This is a modified translation by Karl-Heinz Pohl. See his 'Cheng Pan-ch'iao, 1693 - 1765: Poet, Painter and Calligrapher'

(doctoral dissertation: University of Toronto, 1982), p. 56.

15. Zheng Banqiao Ji, p. 209.

16. Lin, *The Wisdom*, p. 1081.

17. Zheng Banqiao Ji, p. 98.

18. Jin Nong, *Dongxin Huazhu Tiji* (Meishu Congshu edition), p. 68.

19. Jin, *Dongxin Huazhu Tiji*, p. 68.

20. Although Jin Nong and Zheng Xie share the same ideology, there are subtle differences between their attitudes toward painting. For Jin, painting is no more decent than antique dealing. However, in Zheng's opinion, to involve oneself in the vulgar business of antique dealing was not advisable. Believing that antique dealing would erode one's intellectual nature, Zheng once tried to talk Jin out of it in a personal letter to him. Compared to other professions that many literati turned to for income, such as fortune-telling, medicine and geomancy, painting was considered high in the hierarchy, equal to poetry and calligraphy. See *Zheng Banqiao Ji*, pp. 206-207.

21. *Zheng Banqiao Ji*, p. 197.

22. See Chang Chung-li, *The Income of the Chinese Gentry* (Seattle, 1962), p. 16.

23. *Zheng Banqiao Ji*, p. 98.

24. *Zheng Banqiao Ji*, p. 222.

25. YHFL, p. 291.

26. YHFL, pp. 344-345.

27. *Lianghuai Yanfa Zhi* (1870 edition), *juan* 42. In this account about the salt merchants of the Lianghuai district, one full *juan* is devoted to records of merchants' contributions toward government projects, military expenses and local welfare. According to Ho Ping-ti, the Liang-huai salt merchants contrib-

uted 36,370,963 taels to the government between 1738 and 1804, not counting the 4,670,000 taels spent on the Qianlong emperor's southern tours and numerous smaller contributions to salt officials. See his *The Ladder of Success in Imperial China* (New York, 1964), p. 82.

28. YHFL, pp. 168-169.

29. A commentator described Yangzhou merchants' enthusiasm for antique collecting: 'The prices of the paintings or calligraphy were not a problem, as long as they were signed and inscribed by known persons; the authenticity of the antiques was not a problem either, as long as they were high in price and showed the damage of time.' See Huang Junzai, *Jinhu Langmo*, *juan* 1, pp. 10a-b, in his *Jinhu Qimo* (1873). For an example of conspicuous spending on literary gatherings, see Li Dou, *Aitang Chulu*, in Ren Na, ed. *Xin Chuyuan* (Shanghai, 1940), I, 26.

30. Niu Yingzhi, *Yuchuang Xiaoyi Lu*, quoted in Gu Linwen, ed. *Yangzhou Bajia Shiliao* (Shanghai, 1962), p. 47.

31. Jin's *Dongxin Huazhu Tiji* was reportedly published by Jiang Chun. See Jin's own preface dated 1750. See Gu, *Yangzhou Bajia Shiliao*, p. 61.

32. Xu Ke, ed. *Qingpai Leichao* (Shanghai, 1917), *juan* 49, pp. 108-109.

33. This is a recorded painting dedicated to Jiang Chun. See *Zheng Banqiao Ji*, pp. 161-163.

Jin Nong: The Eccentric Painter with a Wintry Heart

1. To embellish his paintings, Jin

Nong often inscribed elegant, expressive inscriptions. Whether the inscriptions are in the form of poetry or prose, the contents are usually as humorous as they are profound, refreshingly readable, fashioned in a lyrical mode, replete with subtle ideas and surging feelings. No wonder that, in 1750, under the persuasion and support of his patron-friend, Jiang Chun (1727-93), Jin Nong collected about fifty superb inscriptions he had composed for his bamboo paintings. He published them under the title of *Dongxin Xiansheng Huazhu Tiji* ('Jin Nong's Inscriptions on Bamboo Paintings') (*Meishu Congshu* edition). It became his first compilation of inscriptions; more were to follow. See *Ibid.*, pp. 61-84. Jiang Chun was a member of the influential and wealthy Jiang family in Yangzhou.

2. On his early exposure to art, Jin Nong has this to say:

'When I was only thirteen or fourteen years old (1699 - 1700), my father brought me to the Changming Temple (in Hangzhou) during the Lantern Festival (the first full moon or the fifteenth day of the first lunar month). There we saw the painted portraits of the sixteen *luohan* attributed to Guanxiu (832 - 912). In the paintings, these monks all had high nose bridges, full faces, long ear lobes and large eyes with heavy eyebrows.' See *Dongxin Huafo Tiji* ('Master Dongxin's Inscriptions on Buddhist Paintings') (*Meishu Congshu* edition), p. 103.

This early exposure to paintings of *arhats* or *luohan* must have left a

strong impression on this sensitive teenager, for fifty years later he remembered the experience.

3. Jin Nong made two trips to the North. On his first trip, he visited Beijing and recorded the many paintings he saw. For example, he saw a handscroll depicting Buddhist purgatory. He recorded it in his *Dongxin Xiansheng Suibi* (*Meishu Congshu* edition), p. 224:

'The handscroll, *Scenes from Hell*, was painted by Du Fenglian (active sixteenth century?). It is very close in style to Mr Xiao Gungbo's scroll, *Punishing the Evil-doers*, but this handscroll reveals a new dimension to ghost paintings. It does not follow the traditional way of illustrating punishments such as blade-forests and deep-frying pots. It is most charming indeed. In the third year of Yongzheng (1725), I visited the capital and saw [Du's] painting in Academician Mr A Yunju's home. I was told that Mr A acquired it from the grandson of Premier Liang (Liang Qingbiao). At the end of the painting, there was indeed the latter's collecting seal...'

Jin Nong liked it and described it as *ke'ai*, or 'charming.' It is well known that Jin Nong and his student, Luo Ping (1733-99) were both famous for their ghost paintings. They often depicted ghosts as odd-looking ordinary people instead of showing punitive scenes in hell. Both artists went against the current practice. Perhaps the inspiration for their ghost paintings can be traced back to Jin Nong's interpretation of this very scroll seen so long ago in Beijing.

The second trip to Beijing was occasioned by the *Boxue Hongci* examination of 1736, though inexplicably, after reaching there, Jin Nong declined to take the examination. With plenty of leisure on his hands, he was free to explore the city. He visited several private collectors and enjoyed seeing numerous paintings. For example:

- a. *Dongxin Xiansheng Huazhu Tiji*, p. 65: 'In the ninth lunar month of the first year of Qianlong (1736), I saw in the capital a horizontal bamboo painting by Su Shi (1036 - 1101).'
- b. *Dongxin Xiansheng Suibi*, pp. 223-224: 'In the twelfth lunar month of the first year of Qianlong, I saw a landscape handscroll by Fan Kuan (active early eleventh century) entitled *Thatched Studio at the Solitude Mountain* in the home of Zhang Donglai, the Minister of the Conservancy Bureau.'
- c. *Dongxin Zahua Tiji* ('Master Dongxin's Inscriptions on Paintings of Miscellaneous Subjects') (*Meishu Congshu* edition), p. 190: 'In the first year of Qianlong, at the house of Mr Zhang, the Minister of the Conservancy Bureau, I saw a painting depicting grapes by Wen Riguan (active late thirteenth century).'
- d. *Dongxin Huamei Tiji* ('Master Dongxin's Inscriptions on Plum Blossom Paintings') (*Meishu Congshu* edition), p. 89: 'In the first year of Qianlong...I visited the home of Mr Zhang, the Minister of Crime, with a friend, Xu Liangzhi, who was a *han-lin*. We viewed a small hanging scroll of plum blossoms by Zhao Mengfu.'

e. *Dongxin Zahua Tiji*, pp. 177-178: 'Years ago, at the home of the Minister of Crime, Mr Zhang in the capital, I saw a pine painting [by the wild monk Zeren (active late thirteenth century) of the Song dynasty]...'

f. *Dongxin Huamei Tiji*, p. 96: 'At the Vice-minister Wang's house in the capital I saw the painting entitled *A Horse with a Red Saddle Cloth* by Wei Yan (ca. late seventh century).'

Especially see *Dongxin Xiansheng Suibi*. This short text of only fourteen pages was finished in 1738 and is especially useful when one wishes to check the many books and paintings which Jin Nong had seen before that year. It was published at a much later date in the nineteenth century. According to Wei Xizeng's postscript dated 1878, the original manuscript that he used to reprint the present version was hand-written by Jin Nong himself. It is possible that the book was actually intended to be a calligraphic scroll or a set of album leaves.

It is rather puzzling that the many paintings he recorded seem to belong to a category unfamiliar to us. Few of the artists and paintings are recorded in any other texts dealing with early Chinese painting. Judging from Jin Nong's busy social and cultural activities, he must have encountered far more old paintings than those acknowledged in his books. A primary example which he failed to note is the fabulous *Five Oxen* scroll. In 1739 Jin Nong returned to Hangzhou briefly to attend the Moon Festival. On the full-moon night he and his friend, Yao Shiyu (1695 -

1749) were invited to the home of a collector, Wang Xueshan. In his Qiushi Studio they viewed together one of the most famous animal handscrolls in China, the *Five Oxen*, attributed to the Tang dynasty painter, Han Huang (723-77). Seven years later in 1746, once again in Wang's studio but this time accompanied by an artist-monk, Ming-zhong, Jin Nong saw the scroll for a second time. Nevertheless, he never mentioned this painting in his writings.

A second example involves the painting, *Gathering Water Chestnuts*, by Shen Zhou (1427 - 1509), the great master of the Ming dynasty. Shen Zhou's painting, one of a set of nine album leaves, has two versions. The first set with only six leaves formerly belonged to the Hayashi collection, Hara, Japan. It has been published in Richard Edwards, *The Field of Stones* (Washington, DC, 1962), pl. 13B. The second version, which is more credible, belongs to a private collection in Hong Kong. Although its composition, with thick green dots functioning as water chestnut foliage, and its expressive forms clearly form the basis for Jin Nong's own version, he never mentioned it in any of his writings. Jin Nong's painting also has two versions. They belong to two separate sets of album leaves depicting figures and landscapes. The one at the Shanghai Museum has been published in Chang Wan-li and Hu Jen-mou eds. *Yangzhou Bajia Shuhua Ji* ('The Selected Paintings and Calligraphy of the Eight Eccentrics of Yangchow') (Hong Kong, 1969), VIII,

no. 173. The second set from the Beijing Palace Museum has been reproduced as an individual piece in color, under the wrongly assigned title, *Album of Portraits and Landscapes by Jin Nong* (Beijing, 1983).

4. In the past, there have been several theories concerning the time. For example, in checking through writings by three biographers, one finds that Zhang Geng (1685 - 1760), a contemporary and friend of Jin Nong, must have initiated a theory that he started to paint after fifty years of age: '...After the age of fifty, he started to paint. Even at the very beginning, his work was in a graceful ancient style...' See *Guochao Huazheng Lu* (*Huashi Congshu* edition), *juan* 2, p. 111. From his wording, *nian wushi yu* ('after the age of fifty'), it is clear that Zhang Geng did not pin down the exact date. It was then copied almost word for word in later compilations such as Jiang Baoling's (1781 - 1840) *Molin Jinhua* and Qin Zuyong's (1825-84) *Tongyin Lunhua*, with one major discrepancy. It was Jiang first, and Qin later, who interpolated Zhang Geng's passage to mean 'at the age of 50.' See Gu Linwen, *Yangzhou Bajia Shiliao* (Shanghai, 1962), pp. 29-30. Also see Qian Du, *Songhu Huazhui* (*Yuyuan Congke* edition), *juan* 1, p. 15b, in which the author mentions that he had known the elderly Jin Nong as a family friend and that he learned that the latter had started to paint when he was 40 *sui*.

5. At that time, Jin Nong probably was mainly interested in poetry and

calligraphy. By 1723 he may have made playful attempts at a few paintings, perhaps to while away a lazy afternoon. One of the poems written during this period, published in his *Dongxin Xiansheng Ji* (in *Xiling Wubuyi Yizhu* (Hangzhou, 1871), *juan* 1, p. 12a, states:

'I wrote (painted) bamboo and orchid.
Scattered and pliant, the branches
were formed in black ink.

One blossom against one stalk,
They are without charm, but plenty
of pure bitterness.

I cast aside the painting and sighed:
Such a work, in no way, can match
those done by professional hands.

If one must divide the gift paintings
into good and bad categories,

Then I must emphasize the value of
the wonderful inscriptions I wrote,
With my private seal at the end,
And after that, in ancient clerical
script, my name was signed.

Please consider my painting as only half
of a scroll to decorate an empty studio.
Its color and fragrance fill the whole
cave on a cliff.

Sit down comfortably and watch the
painting all day long.

Close your door and chant alone by
yourself.

Also, take out your jade *qin* and pre-
pare some tea.

Suddenly, the raindrops were falling
against the rays of the setting sun.'

The apologetic tone proves that he
felt that he was not able to reach the
level of those professionals and was
not fit to serve as a model for novices.
This is completely different from the
way he regarded his paintings in later

years, when he usually boasted of his
own works.

6. One is the *Plum Blossoms*, a set of
four hanging scrolls in the collection
of Wango H. C. Weng, New Hamp-
shire. The other is a landscape album
of twelve leaves in Museum Rietberg,
Zurich. Both appear in Suzuki Kei
and others, *Comprehensive Illustrated
Catalog of Chinese Paintings* (Tokyo,
1982-1983), I, A13-015 and II, E7-060
and also partially in *EB*, no. 60. Both
were purportedly painted in 1736,
when he was in Beijing. After careful
examination, it appears that neither
is convincing enough to fit into Jin
Nong's life and creative progress.
Both are well-organized with com-
plicated compositions and assured
brushwork, signs of a trained back-
ground. In short, they are far too
advanced for the beginning stage of
Jin Nong's work. In addition, check-
ing through the dates of his recorded
and extant paintings, there is a big
gap between 1737 and 1745 (ages 51
to 59) with not a single work. Assum-
ing that he had already mastered his
painting skill in 1736, he would have
continued to paint and sell his paint-
ings as a way to ease his financial
pressures. With his extravagant habits,
Jin Nong was always in need of money.

7. *Huazhu Tiji*, preface, p. 61.

8. *Huazhu Tiji*, pp. 80-81.

9. *Huafu Tiji*, p. 98. In its preface, Jin
Nong wrote:

'When I first started to paint bamboo,
I used real bamboo as my teacher.
Then I began to depict the wild plum
blossoms growing by the bank of the
river... After that, I engaged in paint-

ing the strapping stallions imported from Tongguli (in Chinese Turkistan). Then I switched my subject again and began to paint Buddhist figures...'

From this passage, the chronological sequence of the major subjects Jin Nong chose for his painting is quite clear. See his *Huamei Tiji*, *Huama Tiji*, *Dongxin Zixiezhen Tiji*, *Dongxin Zahua Tiji* and its sequel, *Dongxin Zahua Tiji Buyi* (*Meishu Congshu* editions).

10. *Huazhu Tiji*, p. 65: 'In the year of *dingmao* (1747), I moved from my home by the river to the south corner inside of the city. There I planted numerous bamboo plants. Almost day and night, I depicted these stalks as if I were painting their portraits. My brush has perhaps already consumed fifty pecks of ink...' Also, *Zahua Tiji*, p. 171:

'...In the *wuchen* year of Qianlong (1748), I moved from my home by the river to a studio located at the corner inside of the [Hangzhou] city. There was plenty of empty land around my studio. So I sent my servants to clear the weeds. I then bought several hundred bamboo roots from the monk at the Dragon Well Temple and planted them on the cleared lot. Each root cost me thirty coins. I began to paint bamboo and used the bamboo as my teacher.'

11. *Zahua Tiji*, p. 171. An inscription appears on a bamboo painting dedicated to his student, Xiang Jun. The painting now belongs to the Sichuan Provincial Museum, Chengdu. It is reproduced in *Yiyuan Duoying* (Shanghai, July, 1980), no. 9, pl. 25:

'For two successive years, I was caught in my off-and-on sickness. I could not do anything but paint bamboo. However, when I started to paint, I did not follow any particular teacher. I sought inspiration directly from the dense bamboo stalks and tender new shoots. I could paint unrestrainedly with ink from expensive ink-sticks made by Li Chao'er... My two friends (Gao Xiang and Wang Shishen) admired my work. They praised my interpretation of bamboo in my painting. I neither paid attention to any early masters, nor confined myself to traditional realism. My technique has surpassed all the conventional rules and doctrines.'

12. *Huazhu Tiji*, preface, p. 61.

13. The names of the ten early bamboo painters and their considerable impact are disclosed in the following entries in *Huazhu Tiji*:

- Shen Zhenji (1400 - after 1482), p. 63.
- Xu Lü (active during the Shunxi period, 1174-89), p. 64.
- Su Shi (1036 - 1101), p. 65.
- Wen Tong (1018-79), p. 66.
- Ke Jiusi (1290 - 1343), p. 66.
- Zhang Li (Tang dynasty), p. 67.
- Wu Zhen (1280 - 1354), p. 72.
- Zhang Xuan (active 713-41), p. 76.
- Cheng Tang (active eleventh century), p. 80.
- Li Yu (937-78), p. 82.

14. When Jin Nong compared Song painter Xu Lü with Ming painters like Xia Chang (1388 - 1470), Wen Zhengming (1470 - 1559) and Yao Shou (1423-95), he said it was like

contrasting a dignified phoenix with a flock of wild pheasants. See Jin Nong, *Huazhu Tiji*, p. 64.

15. *Huazhu Tiji*, p. 80.

16. For example, a bamboo painting in 'double-contour' technique is dated 1760, when Jin Nong was 74 *sui*. It has gigantic stalks and large leaves, to which he also added red ink. The inscription on this painting has been translated by Chu-tsing Li in his article, 'Bamboo Painting of Chin Nung,' *Archives of Asian Art*, XXVII (1973-1974), 65. Another example is a small album leaf dated 1761 at the Liaoning Provincial Museum which shows a double-lined bamboo with three stalks and two clusters of leaves. In this piece Jin Nong first used washes in light brownish orange color to form the stalks and leaves. He then applied thin outlines in dark brown while the washes were still wet. This painting has been reproduced in the exhibition catalog, *Chinese Paintings of the Ming and Qing Dynasties, 14th-20th Centuries* (Victoria, Australia, 1981), no. 80, leaf 1.

17. In the Sichuan Provincial Museum. See n. 11 above.

18. See Suzuki Kei, *Comprehensive Illustrated Catalog*, I, A13-003; also *EB*, no. 61.

19. Another leaf with similar composition, although less impressive, can be found in the album of *Landscape and Figures*. See *Jin Nong Shanshui Renwu* (Beijing, 1983).

20. In 1716, when he was 30, Jin Nong was stricken with *pi*, or dyspep-

sia. In the old days in China, the only cure was bed rest. Lying in bed all the time, Jin Nong suffered from boredom and depression. Later he wrote: 'In the year *bingshen* (1716), I was sick with *pi* at home by the river bank. During one cold night, I laid awake and was filled with random thoughts. By dawn, I decided to adopt Dongxin ('Wintry Heart') as my style name. This term was borrowed from a verse found in the Tang poet Cui Guofu's poem which said: "I held my wintry heart in desolate loneliness."' "

See *Dongxin Xiansheng Ji*, preface, pp. 5-

6. Cui Guofu was a well known mid-eighteenth century poet. His poem reads:

'I held my wintry heart in desolate loneliness.

Cutting brocade in only a thin cotton robe, I shivered in the cold.

So late in the night, the wick of my dim oil lamp had been lifted numerous times.

Icy frost now covers my chilly scissors.' Such verse belongs to the type of poetry called *ziye ge*, 'midnight songs.'

Derived from old ballads in ancient China, it narrates the daily lives of common people and expresses the sadness and bitterness of life. See *Quan Tangshi* (Taipei, 1967), II, 662.

21. Published in the catalog, *The Eight Masters of Yangzhou* (Tokyo, 1986), no. 33.

22. See Edwards, *The Field of Stones*, pl. 13B. Another, more credible version is in a private collection in Hong Kong. See n. 3 above.

23. Reproduced under the title of *Jin*

Nong Shanshui Renwu. See n.19 above.

24. See *Lanqian Shanguan Shuhua* (Tokyo, 1978), II, no. 87.

25. *Yurin Taikan* (Kyoto, 1929), V (Chinese Painting), pl. 32.

26. Howard Rogers and Sherman E. Lee, *Masterworks of Ming and Qing Painting from the Forbidden City* (Lansdale, PA, 1988), cat. no. 64.

27. See *Huamei Tiji*, pp. 86-87. The thirty-two inscriptions recorded there represent the bulk of his works in this category. As usual, the inscription must have been arranged chronologically. Therefore, the date of the fifth inscription, 'the first lunar month in 1756,' can be considered close in time to his first attempts. It reads:

'In the early spring (first lunar month), the *bingzi* year (1756) of the Qianlong period, the Monk Louzunzhe from the Jingneng Monastery in the Emei Mountains (in Sichuan) sent me a letter by the messenger, Adun. I composed a poem for the Abbot a month ago without sending it to him. When I painted this long scroll of plum blossoms for him, after the style of Jiuli Shanren, I copied that poem on my painting...'

28. Wang Shishen became blind in 1752 and Gao Xiang died in 1754.

29. This painting belongs to the Tokyo National Museum. It has been published in *Bunjinga Suihen*, IX (Tokyo, 1976), no. 15. For the inscription, see *Huamei Tiji*, p. 90.

30. The first type is represented by the short handscroll, *Composing Verses under the Plum Trees*. It shows a poet with a red hood. Pacing amidst the plum trees, it appears that the poet is

musings over a poem and searching for the right word. To prepare tea for his master, a boy servant stoops besides two large urns, fanning the fire under a small stove. The boy gazes at his master. The painting is naive and simple, but the depiction is clever and faithful. For reproduction, see *Baimei Ji* (Shanghai, 1929), I, no. 6.

The second type can be represented by several examples. An album leaf shows blooming plum inside the gate of a wooden or bamboo stockade, faded petals scattered on the ground. See Chang and Hu, *Yangzhou Bajia Shuhua Ji*, VIII, no. 175. In another hanging scroll, Jin Nong painted a white-plastered wall in the middle ground; indigo colored tiles and bricks for reinforcing purposes have been painted along the top and bottom. Inside the wall, the upper section of a flowering plum tree is visible, and one spray hangs over the wall. See *Yiyuan Duoying*, no.8 (Shanghai, March 1980), reproduction on the back of the title page.

31. *Zixiezhen Tiji*, p. 90.

32. *Huamei Tiji*, p. 91.

33. This handscroll is in the collection of the late P. T. Huo, Hong Kong. It is reproduced in color in Chang and Hu, *Yangzhou Bajia Shuhua Ji*, V, no. 136. Also see Suzuki, *Comprehensive Illustrated Catalog*, II, S9-003.

34. *Huamei Tiji*, p. 91.

35. *Huama Tiji*, p. 97.

36. *Huama Tiji*, p. 93. In 1750 Jin Nong saw *A Tibetan Horse* attributed to Hu Huai (active tenth century). Jin Nong also mentioned the rubbings of the famous *Zhaoling Liujun* ('The Six Steeds in Zhaoling,' those reliefs in

the mausoleum of Emperor Taizong of the Tang dynasty). He also saw a handscroll of horses in color attributed to Zhao Mengfu. Earlier, in 1736, in the home of Wang Shu (1668 - 1743) in Beijing, Jin Nong saw a horse painting entitled *Hongji Fubei* ('A Horse with a Red Saddle'), attributed to Wei Yan (active first half of the eighth century).

37. For the *Dayuan Ma*, see *Yiyuan Yizhen* (Hong Kong, 1967), V, no. 34. The inscription can be found in *Huama Tiji*, p. 95:

'When I paint horses after Tang examples, I always chose those depicting Ferghana horses. I apply powerful strokes and the results are unique among horse paintings. [One is able to visualize] the grooms with ragged robes and snow and ice on their beards, shivering in the cold, howling wind. By opening the scroll, one can imagine oneself being in Chinese Turkistan in ancient times. After I finish my painting, I inscribe a few lines on it for those who love horses.' For the *Hualiu Tu*, see Osvald Sirén, *Chinese Painting*, V, pl. 454A, where it was given the title, 'A Saddled Horse.' Jin Nong's inscription is also included in his *Huama Tiji*, p. 96:

'Using a worn brush, Wei Yan (of the Tang dynasty) cleverly painted a portrait of Hualiu (the famous stallion belonging to King Mu of the Zhou dynasty). In the first year of Qianlong, I saw this painting, depicting a horse with a red blanket on its back, at Vice Minister Wang's home in the capital. I inscribed a poem on the left side of the painting. After Mr Wang had passed away, a servant

stole his painting and sold it to the owner of a wine shop in the inner city. I now pick up my brush and try to recall that painting from memory. I imitate the strokes on the head and tail of the horse in that piece. Every year I tried to cleanse off my sins on the third day of the third lunar month, I feel I am standing in the light of the setting sun watching [my youth which is like] a beautiful woman on a fragrant cart disappearing into the distance.'

38. See the dictionary, *Cihai* (Shanghai, 1958), p. 1510.

39. For Bada's works, see *Bunjinga Suihen*, VIII (Tokyo, 1976), pls. 28, 31, 61, 74, 96, 98, and 111.

40. This painting is in the collection of the Palace Museum, Beijing. It is published in Kao Mayching ed. *Paintings by Yangzhou Artists of the Qing Dynasty from the Palace Museum* (Hong Kong, 1984), no. 57.

41. See Gu, *Yangzhou Bajia Shiliao*, pp. 27-28 and p. 26, citing Yuan Mei, *Xiaocang Shanfang Shiji* and Zheng Xie's *Banqiao Shichao* respectively.

42. There are two versions of this painting. The original is in China and has been published in Xu Bangda's *Zhongguo Huihuashi Tulu* (Shanghai, 1984), II, no. 570. The second version, a copy, can be found in *Lanqian Shanguan Shuhua*, II, no. 89.

43. *Yiyuan Duoying* (Shanghai, October 1982), no. 18, p. 40. It is in the collection of the Zhejiang Provincial Museum.

44. This painting belongs to a set of two portraits done in the same year, the other being the portrait of Ding Jing by Luo Ping. Based on a colophon

written on the latter's side, these two were executed in 1763 when Jin Nong was 75 *sui*.

45. See *Huafo Tiji*, p. 102.

46. The early Buddhist painters may have painted figures with individual characteristics. However, they were still based on descriptions recorded in Buddhist canons. For example, Guanxiu (832 - 912) created his famous sixteen *arhat* figures, each with dramatic features and exaggerated expressions. However, he stressed the deified natures of these sixteen *arhats*, so they are not like the real people of flesh and blood depicted in Jin Nong's Buddhist paintings. The original set of the *Sixteen Arhats* by Guanxiu was destroyed a long time ago. The best known version is preserved in the Imperial Household Museum in Tokyo. See Suzuki Kei, *Comprehensive Illustrated Catalog*, III, JM5-020.

47. Zhang Geng, from Jiaxing, Zhejiang, was a famous scholar of the Qianlong period. His book, *Guochao Huazheng Lu*, 3 *juan*, with a sequel of 2 *juan*, was published in 1739. It contains approximately 465 painters of the early and middle Qing period. See Yu Shaosong's *Shuhua Shulu Jieli* (Taipei, 1968), I *Juan* 1, pp. 16a-17a, for an appraisal of this text. The painting is reproduced in *Jiaoyubu Dierci Quanguo Meishu Zhanlan Hui Quanji* ('Second National Exhibition of Chinese Art under the Auspices of the Ministry of Education') (Nanjing, 1938; Shanghai, 1943), II, *Jin Tang Wudai Song Yuan Ming Qing Mingjia Shuhuaqi* ('Painting and Calligraphy

by Famous Artists of the Jin, Tang, Five-Dynasties, Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing Periods'), pl. 334.

48. *Bo* tree, *Ficus religiosa*, is a linden tree. In Buddhism, it is called *bodhidruma*, the wisdom tree under which Sakyamuni attained his enlightenment.

49. Jin Nong ends the passage by signing himself as the 'Monk of Rice and Gruel.'

50. The inscriptions on this painting are reproduced in *Jiaoyubu Dierci Quanguo Meishu Zhanlan Hui Quanji*, II, pl. 334.

51. See 'Kin Tōshin no Geijutsu' ('The Art of Jin Dongxin') in *Aoki Masaru Zenshū* (Tokyo, 1983), VI, 3ff, p.1.4.

52. Before the eighteenth century, Chinese artists generally inscribed their paintings in the empty spaces of a composition. This could be distracting, with the calligraphy and painting clashing against each other. Jin Nong, on the other hand, often wove his calligraphy into the painting, creating thereby an integrated composition. His calligraphy and painting combine well, for both are heavy and powerful.

53. In this inscription, he says in part: '...People should not judge my works only by the achievement of my brushwork. They must stare at my paintings for a long time, as if they were enjoying the stone sculptures at the Longmen site. People should try to appreciate the simple, honest and ancient spirit in my work, which will last for hundreds and thousands of years.'

54. This painting is recorded under the *jian mu* section of *Gugong Shuhua*

Lu (Taipei, 1965), *juan* 8, p. 60. It is listed as *Songren Hua Damo* ('Damo by a Song Artist').

55. His works tend to encompass people and objects encountered in his daily life. In that sense, it is not unlike the origination of some of his poems; they share that sense of intimacy and immediacy. This is the case when he travelled to the Niangzi Guan, a famous gate of the Great Wall guarding a dangerous mountain path. Nearby he fell from the back of his horse onto the rugged path. Fortunately he was not hurt. He carved a seal to commemorate this accident which bears the verse: 'Executed after Falling from My Horse at the Niangzi Gate.' He also named himself as 'A Person Falling off the Horse's Back at the Niangzi Gate.' See Jin Nong, *Dongxin Xuji*, p. 8, 'Three Poems on My Portrait of Forty-three Sui.' The impression of this seal can be found on the first page of calligraphy he did in 1730 in Qufu, Shandong, a set of album leaves entitled *Anecdotes of Famous Sages of the Six Dynasties Period*. It was published in *Shina Bokuseki Taikei* ('A Collection of Works of Chinese Calligraphy') (Tokyo, 1984), V, 98-115. During the fall of the same year, while riding on a Taihang Mountain trail during his trip south, Jin Nong composed a poem using his riding crop as a subject. *Dongxin Ji*, *juan* 3, p. 17. He then incised it on the crop as decoration. Jin Nong often used the simplest and most immediate of his experiences as creative inspiration.

An Overview of Li Jian's Painting

1. For Li Jian's biography, see Su Wenzhuo (So Man-jock), *Li Jian Xiansheng Nianpu* ('The Chronological Biography of Li Jian') (Hong Kong, 1973), particularly p. 8; and the *nianpu* in Zhou Xifu ed. *Li Jian Shixuan* (Guangdong, 1983), pp. 293-307. Also see Wang Zhaoyong, *Lingnan Hua Zhenglue* (Hong Kong, 1961), *juan* 5, pp. 1-12; and *EB*, p. 280.
2. The content of the inscription is published in The Art Gallery, Chinese University of Hong Kong, *Guangdong Shuhua Lu* ('Catalog of Guangdong Paintings and Calligraphy') (Hong Kong, 1981), no. 178; not illustrated.
3. See Su Wenzhuo, *Li Jian*, p. 114; also see Pan Zhengwei, *Tingfan Lou Shuhua Ji* ('Catalog of Paintings and Calligraphy from the Tingfan Lou Collection') in Deng Shi and Huang Binhong eds. *Meishu Congshu* (Taipei, 1963), XXXVII, 665.
4. Su Wenzhuo, *Li Jian*, p. 87.
5. See Li Yuchun, 'Li Erqiao Zaoonian Buming "Jian": Yiji "Luofu Shan Youji" Shuhua Ce' ('Li Erqiao's Name Was not Jian in His Early Years. Some Notes on the Painting and Calligraphy Album of *Travels in the Luofu Mountains*') in Guangdong Sheng Wenshi Yanjiu Yuan, *Lingnan Wenwu* (1984), III, 153-154.
6. *Landscape in the Style of Shitao*, dated 1781. Unpublished fan in the collection of P.T. Huo, Hong Kong.
7. From the Bei Shan Tang collection, Hong Kong. Published in The Art

Gallery, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, *Landscape Paintings by Kwangtung Masters during the Ming and Ch'ing Periods* (Hong Kong, 1973), no. 41; also Su Wenzhuo, *Li Jian*, p. 44.

8. Just how important Dong Yuan was to Li Jian can be seen in his inscription on an album entitled *Ancient Temple and Precarious Peak* in the collection of the Guangzhou Art Gallery, also from 1781:

'Dong Yuan was proficient in doing long *cun* (texture strokes) like great lassos. It is a distinctive and marvelous technique. My contemporaries consider it too ordinary and would not follow such a practice; they go astray in imitating Wu Wei [of the Zhe school]. They do not realize that, in doing so, they have lost their grasp of the essence of real landscape.'

This album is to be published in the forthcoming catalog of the exhibition, *Guangdong Painting of the Ming and Qing Periods*, held at The Art Gallery, Chinese University of Hong Kong from 18 December 1982 to 16 January 1983; entry no. 59.

9. From the collection of P. T. Huo, Hong Kong. Published in *Landscape Paintings by Kwangtung Masters*, no. 42; City Museum and Art Gallery (Hong Kong Museum of Art), *Kwangtung Painting* (Hong Kong, 1973), no. 57; also see Su Wenzhuo, *Li Jian*, pp. 37-38.

10. From the Bei Shan Tang collection, Hong Kong. Published in Su Wenzhuo, *Li Jian*, p. 85.

11. *Landscape after Shitao*, dated 1789. Unpublished fan in the collection of P.T. Huo, Hong Kong.

12. Painted on his birthday in the fifth month; in the Bei Shan Tang collection, Hong Kong. Published in Su Wenzhuo, *Li Jian*, p. 90; and *Landscape Paintings by Kwangtung Masters*, no. 44.

13. Painted in the seventh month of that year.

14. From the collection of The Art Gallery, Chinese University of Hong Kong. Published in *Landscape Painting by Kwangtung Masters*, no. 45; *Guangdong Shuhua Lu*, no. 180; and *EB*, no. 88.

15. From the collection of The Art Gallery, Chinese University of Hong Kong. Published in Su Wenzhuo, *Li Jian*, p. 95; and *Landscape Paintings by Kwangtung Masters*, no. 46. This enables us to date a series of undated paintings: two pairs of album leaves, with one pair after the styles of Ni Zan and Dong Yuan in Chongyizhai collection, and the other pair after Guo Xi and Ni Zan in P. T. Huo's collection, together with a hanging scroll purporting to be in the style of Dong Yuan and Juran, in Harold Wong's collection. In the last painting, feathery trees predominate.

16. Xie Lansheng, *Changxingxing Zhai Shuhua Tiba* (Macau, n.d.), p. 52.

17. Su Wenzhuo, *Li Jian*, pp. 74-75.

18. This painting has been published in Su Wenzhuo, *Li Jian*, pp. 125-126 and *Landscape Painting by Kwangtung Masters*, no. 47. Although undated, the artist imitated Daoji to the point that he signed his precursor's name and put down his seal. Based on its style, the painting seems to date before 1790.

19. From the collection of the

Guangdong Provincial Museum. Published in *Guangdong Sheng Bowuguan Canghai Xuanji* ('Selected Paintings from the Guangdong Provincial Museum') in *Yiyuan Duoying*, no. 14 (October 1981), p. 31, left.

20. From the collection of Kong Chung, Hong Kong. Unpublished.

21. From the Bei Shan Tang collection, Hong Kong. Unpublished.

22. From the collection of Low Chuck Tiew, Hong Kong. Published in *Landscape Paintings by Kwangtung Masters*, no. 48; and *Chinese Painting and Calligraphy in the Xubai Studio* (Tokyo, 1983), p. 90.

23. Collection of Tangshi Cangyan Lou. Published in Su Wenzhuo, *Li Jian*, pp. 135-136.

24. This group of meticulous and detailed *gongbi* landscapes includes:

- Four landscape album leaves, The Art Gallery, Chinese University of Hong Kong, published in *Landscape Paintings by Kwangtung Masters*, no. 39; and *Guangdong Shuhua Lu*, no. 181.
- *Rustic Temple Across the River*, collection of P. T. Huo, Hong Kong, unpublished.
- *Blue-and-Green Landscape after Zhao Boju*, collection of P. T. Huo, Hong Kong.

25. Collection of P.T. Huo, Hong Kong, previously unpublished.

26. Xie, *Changxingxing Zhai*, pp. 79-80.

27. Su Wenzhuo, *Li Jian*, p. 46.

28. See also *Guangdong Shuhua Lu*, no. 180.

29. Huang Danshu was a native of Shunde, Guangdong and a close friend of Li Jian. See Wang, *Lingnan Hua*, *juan* 4, pp. 13-15.

30. Wu Rongguang was a native of Nanhai, Guangdong. An accom-

plished calligrapher, he was also a collector and the author of *Xinqiu Xiaoxia Ji*. See Wang, *Lingnan Hua*, *juan* 7, pp. 1-3.

31. Xie Lansheng was a native of Nanhai, Guangdong. See Wang, *Lingnan Hua*, *juan* 6, pp. 1-12.

32. See *Guangdong Shuhua Lu*, no. 180.

33. *Guangdong Shuhua Lu*, no. 180.

34. *Guangdong Shuhua Lu*, no. 180.

35. Tsang Ka-bo, 'Guangdong Wuwei Shoucangjia Cangpin zhi Laiyuan' ('Sources for the Collections of Five Guangdong Collectors'), Centre of Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong, *Journal of Oriental Studies*, XII, nos. 1-2 (Hong Kong, 1974), pp. 71-100.

36. Pan, *Tingfan Lou*, pp. 24-25.

37. In 1777, when he was thirty-one *sui*, Li Jian wrote to his father to complain about a Mr Hu who had asked him to paint a portrait for ten *yuan* and refused to pay after it was done. See Su Wenzhuo, *Li Jian*, p. 17. There is abundant evidence to show that Li Jian was an accomplished portrait painter and his livelihood depended largely on this skill.

38. Published in *Kwangtung Painting*, no. 58; and *EB*, no. 89.

39. From the Chongyizhai collection. Published in Hong Kong Museum of Art, *Anthology of Chinese Art: Min Chiu Society Silver Jubilee Exhibition* (Hong Kong, 1985), no. 87.

40. Pan, *Tingfan Lou*, pp. 465-468.

41. Pan, *Tingfan Lou*, pp. 468-471.

Eighteenth-Century Foundations in Modern Chinese Painting

1. This often quoted statement of Zheng Xie originally appeared in Ye Tingguan, *Oubo Yuhua*, juan 6, but can be found in Gu Linwen, *Yangzhou Bajia Shiliao* (Shanghai, 1962), p. 118.

2. See *EB*, nos. 54 and 55.

3. See *EB*, nos. 1 and 2.

4. For a fascinating discussion of the life of Emperor Kangxi, see Jonathan D. Spence, *Emperor of China: Self-portrait of K'ang-hsi* (New York, 1974). Many descendants of both of these two Wangs became painters. This tradition lasted well into the Qianlong period.

5. For discussion of these two painters, see Chu-ting Li, *A Thousand Peaks and Myriad Ravines: Chinese Painting in the Charles A. Drenowatz Collection* (Ascona, 1974), I, 160-161 and 166-169.

6. A good example of this kind of painting can be found in *EB*, no. 9.

7. For the works of Castiglione, see *EB*, pp. 21-38.

8. For samples of Castiglione's painting, see *EB*, nos. 4 and 6.

9. The first part of *Shiqu Baoji* was commissioned by Emperor Qianlong in 1744 and completed in 1745; the second part was commissioned by the same emperor in 1791 and completed in 1792; and the third part was commissioned by Emperor Jiaqing and completed in 1816. The first facsimile reprint of Part I was done in 1918, and the second part in 1948.

Between 1969 and 1971, the complete set of all three parts was printed, with indexes, by the National Palace Museum in Taipei. The *Bidian Zhulin* has a similar history.

10. See, for example, Ho Ping-ti, 'The Salt Merchant of Yangzhou: A Study of Commercial Capitalism in Eighteenth-century China,' in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, XVII (1954), 130-168. On art, the major source is *YHFL*.

11. Many of the famous literary gatherings and lavish parties in Yangzhou were recorded in *YHFL*.

12. Most of the information concerning the history of Shanghai during the nineteenth century came from Liu Huiwu, *Shanghai Jindai Shi* (Shanghai, 1985), I, especially the first five chapters.

13. This, according to Xu Beihong, the modern painter who collected a large number of Ren Bonian's paintings, was what Ren did when he first went to Shanghai in order to try to make a living. This was how he met Ren Xiong, who came from the same district in Zhejiang but was not directly related to him and who was already a well-established painter in Shanghai.

14. For some discussion of Dai Xi, see Chu-ting Li, *A Thousand Peaks and Myriad Ravines*, I, 252-262.

15. For basic materials on the Yangzhou painters, see Gu Linwen, *Yangzhou Bajia Shiliao*.

16. For Wang Shishen's rendition of plum blossoms, see *EB*, no. 50, leaf G and no. 51, leaf D. For Jin Nong's version, see *EB*, no. 62.

17. See *EB*, nos. 54 and 55.

18. Examples of their works can be seen in *EB*, nos. 52 and 58.

19. See *EB*, nos. 68-70.

20. See *EB*, no. 64 and a version of his *Guiqu Tu*, reproduced in Suzuki Kei et al, *Comprehensive Illustrated Catalog of Chinese Paintings* (Tokyo, 1982), II, 86-91, S 9-003.

21. See *EB*, no. 74.

22. See *EB*, nos. 36 and 37, as compared to no. 34.

23. See no. 178 in Lin Shuzhong and Zhou Yiyin, *Zhongguo Lidai Huihua Tulu* (Tianjin, 1981).

24. See Luo Ping's *Portrait of Ding Jing*, in *Yiyuan Duoying*, no. 18 (Shanghai, 1982), p. 41.

25. See *EB*, no. 55.

26. For some discussion on the painting development in Guangdong, see two exhibition catalogs: The Art Gallery, Chinese University of Hong Kong, *Landscape Paintings by Kwangtung Masters during the Ming and Ch'ing Periods*, with introductory essay by Chu-ting Li (Hong Kong, 1973); and City Museum and Art Gallery, *Kwangtung Painting*, with introductory essays by Chuang Shen and Lawrence C. S. Tam (Hong Kong, 1973).

27. See *EB*, no. 88, especially Leaf A. Also, see Christina Chu, 'An Overview of Li Jian's Painting' in this issue.

Epilog: Rubric and Art History

The author is grateful to the Interdisciplinary MA Program in the Humanities, Arizona State University, for providing release time from teaching in spring, 1989, during which the present article was conceived and written.

1. This gave rise to the title of Victoria Contag's book, *Die Beiden Steine* (Braunsweig, 1950).

2. See Wu Weiye, *Meicun Jiancang Gao* (*Siku Congkan* edition), *juan* 11, p. 64.

This idea of Nine Friends inspired Zhu Wenzhen to formulate his own Ten Wise Painters. See Jiang Baolin, *Molin Jinhua* (Taipei, 1975), pp. 37-38.

3. An early suggestion that the nomenclature can be found in Zhang Geng's *Guochao Huazheng Lu* is totally without base. See the text in the *Huashi Congshu* edition. Also see the article by Huyan Yepa, 'Yangzhou Baguai Huafeng' ('The Painting Style of the Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou'), in *Yilin Conglu* (Hong Kong, 1975), II, 314, where the suggestion was made.

4. See *YHYL*, *juan* 2, p. 14b. For Wang Yun's other writings, see *Yanshan Conggao*, 2 Vols., in Ch'u Wan-li and Liu Chao-yu eds. *A Collection of Unpublished Manuscripts in the Ming and Ch'ing Dynasties* (Taipei, 1976). Also see n.52 below.

5. For a convenient reference, see the chart prepared by Bian Xiaoxuan in *Yangzhou Baguai Huaji* (Jiangsu, 1985), p. 3.

6. (Taipei reprint, 1981), p. 229. The earliest preface to this text is dated in the year of 1875 (p. 2). However, Li's own preface is dated 1894 (p. 12) and, in the *liyan* section, he mentioned that the compilation began from 1865 and ended in 1895, with many additions and revisions in between (p. 26). We know for certain that its publication took place either in or

after 1897; see the *liyan* and the post-script (p. 363).

7. A more precise definition of *guai* will be attempted below. Advocates of the Eight Eccentrics differ among themselves regarding its meaning. A breadth of content is inherent, voiding the necessity of differentiating *guai* from such overlapping terms as *kuang* ('crazy'), *yi* ('untrammelled'), *ye* ('uncouth' or 'uninhibited'), *ci* ('foolish'), etc. For ease of discussion, we will use *guai* as an umbrella term covering a wide spectrum of behavior and artistic pattern that border on the strange and the unusual.

8. For a convenient reference to Lin Xia's *Ode to the Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou*, see Bian Xiaoxuan ed. *Zheng Banqiao Quanji* (Shandong, 1985), pp. 641-42. Lin Xia (active during the Guangxu period, was a contemporary and a close friend of Wang Yun; he wrote the preface to the latter's *Bu Yihe Ming Kao* (dated the ninth year of Guangxu, 1883). However, his laudation of the Eight Eccentrics is in diametrical opposition to Wang's denigration of them. For a biographical account of Lin Xia, see Zhang Minke, *Hansong Ge Tanyi Suolu* (Shanghai, 1936), *juan* 3, p. 9b.

9. See, for example, Chen Dayu, "Yangzhou Baguai" de Yishu Fengge' ('The Art of The Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou'), *Yishu Zongheng*, no. 1 (February 1982), p. 105; and *Yangzhou Baguai Huaji*, which includes Hua Yan. But also see Yang Xin, in *Yangzhou Baguai* (Beijing, 1981), p. 4; he opposes Hua Yan's inclusion on ground of style and life pattern.

10. *YHYL*, *juan* 2, pp. 14b-15a.

11. For example, Gu Linwen's *Yangzhou Bajia Shiliao* (Shanghai, 1962) and Chang Wan-li and Hu Jen-mou, comps. *The Selected Painting and Calligraphy of the Eight Eccentrics of Yangchow* (Hong Kong, 1969). In the 70s and 80s, Tsuruta Takeyoshi of Japan and Yang Xin in China seemed to favor the historicity of Li's list. See Howard Rogers et al, eds. *Kin Nō in Bunjinga Suihen*, IX (Tokyo, 1976); also Yang Xin's *Yangzhou Baguai*, pp. 3-4.

12. See Zheng Qi and Huang Shucheng's summary in "Yangzhou Baguai" Yanjiu Shuping' ('A Summary of Scholarship on "The Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou"'), *Duoyun*, no. 13 (April 1987), pp. 100-105.

13. See the afore-mentioned chart in Bian Xiaoxuan's preface to *Yangzhou Baguai Huaji*, p. 3.

14. See Bian Xiaoxuan, 'Preface' to *Yangzhou Baguai Huaji*, p. 3. Bian's inclusion of artists listed by Huang Binhong and Chen Hengke of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century is anomalous in historical studies unless their views reflect earlier sources.

15. We shall not ignore Li Mian, who was Wang Yun's choice. See above.

16. For Gao Fenghan, see *EB*, pp. 106-107. Also see his *nianpu* in Li Jitao, *Gao Fenghan* (Shanghai, 1963), pp. 9ff, specifically pp. 19-24. For a recent argument in favor of Gao Fenghan's inclusion, see Qin Lingyun, *Yangzhou Bajia Conghua* (Shanghai, 1985), p. 2, where he makes allusion regarding Gao's affinity of style and life pattern to the Eight Eccentrics.

17. See *EB*, pp. 226.

18. For a reproduction, see Sotheby's auction catalog, *Fine Chinese Paintings*, New York, 3 June 1985, lot 69.

19. These two, Min Zhen and Luo Ping, might conceivably have crossed paths in the capital; but it is highly doubtful whether they ever met in Yangzhou. Between 1779 and 1799, Luo Ping was fully active in Beijing and only returned toward the end of his life. See Chen Jinling, *Luo Liangfeng* (Shanghai, 1981), especially the *nianpu*, pp. 32ff.

20. See the preface by Bian Xiaoxuan to *Yangzhou Baguai Yanjiu Ziliao Congshu* (Jiangsu, 1985), pp. 3ff. Some of the typical generalizations about the art of Eight Eccentrics are originality and empirical approach. Some, not all, of them do display originality and empiricism, but only some of the time. Others are dubious on both grounds. I have the suspicion that, particularly in dealing with empiricism in art, scholars in modern times tend to take the artists' or critics' spoken words for granted, and seldom examine the works in question. This is the case of Zheng Xie. When Zheng Xie commented on bamboo, his words indicate that he observed the bamboo in various atmospheric and timely conditions. However, it should also be observed that his later bamboo frequently border on formulae painting. Jin Nong's style of painting *prunus* does not exactly break away from the known tradition. When praising the spontaneity of the eccentrics, critic-historians have invariably pointed to the

achievements of one or two individuals, for example Huang Shen's adoption of themes taken from lives of ordinary people or Jin Nong's and Luo Ping's unusual portraits, and not to the group as a whole. In another vein, while they laud the Eccentrics for being expressive in their inscriptions regarding the contemporary ills of the time, these same critics seldom mention that the pictorial elements rarely betray the same intensity or purposefulness.

Others, such as Zhuang Bohe, in 'Yangzhou Baguai di Chuangzao Jingshen' ('The Creative Spirit of the Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou'), *Yishujia*, no.8 (1976), p.8, speak of their disillusionment with reality or with official career. Yang Xin in *Yangzhou Baguai*, pp. 4-6, also comments on their shared fate: the majority were born into poor families of the intelligentsia; they had classical educations, and whereas they were talented, they endured hardship and poverty. Some resigned after having offended their superiors. The intriguing aspect of this characterization is that while truthful to some extent, they are never fully applicable to every Eccentric. Each generalization is followed by exceptions that defy the rule.

21. See Zheng Qi and Huang Shucheng, "'Yangzhou Baguai" Yanjiu Shuping,' p. 102.

22. See Zhou Jiyin, 'Qingdai Yangzhou Huapai' ('The Yangzhou School of Painting during the Qing Period'), *Jiangsu Huakan*, no. 6 (1979), pp. 32-34; and Xi Feng's article in *Yishu Zongheng*, no. 1 (February 1982), pp. 94-103, 'Qingdai Yangzhou Huapai Shishu'

('An Inquiry into the Yangzhou School of Painting during the Qing Dynasty'). Also see the exhibition held in 1984 at The Art Gallery, Chinese University of Hong Kong, entitled *Painting by Yangzhou Artists of the Qing Dynasty from the Palace Museum*. This exhibition and its catalog (Hong Kong, 1984) exemplify the trend to broaden the inquiry to the whole of Yangzhou artistic currents.

23. See Professor Ho Ping-ti's article, 'The Salt Merchants of Yang-chou: A Study of Commerical Capitalism in Eighteenth Century China,' *Harvard Journal of Asian Studies*, XVII (1954), pp. 130-168. Also see Professor Frederick Mote's essay, 'The Intellectual Climate in Eighteenth-century China: Glimpses of Beijing, Suzhou and Yangzhou in the Qianlong Period,' *Phoebus* 6, no. 1, pp. 17-55, especially pp. 33ff. Other writings of relevance include: Zuo Buqing, 'Qingdai Yanshang di Shengshui Shulue' ('On the Rise and Fall of the Salt Merchants'), *Gugong Bowuyuan Yuankan*, no. 1 (1986), pp. 49-58; and Chen Chuanxi, 'Lun Yangzhou Yanshang he Yangzhou Huapai ji Qita' ('On the Salt Merchants of Yangzhou and the Yangzhou School of Painting'), *Jiuzhou Xuekan*, no. 5 (September 1987), pp. 33-58.

24. For a critique of the text, see Wu Bijiang, *Shuhua Shulu Jieti Bu Jia-bian*, in *Huayuan Bijie* (Taipei, 1971), pp. 392-394. See also Ding Fubao and Zhou Yunqing, *Sibu Zonglu Yishu Bian* (Shanghai, 1957), I, 20.

25. YHYL, *juan 2*, p. 14b.

26. YHYL, *juan 2*, p. 15a.

27. See quotation below. The prevalent assumption that it was the orthodox painters that rejected and denied the art of the eccentrics is only partially true. Orthodox painters may indeed take pride in their being in the mainstream. Some, for instance, Shen Zongqian, may even attack the so-called heterodox; but even he no longer attributed inherent evil to the Northern school, as his predecessors had done. Others felt no strong antipathy one way or the other. Nor is the assumption always true that the eccentrics rebelled against the orthodoxy of the Southern school. During the Qianlong era, a number of them worked side by side, with a degree of tolerance that was far more liberal and liberating than the prejudicial criticism of modern critics. This is best attested in Zhu Wenzhen's formulation of Ten Wise Painters (see *Molin Jinhua*, pp. 37-38); Zhu, a student of Zheng Xie, not only decided not to include his teacher, but also was willing to place Gao Xiang and Gao Fenghan by the side of such orthodox artists as Li Shizhuo and Dong Bangda. For Shen Zongqian's attack on the rival schools, see his *Jiezhou Xuehua Bian*, in Yu Anlan ed. *Hualun Congkan*, I, 325; for his disparagement of Huang Shen, see p. 380. For his tolerance of the Northern school, see p. 326.

28. YHYL, *juan 2*, p. 8b. For Yan's work, see *Paintings by Yangzhou Artists*, nos. 12-15.

29. See YHYL, *juan 2*, pp. 5a-b.

30. YHYL, *juan 2*, pp. 15a-b. Another teacher of Wang Yun, Master Li Xinmen, appears only once in the text, *juan 2*, p. 30a.

31. *YHYL*, *juan 2*, pp. 6a-b.

32. It may be useful to remark that the Eight Eccentrics, whoever they are, do not follow a coherent style or submit to a set of themes or subjects. The first half of Wang Yun's exposition should suggest that. Also, the quotation from Wang Yun makes it clear that they are eight individuals, and not a group.

33. See *YHYL*, *liyan*, p. 1a.

34. See *YHYL*, preface, p. 1a. That is, with the exception of Luo Ping, about whom Wang Yun appeared to have some lingering memories. This is because a local elder, Li Zhixiong, was befriended by Luo. See *YHYL*, *juan 2*, p. 9b. Also, see n.52 below.

35. *YHYL*, *juan 2*, pp. 13b-14b. Wang Yun (Qingci) was a student of Wang Hui, and is not related to the author of the text.

36. Wang Yun's (Qingci) biography appears in *YHYL*, *juan 1*, pp. 6a-b; Guan Xining's in pp. 13a-14a; and Fang Shishu in pp. 9b-10b.

37. See no. 50 in *The Image of the Mind* (Princeton, 1984), where Guan Xining (Kuan Hsi-ning) cooperated with Wang Shishen and Wu Kan on a painting of *Butterflies*, dated 1741. Wang Yun (Qingci) resembles Yuan Jiang and Yuan Yao in terms of pictorial concepts; his polished surface is several notches away from the mainstream. Fang Shishu, on the other hand, is often lauded for having the potential to reach the level set by the Wangs but for his untimely death. See Zhang Geng, *Guochao Huazheng Xulu* (*Huashi Congshu* edition), *juan 2*, p. 101.

38. *YHYL*, *juan 2*, pp. 12b-13b. Only

Yu Jianhua, in his article, 'Yangzhou Baguai di Chengxian Qihou' ('Tradition and Creativity in the Art of the Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou'), notes the connection, but does not elaborate. Also see Zhou Jiyin et al, *Jiangsu Lidai Hua Jia* (Jiangsu, 1985) for Yu Chan's resuscitation in modern times. In part, this revival is 'ideological' in nature, based on his linkage with the Taiping Rebellion. For Yu Chan's painting, see pls. 168 and 169 in *Zhongguo Meishu Quanji*, XI (Shanghai, 1988), which do not appear to be as bombastic as Wang Yun seemed to suggest.

39. *YHYL*, *juan 2*, pp. 12b-13b.

40. It is important to note Wang Yun's 'rear-view' perspective. By this time, the Qianlong artists were gone, and their art was not observed *in process*. Their paintings became fixed entities, with a concurrent muting of time and sequence. The earlier attempts to *evolve* a distinctive personal style often were lost in the accumulation of later works. Then there were the inevitable overlays of fakes and forgeries, which trailed the rising fame; they helped to further solidify the 'image' of those later works, but at the same time, to dilute the qualitative level. For example, the vast majority of Zheng Xie's works, whether genuine or attributed, are dated later than 1754 and reflect a simplified approach to bamboo painting. A cluster of bamboo plants, no more than two or three, and slashes of bamboo leaves, complete the picture. When full compositions of pre-1754 are shown, for example, the *Tokyo Ink Bamboo Screen*, and

Princeton's *Misty Bamboo on Distant Mountains*, the result could be startling, and so, as it did, unwarranted suspicion.

41. See for instance Yang Shiqing, in *YHYL*, *juan* 4, pp. 8b-9a. To Wang Yun, however, Yang overcame his shortcomings by a scholarly temperament, which included an enthusiasm for rubbings of ancient stele and vassels and manifested skill in poetry. Yang was thought to belong to an untrammelled class and to be without vulgarity.

42. A modern critic of Wang Yun, Chen Chuanxi, has responded that this is precisely why the eccentrics are eccentrics. See his 'Lun Yangzhou Yanshang he Yangzhou Huapai Ji Qita.' What Wang Yun considered to be undesirable, he has taken as a sign of growing modernity. This pertains to quick execution, which is seen as the result of nascent capitalism, when the artist is both the producer and the retailer. And the *dayou* poems that accompany the works not only reflect the same consideration in economy, but also are a prelude to the vernacular literature that was to come.

Chen was right in a number of ways, except that the first half of it strikes a note of economic determinism at the expense of quality. It is true that among the so-called Eight Eccentrics' works, lapses of quality exist. The so-called *fanpiao* ('meal ticket') syndrome is all too common, especially with well-known artists approaching old age. That could have caused critics like Wang Yun to deplore such shabby practices. Zheng Xie admitted

that, nearing his sixties, his art entered into a simpler phase after having gone through a prior stage in which fuller and more elaborate compositions were the norm. Was he rationalizing for having dashed off a casual painting here or another there? The reality of patronage however operates on different levels. As Ginger Hsü demonstrated in her article, there were short-term patrons just as there were long-term ones. For those who walked in the door, demanded a painting, never to appear again, a Yangzhou artist could have dashed off a few strokes and charged, regardless of the quality involved, according to size. For long-term patrons, those in whose house the artist may be lodged, or those who substantially improve his life style, such casual products may be dubious at best. In fact they could act as a detriment, causing the patrons to lose interest and dispense with the artist's services.

43. The tendency today is to laud the *wenren hua* affiliation of the eccentrics.

44. This also runs contrary to recent efforts to interpret the Eight Eccentrics as having broadened the *wenren* ideal in painting. For an example, see Shi Lan, "'Yangzhou Baguai" kuoda liao "Wenrenhua" di Biaoxian Lingyu' ('The Eight Eccentrics and the Broadening of the Expressive Range of Scholar-painting'), *Wenwu*, no. 5 (1983), pp. 84-87.

45. See Xu Shennong, 'Shitan "Yangzhou Baguai" di Tihua Yishu' ('A Probe into the Art of Inscription by the Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou'),

Yishu Zongheng, no. 1 (February 1982), pp. 117-126; Chen Dayu, "Yangzhou Baguai" di Yishu Fengge' ('The Style and Approach of the Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou'), *Ibid.*, pp. 104-116; Xi Feng, 'Tan Yangzhou Baguai de Shihua Jihe' ('On the Relationship between Poetry and Painting in the art of the Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou'), *Meishu Yanjiu*, no. 2 (1983), pp. 64-66; and Shi Lan, "Yangzhou Baguai Kuoda liao 'Wenren Hua' de Biaoxian Lingyu." 46. *YHYL*, *juan* 2, pp. 14b-15a.

47. *YHYL*, *juan* 2, pp. 31b-32a, under the entry of Yuan Xianzhong.

48. *YHYL*, *juan* 2, p. 35b, entry under Xu Zhenjia.

49. *Zheng Banqiao Quanji*, p. 218.

50. See *Zheng Banqiao Quanji*, p. 217.

51. Wang Yun's attitude toward Huang Shen shows a degree of ambivalence. His entry on the Fujian master is largely derived from *YHFL* and *Molin Jinhua* (pp. 23-24), but also differs slightly. Regarding the poetic achievement, he adds the line, 'master Lei Cuiting also said that his poems evoke a realm that is other-worldly, a realm where the sheer precipice and cliff reign and where the mist and cloud gather.' The effort he made in incorporating this laudation of Huang Shen's poetry underscores an appreciative attitude, much as he refused to acknowledge Huang's pictorial achievement. See *YHYL*, *juan* 3, pp. 6b-7a.

52. For Wang Yun's admiration for Jin Nong, see his *Shi'eryan Zhai Suilu*, in *Biji Xiaoshuo Daguan*, Pt. 4, Vol. 9, p. 5948. For his high regard of Luo

Ping, see *YHYL*, *juan* 2, p. 7b, under the entry of Jiao Chun and p. 9b, under that of Li Zhixiong. In both instances, his attitude conveys a deep sense of respect, addressing Luo either as *jun* ('gentleman') or *xiansheng* ('master').

53. For Wang Su, see *YHYL*, *juan* 2, pp. 6b-7b.

54. See *YHYL*, *juan* 4, pp. 17a-18a. While praising Lianxi's art, including his orchid painting, Wang Yun considered him less than ideal. His criticism focuses on Lianxi's dependence on painting for income. The latter thus was forced by circumstance to 'depart from ancient methods in favor of current trends, thus incurring criticism from those with discerning eyes.'

55. See Chen Hengke's *Wenrenhua zhi Jiazhi* ('Scholar Painting and Its Values'), included in Yu Anlan ed. *Hualun Congkan* (Beijing, 1962), II, pp. 692-97.

56. One could only assume that the paintings of his teacher, Wu Xizhai, must in some way conform to the rules of Xu and Huang.

Glossary

阿芙蓉	<i>afurong</i>	查士標	Cha Shibiao
艾塘曲錄	<i>Aitang Chulu</i>	常惺惺齋書畫題跋	<i>Changxingxing Zhai Shuhua Tiba</i>
アジア歴史地圖	<i>Ajia Rekishi Chizu</i>	陳邦彥	Chen Bangyan
青木正兒	Aoki Masaru	陳傳席	Chen Chuanxi
青木正兒全集	<i>Aoki Masaru Zenshū</i>	陳大羽	Chen Dayu
巴達巴顏	Bada Bayan	陳衡恪	Chen Hengke
八大山人	Bada Shanren	陳閔	Chen Hong
白壽彝	Bai Shouyi	陳洪綬	Chen Hongshou
白雪石	Bai Xueshi	陳金陵	Chen Jinling
百部叢書	<i>Baibu Congshu</i>	陳炯	Chen Lang
百梅集	<i>Baimei Ji</i>	陳枚	Chen Mei
白描	<i>baimiao</i>	陳鵬年	Chen Pengnian
巴郎阿	Balang'a	陳士俊	Chen Shijun
板橋詩鈔	<i>Banqiao Shichao</i>	陳淳	Chen Shun
鮑志道	Bao Zhidao	陳奕禧	Chen Yixi
寶迂閣書畫錄	<i>Baoyuge Shuhua Lu</i>	陳永价	Chen Yongjie
八旗滿洲氏族通譜	<i>Baqi Manzhou Shizhu Tongpu</i>	陳章	Chen Zhang
八旗通志初集	<i>Baqi Tongzhi Chuji</i>	陳撰	Chen Zhuan
八旗文經作者考	<i>Baqi Wenjing Zuozhe Kao</i>	陳子壯	Chen Zizhuang
貝子	<i>beizi</i>	程梁	Cheng Liang
邊壽民	Bian Shoumin	程琳	Cheng Lin
卞孝萱	Bian Xiaoxuan	程夢星	Cheng Mengxing
秘殿珠林	<i>Bidian Zhulin</i>	程榮	Cheng Qi
筆記小說大觀	<i>Biji Xiaoshuo Daguan</i>	程堂	Cheng Tang
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辟支佛	<i>Bizhi Fo</i>	程志道	Cheng Zhidao
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曹樹德	Cao Shude	辭海	<i>Cihai</i>
曹雪芹	Cao Xueqin	慈禧	Cixi
曹霑	Cao Zhan	崔國輔	Cui Guofu
		戴洪	Dai Hong
		戴熙	Dai Xi

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大陸雜誌	<i>Dalu Zazhi</i>	朵雲	<i>Duoyun</i>
到處因循緣嗜酒	<i>daochu yinxun yuan shijiu</i>		
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皇帝實錄	<i>(Qianlong) Huangdi Shilu</i>		
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皇帝實錄	<i>(Jiaqing) Huangdi Shilu</i>	范寬	Fan Kuan
大清一統志	<i>Daqing Yitong Zhi</i>	方琮	Fang Cong
大同	<i>datong</i>	方士庶	Fang Shishu
大雅之林	<i>daya zhi lin</i>	飯票	<i>fanpiao</i>
打油	<i>dayou</i>	樊榭山房文集	<i>Fanxie Shanfang Wenji</i>
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董源	Dong Yuan	稿	<i>gao</i>
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冬心畫竹題記	<i>Dongxin Huazhu Tiji</i>	高晉	Gao Jin
冬心先生集	<i>Dongxin Xiansheng Ji</i>	高士奇	Gao Shiqi
冬心先生隨筆	<i>Dongxin Xiansheng Suibi</i>	高翔	Gao Xiang
冬心續集	<i>Dongxin Xuji</i>	高儼	Gao Yan
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 顧麟文 Gu Linwen
 顧祿 Gu Lu
 顧文淵 Gu Wenyuan
 顧炎武 Gu Yanwu
 顧貞觀 Gu Zhenguan
 怪 *guai*
 關槐 Guan Huai
 關仝 Guan Tong
 管希寧 Guan Xining
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 梁國治 Liang Guozhi
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 梁詩正 Liang Shizheng
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 流寓 *liuyu*
 呂紀 Lü Ji
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 呂留良 Lü Liuliang
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 門應兆 Men Yingzhao
 孟森 Meng Sen
 門客 *menke*
 米芾 Mi Fu

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明善堂	Mingshan Tang	錢維城	Qian Weicheng
明史	<i>Mingshi</i>	錢選	Qian Xuan
墨林今話	<i>Molin Jinhua</i>	錢泳	Qian Yong
墨妙珠林	<i>Momiao Zhulin</i>	乾隆南巡圖	<i>Qianlong Nanxuntu</i>
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畝	<i>mou</i>	秦嶺雲	Qin Lingyun
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