

In echoing the tenth-century stone reliefs at Qixia Si (see FIG. 65) and the carvings at the tomb of the Northern Song emperor Yingzong (see FIG. 66), the schematic mountain form of Wutai Shan at Dunhuang — with its unmodulated iron-wire outlines and solid bands of colors — has come full circle to emerge as a new beginning in Chinese landscape painting history. Known as the blue-and-green (*qinglü*) or gold-and-green (*jinbi*) style, this became a fixed primitivist idiom in subsequent centuries of Chinese landscape painting.

4 Two Dong Yuans: Dual Paradigms of Naturalism and Calligraphic Expression

HOW DO WE LOOK AT CLASSICAL Chinese paintings in modern universal art museums? One answer is to see how art is history by studying archaeologically discovered ancient works in a historical sequence of stylistic development.¹ China and Europe possess the two most ancient traditions of representational painting, but they follow very different trajectories. This holds true as well for academic traditions that evolved to explain these two pictorial traditions. In the West, archaeologically authenticated and dated objects are exhibited as the material evidence of an art history that shows a chronological development both in style and in content. The East, on the other hand, followed the paradigm of genealogy and viewed Chinese painting history in terms of exemplary stylistic traditions, each an independent lineage derived from leading early masters and perpetuated by later followers and copyists. In recent years, art historians working in the Western academic tradition have attempted to formulate a coherent narrative of classical Chinese painting styles. But this is no easy task: many archaeologically recovered early works have not been fully understood or precisely dated, making it difficult to establish a reliable developmental sequence. In addition, the Chinese custom of emulating past masters led to many generations of copies and forgeries, so that ascertaining the original paradigmatic styles of great masters such as Dong Yuan — and their development through different time periods — is a highly critical and controversial undertaking.

How to proceed then? Chinese painting has its own visual language. The formal analysis of artworks yields the keys to that language, which unlock the system that brought it into being, furnishing the means to piece together a history of its development. Connecting the evidence of classical Chinese paintings to a history of ideas in context brings us comprehensive understanding of Chinese culture as a whole. The present chapter seeks to elucidate this approach by focusing on two masterworks by the tenth-century painter Dong Yuan (active 930s–960s). I believe that these two works can be understood as Founding Paradigms or prime objects — supported by archeologically dated monuments and analyzed through their “formal sequences” and “linked solutions” (George Kubler’s terms)² — that were repeatedly revived and deconstructed in later periods through a process known as “genealogical transmission from masters to pupils” (*shizhi chuanshou*).³

¹ See Fong, “Why Chinese Painting Is History,” 230–57.

² Kubler, *Shape of Time*, 33ff.

³ Basing myself erroneously, at first, on the old Wolflin-Bachhofer “graphic-plastic-ornate” schema, my earlier studies, in the early 1960s, of Qian Xuan (ca. 1235–before 1307) and Ni Zan

FIGURE 1 *Sitting Alone under a Mountain*, 8th century. Painting on a plectrum guard of a *biwa*. Shōsōin Treasury, Nara, Japan

FIGURE 2 *Hawk and Ducks*, 8th century. Painting on a plectrum guard of a *biwa*. Shōsōin Treasury, Nara, Japan

FIGURE 3 *Tiger Hunt*, 8th century. Painting on a plectrum guard of a *biwa*. Shōsōin Treasury, Nara, Japan



Early Chinese monumental landscape painting differs greatly from the *plein-air* work of modern Western painters, such as Impressionist pictures that feature the effects of outdoor light and atmosphere. According to the fifth-century scholar Yan Yanzhi (384–456), both Chinese calligraphy (*shu*) and painting (*hua*), as pictorial diagrams (*tuzai*, image-signs or visual schemata), are to be read and visualized (*guanshi*), rather than merely seen or viewed as pictures.⁴ By the late seventh or the early eighth century, three basic visual schemata of early landscape painting had developed: first, a vertical composition dominated by tall elements; second, a panoramic view filled by a series of horizontal elements; and a third one combining the two.⁵ As found on the painted plectrum guards of three eighth-century musical instruments (*biwa*) in the Shōsōin Treasury, Nara, Japan, these correspond to the three distant-views (*sanyuan*) detailed by the leading eleventh-century landscape painter and theorist Guo Xi (ca. 1000–ca. 1090):

Mountains have three distant-views. From the mountain base looking up toward the mountaintop is called the high distant-view (*gaoyuan*). From the front of the mountain looking toward the back of the mountain is called the deep distant-view (*shenyuan*). And from a nearby mountain looking past distant mountains is called the flat distant-view (*pingyuan*).⁶

The three distant-views compositional schemata have been basic in classical Chinese landscape art ever since. The high distant-view *Sitting under a Mountain* (FIG. 1) depicts soaring mountain peaks dominating the tall vertical picture format. The flat distant-view *Hawk and Ducks* (FIG. 2) shows a panorama of rolling receding hills. And the deep distant-view *Tiger Hunt* (FIG. 3) is a valley scene with tall elements in the foreground and low-lying ones in the distance.

These high, flat, and deep distant-view vistas solicit the participation of the viewer. In *Critical Valuations of Famous Painters of the Northern Song Period* (*Shengchao minghua ping*), Liu Daochun (mid-11th century) summarized the great achievements of two paradigmatic early Northern Song landscape masters, Li Cheng (919–967) and Fan Kuan (ca. 960–ca. 1030):

(1301–1374) had fallen short of the mark. See Fong, “Reflections on Chinese Art History,” 31–32.

⁴ See Zhang Yanyuan, *Lidai minghua ji*, juan 1: 1 in *Huashi congshu* 1: 5; Acker, *Some T'ang and Pre-T'ang Texts* 1: 65–66. See also Fong, “Prologue,” 1–3.

⁵ See Fong, “Toward a Structural Analysis,” 388–97; Fong, “How to Understand Chinese Painting,” 282–92.

⁶ Guo Xi and Guo Si, *Linguan gaozhi* in *Yu Jianhua*, *Zhongguo hualun leibian* 1: 639–40.

FIGURE 4 Fan Kuan (ca. 960–ca. 1030). *Travelers among Streams and Mountains*, ca. 1000. Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk, 206.3 × 103.3 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei



"In Li Cheng's painting we see faraway sceneries of a thousand miles in a close-up view. Through Fan Kuan's art we view deep vistas without leaving our seats."⁷ The discovery of new ways of seeing nature in the mind's eye revolutionized early Northern Song landscape painting. As Shen Gua (1031–1095), a noted Song scientist whose interests included painting and calligraphy, observed: "If one paints as one's eye sees, one shows only one peak [at one time]; one will not see layers upon layers of mountain peaks, nor can one see what lies behind the valleys."⁸ The Neo-Confucian thinker Shao Yong (1011–1077) similarly proposed that things should be observed (*guanwu*) "with the Mind (*xin*)" and "in light of their own principles (*yiwu guanwu*)" rather than with the "eye (*yan*)," since only the Mind (*xin*) can perceive the underlying Truth (*zhen*) of things. Shao added: "To observe things in terms of things [that is, to embody things] is to follow Nature (*xing*). But to observe things in terms of Self is to follow feelings (*qing*)."⁹ Thus, in Chinese landscape painting, mastering representation (*xingsi*, or form-likeness) always went hand-in-hand with capturing the underlying Truth of things.

Paradigms in Early Chinese Monumental Landscape Painting

Mastering mimetic realism (*zhenshi*) in landscape painting reached an early climax during the Northern Song period (960–1127) in northern China. The trajectory of this development was encapsulated in a special exhibition of Northern Song paintings and calligraphy organized by the National Palace Museum, Taipei, in July 2008, where four early paradigms of Chinese monumental landscape painting dating from the mid-tenth to the early twelfth century were displayed together for the first time in a single case: Dong Yuan's *Riverbank*, dating to about 940, in the collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fan Kuan's *Travelers among Streams and Mountains*, of about 1000, Guo Xi's *Early Spring*, dated 1072, and Li Tang's (ca. 1070s–ca. 1150s) *Wind in Pines among Myriad Valleys*, dated 1124, all in the National Palace Museum, Taipei.¹⁰

In *Travelers among Streams and Mountains* (FIG. 4), Fan Kuan, a native of Shanxi province in north China, developed a "raindrop" (*yudian*) texture

FIGURE 5 *Amitabha Pure Land Paradise with secular landscape*, first half of the 6th century. Reverse of Stele 2. Sandstone; height 119 cm, width 64.5 cm, depth 24.8 cm. Excavated in 1954 from Wanfo Si, Chengdu, Sichuan province. Sichuan Provincial Museum, Chengdu



7 Liu Daochun, *Shengchao minghua ping*, juan 50: 1v; see also Chen Yunru, entry on Fan Kuan, *Xishan xinglu tu*, 57.

8 See Shen Gua, *Mengxi bitan*, 146.

9 See Fung Yu-lan, *History of Chinese Philosophy*, 466–69.

10 The exhibition and catalogue were titled *Grand View: Special Exhibition of Northern Song Painting and Calligraphy* and *Grand View: Special Exhibition of Ju Ware from the Northern Song Dynasty*. See Fong, "Deconstructing Paradigms," 26, fig. 4; see also Chen Yunru, Entry on Dong Yuan, 38–43.

pattern (*cun*) to capture the gritty geological peculiarities of the Taihang Mountain landscape, where thick vegetation grows in the wind-deposited loess soil on the mountaintops. Depicting rocks and tree forms with stippling texture strokes, Fan Kuan vividly portrayed their tactile surfaces, but his ultimate goal was to create a cosmic vision that goes beyond a mere retinal record of reality. Fan's picture plane is dominated by a central vertical monolith flanked by two subsidiary peaks, a pictorial equivalent of the Chinese ideograph *shan* 山 (mountain), which recalls the Buddhist cosmic Mount Sumeru — the “world axis” behind the centrally aligned Buddha image seen in a sixth-century representation of Buddhist paradise on a stele from Wanfo Si, in Chengdu, Sichuan province (FIG. 5). Fan Kuan, the mountain recluse, invites us to meditate on human life and the cosmos by meandering through mountain paths with additive, frontally conceived near-to-distant views, each framed by a moving focus that roams unhurriedly upward, to the right and to the left, zooming in and pulling away.

In *Early Spring* (FIG. 6), Guo Xi, the favorite court painter of the late Northern Song emperor Shenzong (r. 1068–1085), brought compelling moods and feelings (*qing*) into his mimetically “real” landscape art. In contrast to Fan Kuan's additive rock and tree forms, Guo used layered applications of ink wash to describe the blurring effects of mist and fog. In so doing, he was able both to create a spatially unified composition and to evoke the temporal sensations of season and time of day — thereby achieving a new degree of mimetic realism. By Shao Yong's definition, however, Guo had replaced Fan's earlier vision of Truth with illusionistic vexation and uneasy foreboding. As Shao had noted, “Nature is impartial and enlightened; feelings are partial and blind.... To give free reign to one's Self leads to feelings. Feelings lead to obscuring; and obscuring leads to benightedness.”¹¹

By the late eleventh century Su Shi (1037–1101), leader of the literati-painting aesthetic, had famously denounced mimetic realism in painting, stating that “anyone who judges painting by form-likeness [*xingsi*] shows the insight of a child!”¹² Su's claim that all cultural practices — poetry, prose, calligraphy, and painting — had reached perfection during the Tang period seemed to anticipate twentieth-century Western discourses on the end of art history.¹³ Yet, from the Chinese philosophical point of view — that is, in a universe of ceaseless alternations of change and continuity without end — there can be no end to either art or history. Su Shi's pronouncement

¹¹ See Chen Yunru, Entry on Dong Yuan, 38–43.

¹² Adapted from Bush, *Chinese Literati on Painting*, 26.

¹³ See modern Western writings of Hans Belting (e.g., *End of the History of Art?*) and Arthur Danto (e.g., “End of Art?”).

FIGURE 6 Guo Xi (ca. 1000–ca. 1090). *Early Spring*, dated 1072. Hanging scroll; ink and light color on silk, 158.3 × 108.1 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei

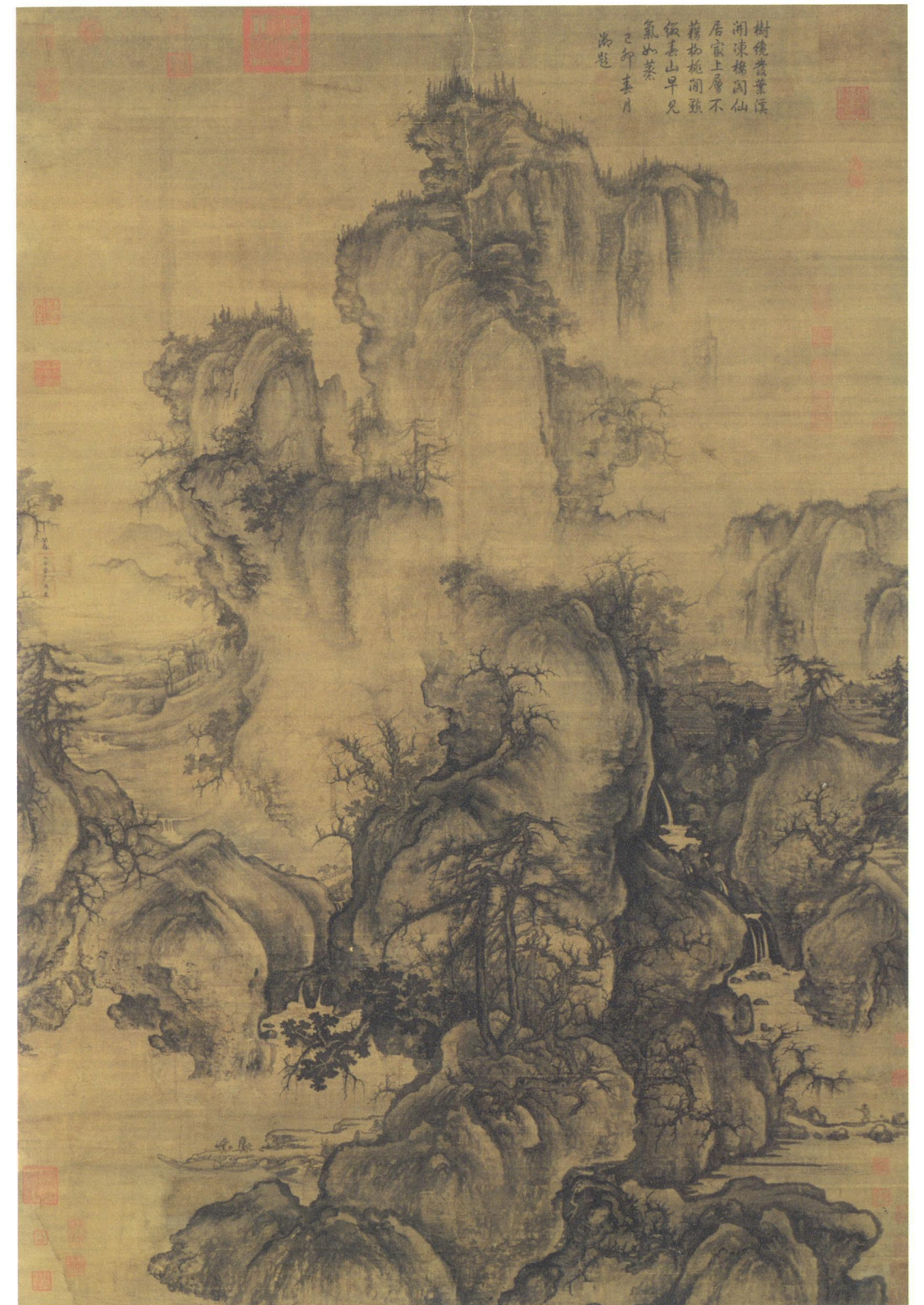




FIGURE 7 Emperor Huizong
(r. 1101–1125). *Finches
and Bamboo*. Detail.
Handscroll; ink and color
on silk, 33.7 × 55.4 cm.
The Metropolitan Museum
of Art, John M. Crawford, Jr.,
Collection. Purchase,
Douglas Dillon Gift, 1981
(1981.278)



FIGURE 8 Emperor Huizong
(r. 1101–1125). *Crows in
Willows*. Detail. Handscroll;
ink on paper, 34 × 223 cm.
Shanghai Museum

against mimetic realism thus expressed his humanistic optimism about the future of the arts, as he saw archaistic revival (*fugu*) of earlier models as his goal. In calling for reformation in art, Su reinstated the primacy of the Mind (*xin*) in art historical transformations of earlier models, rather than literal-minded (childlike) mimetic representation, that is, mere form-likeness.

This explains why at the turn of the twelfth century, Emperor Huizong (r. 1100–1125) abandoned Guo Xi's mimetic illusionism in favor of his Painting Academy's "magic realism" (*shensi*, or supernatural realism), on the one hand, and a return to primitivist archaism (*fugu*), on the other. Magic realism implies a degree of mimetic representation that captures both the form and the spirit of the object depicted, whereas the return to archaism allowed the artist to "present" something of his own personality through the calligraphic reinterpretation of ancient form types. From this dualistic way of thinking, Chinese painting has always been, at one and the same time, a representation of the Object and presentation of the Self.¹⁴ Whereas E. H. Gombrich saw in primitivism a "gravitational pull" away from artistic progress,¹⁵ realism and primitivism coexisted easily in Huizong's paintings. In both his bright springtime *Finches and Bamboo* (FIG. 7) and dark wintry *Crows in Willows* (FIG. 8), Huizong complemented his highly naturalistic representation of his avian subjects with a calligraphic presentation of abstracted landscape details. In contrast to the Chinese dualistic way of concurrently representing and presenting, Western painting, with its interest in corporeal vision, considers art more from the representational than from the presentational point of view. "In the Western tradition," wrote Gombrich, "painting has indeed been pursued as a science. All the works of this tradition ... apply discoveries that are the result of ceaseless experimentation."¹⁶ Gombrich's statement is a concise definition of progress; its alternative, primitivism — a return to earlier masters, which Chinese painters favored¹⁷ — was, in his view, essentially negative, a regressive movement against civilization's hard-earned achievements.¹⁸

Li Tang's *Wind in Pines among Myriad Valleys* (FIG. 9) exemplifies a late Northern Song transformation of an earlier style by Fan Kuan. Born in Heyang, in northern Henan province, Li entered the Imperial Painting Academy under Emperor Huizong around 1120 before joining the Southern Song court in Linan (modern-day Hangzhou); he was promoted to higher

FIGURE 9 Li Tang (ca. 1070s–ca. 1150s). *Wind in Pines among Myriad Valleys*, dated 1124. Hanging scroll; ink and light color on silk, 188.7 × 139.8 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei



¹⁴ Fong, "Prologue."

¹⁵ Gombrich, *Preference for the Primitive*, 280.

¹⁶ Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*, 34.

¹⁷ See Fong, "Archaism as a 'Primitive' Style," 89–109.

¹⁸ Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*, 34.

office under the Southern Song emperor Gaozong (r. 1127–1162). In *Wind in Pines among Myriad Valleys*, Li rejected Guo Xi's atmospheric style in favor of Fan Kuan's tactile treatment of towering mountain peaks. Developing Fan's stippling dots into axelike cutting strokes, Li built his mountain forms with layers of hatchings of varying sizes and ink values, creating a shimmering, wet rock surface (FIG. 10). Compared with Fan Kuan's *Travelers among Streams and Mountains* (FIG. 11), Li's pine trees in the foreground occupy nearly half the height of the large composition. Thus, in exchanging the immeasurable vastness of Fan's earlier Northern Song composition for a more realistic, close-up view, Li Tang, in 1124, moved painting one step closer to the more intimate landscapes of the Southern Song period.

The Precedent of Dong Yuan

An important catalyst for the late Northern Song shift toward archaism was Mi Fu's (1052–1107) rediscovery of the work of Dong Yuan and his "plain and natural" (*pingdan*) sceneries of "streams, bridges, fishing bays, islets, and beaches ... all typical of the Jiangnan [south of the Yangzi River] region."¹⁹

Dong Yuan's career spanned a period of political and artistic transition. After the fall of the Tang dynasty in 907, northern China was governed by a succession of short-lived ruling houses while the region south of the Yangzi River was ruled for a time by the Southern Tang dynasty (937–975), with its capital in modern-day Nanjing. Dong served as a court painter under the Southern Tang with the minor official position of Assistant Administrator of the North Park. The political fragmentation of this period, known as the Five Dynasties (907–960), paralleled a similar fragmentation in the arts. While artists in north China created grand visions of the natural world through ever more descriptive means, artists in the south pursued more expressive goals through a creative revival of archaic paradigms.²⁰ The shift from naturalism to schematic abstraction derived from a return to archaic prototypes is epitomized by Dong Yuan's two surviving masterworks: *Riverbank*, dating about 940 (FIG. 12), in the Metropolitan Museum, and *Wintry Groves and Layered Banks*, of about 970 (FIG. 13), at the Kurokawa Institute of Ancient Cultures, Japan.²¹ These two paintings, both well documented by ample literary references and early imperial seals,²²

¹⁹ Mi Fu, *Lun shanshui hua* in Yu Jianhua, *Zhongguo hualun leibian* 2: 653.

²⁰ Fong, "Archaism as a 'Primitive' Style."

²¹ The convincing attribution of both paintings to Dong Yuan is supported by both literary references and early seals; see Hearn and Fong, *Along the Riverbank*; and Smith and Fong, *Issues of Authenticity*.

²² Fong, "Riverbank," 259–91.



FIGURE 10 Detail of figure 9.
Li Tang, *Wind in Pines among Myriad Valleys*



FIGURE 11 Detail of figure 4.
Fan Kuan, *Travelers among Streams and Mountains*



FIGURE 12 Attributed to Dong Yuan (active 930s–960s). *Riverbank*. Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk, 220.3 × 109.2 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Ex coll.: C. C. Wang Family, Promised Gift of the Oscar L. Tang Family in memory of Douglas Dillon (L.1997.23.1)

FIGURE 13 Dong Yuan (active 930s–960s). *Wintry Groves and Layered Banks*. Hanging scroll; ink and light color on silk, 181.5 × 116.5 cm. Kurokawa Institute of Ancient Cultures, Nishinomiya, Japan



became the paradigmatic early landscape models for all post-Song landscape painters beginning with Qian Xuan (ca. 1235–before 1307) and Zhao Mengfu (1254–1322).²³

It was Richard Barnhart who, following an earlier suggestion by Max Loehr,²⁴ first argued, in 1983, that “if both *The Riverbank* and *Wintry Groves* are the creations of Dong Yuan, then the former must be an early work, perhaps dating from the late 930s, and the latter a product of two or three decades later, near the end of the artist’s life.”²⁵ Barnhart saw the “measured, delicate, and precise *Riverbank*” — with its layered crevices of individual boulders modeled by softly rubbed parallel texture strokes and shading (FIG. 14) — as representing Dong’s early style before his famously amorphous “draping hemp-fiber” (*pima*) texture pattern was fully developed in all its “bold, broken brushwork and blunt power” in *Wintry Groves*. Barnhart added that, “stylistically, ... the painting most intimately related to *The Riverbank* is Zhao Gan’s [active ca. 961–975] handscroll *First Snow along the River*, dating from about 960 [FIG. 15], one of the few other datable mid-tenth-century paintings by a Southern Tang master.”²⁶ More than ten years later, in 1999, Shih Shou-ch’ien, after dating *Riverbank* to the tenth century through stylistic analysis of its pre-Song pictorial concepts — where he also notes how its rocks and trees are remarkably similar to those in Zhao Gan’s painting — further links *Riverbank*’s thematic content to the special *jiangshan gaoyin* (lofty reclusion amid rivers and mountains) landscape genre “which rose to prominence within the cultural environment of the Southern Tang court.”²⁷ Contextually, Shih also recalls “records concerning the reclusive ideals of the two sovereigns of the Southern Tang, Li Jing (r. 943–961) and Li Yu (r. 961–975). The former had built a studio facing a waterfall on Mount Lu as his future place of retirement, while legends ... refer to ... the latter adopting the style name ‘Recluse of Mount Chong.’” “Its [the *Riverbank*’s] significance in the study of Chinese painting,” Shih adds, “lies in the archetype it provided for the mind landscape paintings that flourished [in] the Yuan period.”²⁸

²³ See Chapter 6 in this volume.

²⁴ See Loehr, *Chinese Landscape Woodcuts*, 52–53.

²⁵ Barnhart, *Along the Border of Heaven*, 34.

²⁶ Barnhart, *Along the Border of Heaven*, 33.

²⁷ Shih Shou-ch’ien, “Positioning *Riverbank*,” 144.

²⁸ Shih Shou-ch’ien, “Positioning *Riverbank*,” 136–45; see also Shih Shou-ch’ien, “Style, *Huai-i* Expressive Intention and Reconstruction,” 1–36. For a series of detailed studies of the political and cultural contexts of Southern Tang paintings of the tenth century, see also Chen Pao-chen, “Nantang liezu de gexing yu wenyi huodong,” 27–46; Chen Pao-chen, “Nantang zhongzhu de zhengji yu wenhua jianshe,” 41–93; and Chen Pao-chen, “Yishu diwang Li Houzhu,” pt. 1, 43–57, pt. 2, 41–75; Chen Pao-chen, “Cong Nan Song dao Bei Song,” 155–208.

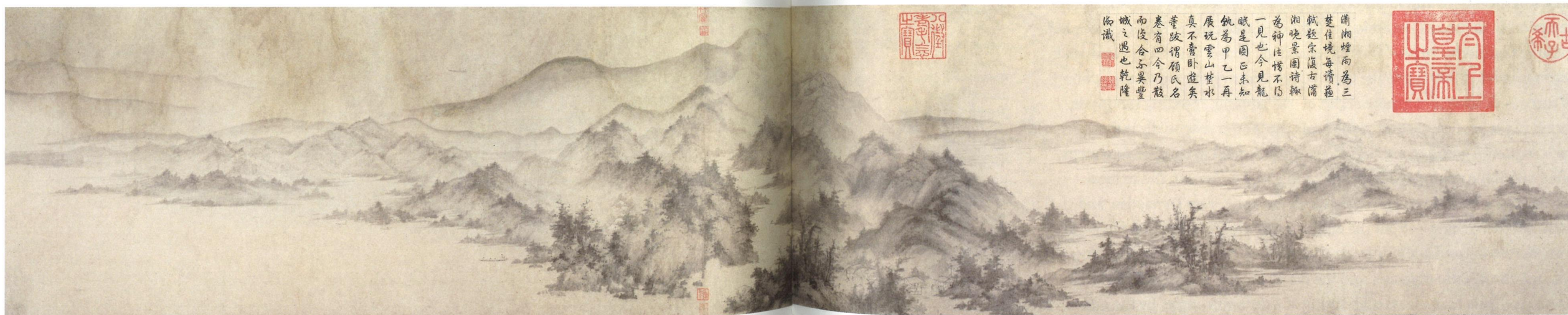
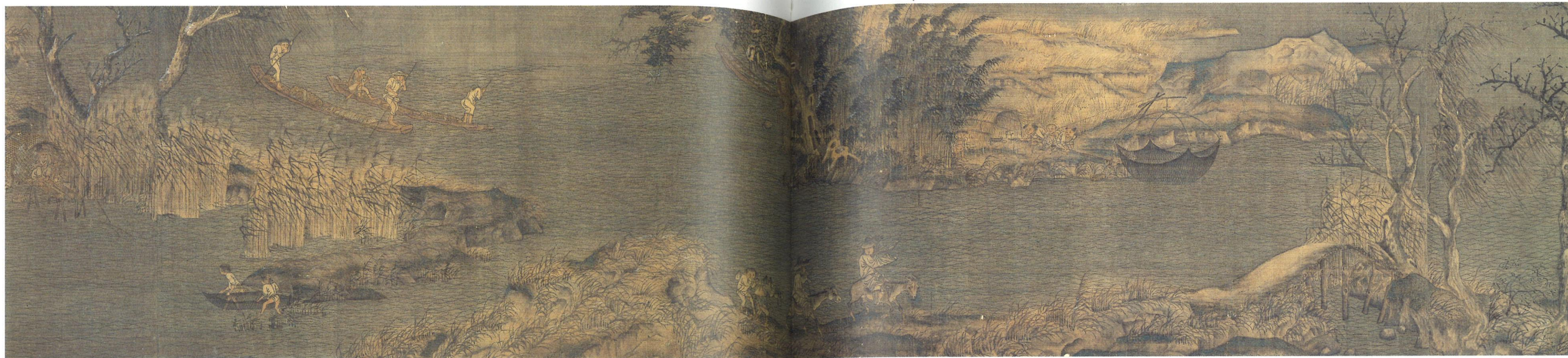
FIGURE 14 Detail of figure 12.
Dong Yuan, *Riverbank*

Following spread:

FIGURE 15 Zhao Gan
(active ca. 961–975).
First Snow along the River,
10th century. Detail.
Handscroll; ink and color
on silk, 25.9 × 376.5 cm.
National Palace Museum,
Taipei

FIGURE 16 Li of Shucheng
(active ca. 1170). *Dream
Journey through the Xiao and
Xiang Rivers*, ca. 1170. Detail.
Handscroll; ink on paper,
30.3 × 403.6 cm. Tokyo
National Museum, Japan





Although rooted in the narrative and didactic landscape tradition of the late Tang, *Riverbank* as a product of the Jiangnan region of southern China stood at the cusp of the rising interest in nature, especially its rich diversity of mountain forms, in the middle of the tenth century. The bulging multipartite mountain boulders of *Riverbank* (see FIG. 14) are naturalistically shaded, with softly rubbed brushwork that blends with and disappears into the graded ink wash, without individualized texture-pattern brushstrokes.²⁹ This representational approach corresponds to a phase in Chinese landscape painting that preceded the development of distinct conventions of texturing. As Kiyohiko Munakata has noted, Jing Hao's (ca. 870–ca. 930) treatise *Methods of the Brush* (*Bifa ji*), composed shortly before Dong Yuan's *Riverbank*, extols the importance of form-likeness, but “does not include the notion of ‘texture pattern (*cun*)’ strokes, which are the typical means by which Song artists achieved harmony between brushwork and ink-wash.”³⁰ This makes the appearance of the draping hemp-fiber texture pattern in Dong's late work *Wintry Groves* all the more remarkable.

*Dating Riverbank and Wintry Groves through
Formal (Stylistic) Analysis*

Between the eighth and fourteenth centuries, the mastery of spatial representation in depth and recession in Chinese landscape painting proceeded in three distinctive steps.³¹ During its archaic phase, as seen in *Hawk and Ducks* (see FIG. 2) dating to the early eighth century, the superimposition of three — or more — separate series of overlapping, receding mountain forms in the vertical picture plane leads the viewer diagonally into space; each sequence going in a single direction is limited to three or four steps, after which the chain breaks, jumping to a higher level in the vertical picture plane, and starts again. Between the Tang, Five Dynasties, and early Northern Song — from the eighth to the early eleventh century — the compartmentalized additive treatment of space continued, with the foreground, the middle distance, and the far distance occupying three separate levels on the picture plane, each tilting at a different angle. By the end of the Northern Song, in the late eleventh and through the twelfth century, as seen in Li of Shucheng's (active ca. 1170) *Dream Journey through the Xiao*

29 I have discussed, in detail, the tenth-century dating of Dong Yuan's *Riverbank* by comparing it with archaeologically dated landscape details in Fuping, Shaanxi Province (8th century), and Yemaotai, Liaoning province (ca. 940–85); see Fong, “Reply to James Cahill's Queries,” 114–28.

30 See Munakata, *Ching Hao's* (Jing Hao's) “*Pi-fa-chi*,” 7.

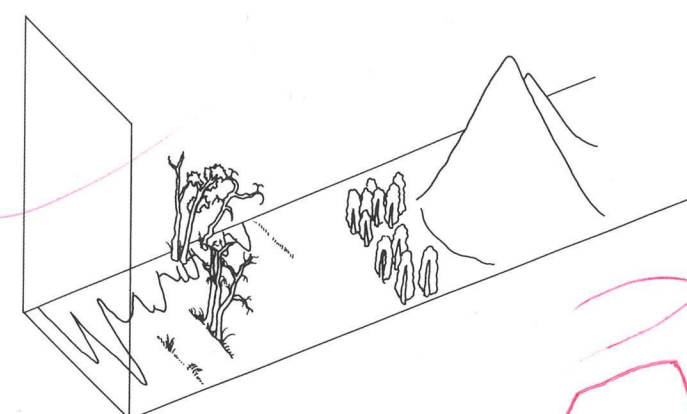
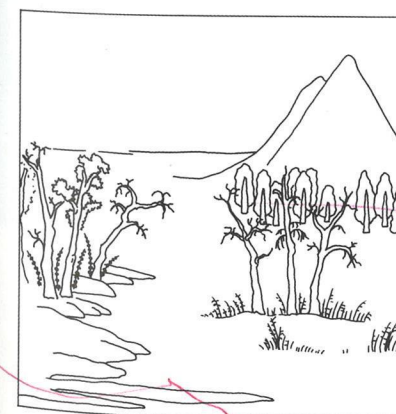
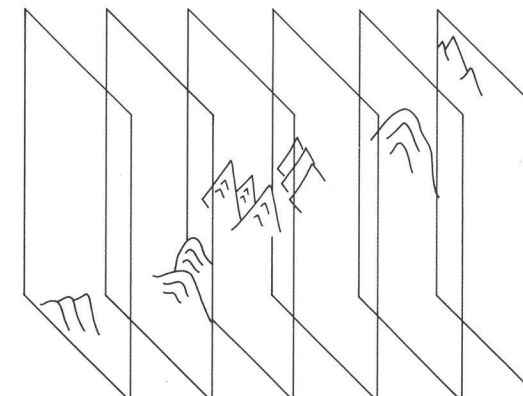
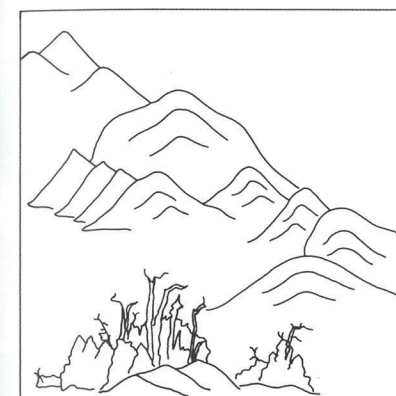
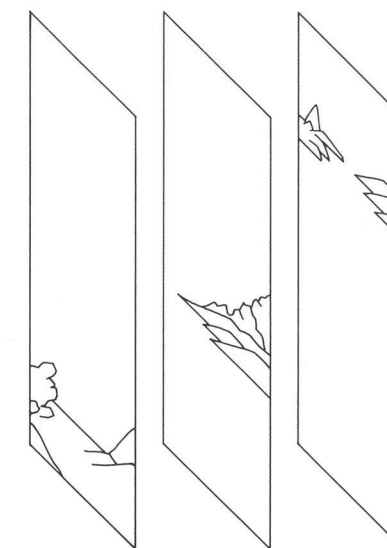
31 See Fong, “Toward a Structural Analysis,” 388–97; Fong, “How to Understand Chinese Painting,” 282–92.

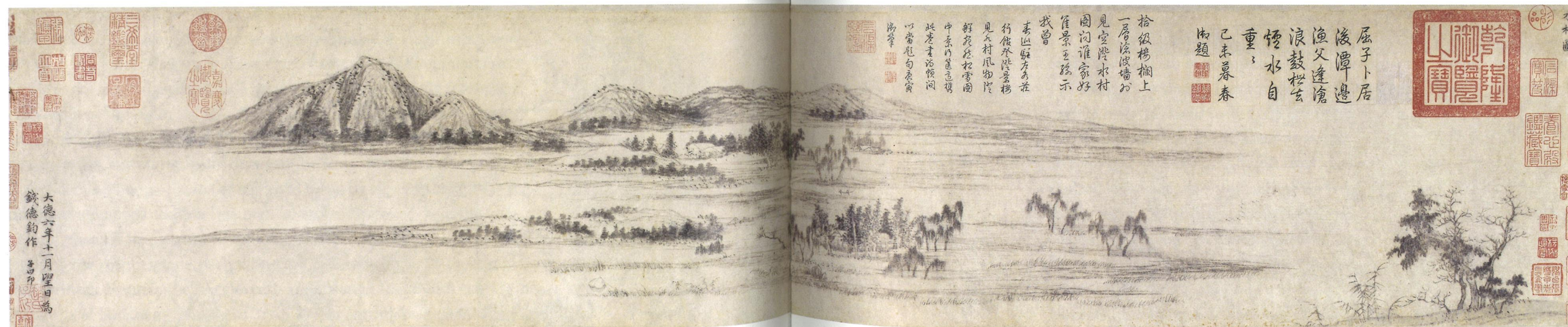
FIGURE 17 Diagram of *Hawk and Ducks*, figure 2, showing additive mountain motives receding in three separate stages; diagram of Li of Shucheng, *Dream Journey through the Xiao and Xiang Rivers* (detail), figure 16, showing overlapping mountain motifs receding in a continuous sequence; diagram of Zhao Mengfu, *Autumn Colors on the Qiao and Hua Mountains* (detail), figure 18, showing landscape elements arranged along a continuously receding ground plane

Following spread:

FIGURE 18 Zhao Mengfu (1254–1322). *Autumn Colors on the Qiao and Hua Mountains*, dated 1296. Handscroll; ink and color on paper, 28.4 × 93.2 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei

FIGURE 19 Zhao Mengfu (1254–1322). *Water Village*, dated 1302. Handscroll; ink on paper, 24.9 × 120.5 cm. Palace Museum, Beijing





and *Xiang Rivers* (FIG. 16), overlapping silhouetted forms, unified by the mist and atmosphere surrounding them, recede diagonally in continuous sequences across the picture surface. Finally, during the early Yuan dynasty, in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, as seen in Zhao Mengfu's *Autumn Colors on the Qiao and Hua Mountains*, dated 1296 (FIG. 18) — a painting with clear references to Dong Yuan in its archaic primitivism and use of the draping hemp-fiber texture pattern — and *Water Village*, dated 1302 (FIG. 19), spatial integration of landscape elements is achieved through the creation of a continuously receding ground plane (FIG. 17). At last, landscape forms are perceived as visually integrated masses, with fused brushwork suggesting forms as seen through atmosphere.

In order to place Dong's earlier *Riverbank* and his later *Wintry Groves* within the above developmental structure, it is necessary to locate them firmly within an "authentic stylistic sequence."³² We may borrow George Kubler's concept of using "prime objects" — namely, archaeologically datable examples from the eighth through the late tenth century — to document stylistic changes as "linked solutions" in Chinese painting history.³³ In the recently discovered wall painting of a six-panel landscape screen from a tomb in Fuping county, Shaanxi province, dating to the eighth century (FIG. 20),³⁴ we find that individual picture elements, each a discrete image viewed frontally, are seen one by one and organized on an additive basis. The steeply rising mountain is depicted in three stages: in the first, a mountain path is framed by overlapping slopes that lead rightward from the bottom of the picture. In the second, the path turns in the middle distance, with sloping mountain forms stepping first to the left, then to the right. And in the third, toward the top of the painting, a river is framed by overlapping mountain forms that twist again first to the right, then to the left. The landscape elements in *Riverbank* (see FIGS. 12, 14) continue to be organized in precisely the same way, with sloping curves from two sides of the mountain path forming a series of interlocking V-shaped space pockets that twist and turn vertically along the tall picture plane into distant space. Scenes that are farther away from the picture plane are seen directly above those that are nearer, so that "above" is read as "behind."³⁵

On a wall painting dating to 924 from a tomb in Quyang, Hebei province (FIG. 21), the complexly naturalistic mountain forms are unmistakably

³² See Loehr, "Bronze Styles of the Anyang Period (1300–1028 B.C.)," 42–53.

³³ Kubler, *The Shape of Time*.

³⁴ See Jin Zengli and Wang Xiaomeng, "Fuping xin faxian de Tang mu bihua," 8–11.

³⁵ Thus, the modern Western eye may see "inconsistencies" in *Riverbank*. James Cahill, for example, comments on "how the river winding out of the distance... turns all but imperceptibly into a road with people walking on it." See Cahill, "Case against *Riverbank*," 17.



FIGURE 20 Landscape screen mural. Tang dynasty, 8th–9th century. Detail. From a Tang tomb, Fuping county, Shaanxi province

FIGURE 21 Landscape. North wall of anterior chamber of Wang Chuzhi's tomb, dating to 924. Wall painting; 167 × 220 cm. Quyang, Baoding, Hebei province



similar to those seen in *Riverbank* (see FIG. 14). The slightly later *Chess Party in the Mountains*, dating to 940–85 (FIG. 22), from a tomb in Yemaotai, Liaoning province, enhances the high distant-view of towering mountain peaks with a deep distant-view of an architectural compound. And, in *The Lofty Scholar Liang Boluan*, of about 970 (FIG. 23), by Wei Xian (active ca. 960–975), a colleague of Dong Yuan working in Nanjing,³⁶ the theme of scholarly reclusion in a mountain valley is represented by a bird's-eye view of the scholar's house, with its elegant roof structure slanting diagonally into space. Likewise, in *Riverbank*, the thematic underpinning of scholarly retreat in a mountain valley is graphically enhanced by the bird's-eye view of the living compound of the scholar's family, with parallelograms of courtyards and fences thrusting diagonally deep into space. Finally, in woodcut prints in the *Bizangquan* (FIG. 24), an imperial commentary to the tenth-century printed edition of the Buddhist Tripitaka, a similar composition of a scholar's cottage amid rivers and mountains further demonstrates the popularity and persistence of *Riverbank*'s composition a century or so later. As an authentic stylistic sequence, the above datable prime objects appear as linked solutions to an overriding stylistic challenge in tenth-century landscape painting: namely, a systematic use of diagonal lines forming parallelograms in the vertical picture plane in order to suggest continuous recession in space. In all of these works there is also a conspicuous absence of conventional texture patterns to describe landscape forms.

Seen within the sequence of authentic monuments that illustrate how spatial representation in depth and recession was gradually mastered in Chinese painting, we can place *Riverbank* in the early tenth century, around 940, when the young master painter Dong Yuan deployed diagonal parallelograms of his riverbank cottage to indicate receding layered banks moving back deeply into pictorial space (see FIG. 12; FIG. 25). In the handscroll *First Snow along the River*, dating from about 960, by Zhao Gan (see FIG. 15; FIG. 26), a student at the Southern Tang Painting Academy where Dong Yuan was the leading master, we see how Zhao imitates Dong's early naturalism in the stormy scene of turbulent waves and gusting winds similar to Dong's *Riverbank* and in the layered banks resembling Dong's descriptive ink-shading technique.

Wintry Groves and Layered Banks can be situated securely within this same sequence of authentic monuments. Dong's depiction of spatial recession remains additive, as it proceeds in three separate stages of foreground,

³⁶ This painting is recorded in the *Xuanhe huapu* (preface dated 1120), *juan* 8: 83, the official catalogue of the imperial paintings collection of Emperor Huizong (r. 1101–1125), in *Huashi congshu* 1: 457.

FIGURE 22 *Chess Party in the Mountains*, ca. 940–985. From Liao Tomb no. 7, Yemaotai, Liaoning province. Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk, 106.5 × 65 cm. Liaoning Provincial Museum

FIGURE 23 Wei Xian (active ca. 960–975). *The Lofty Scholar Liang Boluan*, ca. 970. Handscroll; ink and color on silk, 134.5 × 52.5 cm. Palace Museum, Beijing



middle, and far distance, with intervals of void picture surface in between. Likewise, housing structures in both his middle- and far-distance sceneries continue to employ diagonal parallelograms (see FIG. 13; FIG. 27). The repertoire of motifs that appear in *Wintry Groves* — tall craggy trees, animated figures, and accurately rendered architectural structures — all compare closely to those seen in *Riverbank* and Zhao Gan's *First Snow along the River*. But a mature Dong Yuan has now shifted his emphasis from representation to presentation by reviving the ancient flat distant-view tableau (see FIG. 12).³⁷ Following the precedent of the late Tang figure painter Guanxiu (832–912), who embraced archaism a generation earlier,³⁸ Dong Yuan transformed his earlier complex landscape topography into a series of schematic triangular mountain forms defined additively by bold parallel, hemp-skin texture pattern brushstrokes, thereby changing “representing the natural object” (*zhuang wuxing*) to “expressing one’s calligraphic Self” (*biao wuyi*).³⁹ The visual evidence of these two major extant works by Dong Yuan, *Riverbank* and *Wintry Groves and Layered Banks*, pinpoints an epochal change between two defining periods in early Chinese landscape painting history.

After the devastations of the late Tang, a scholar class arose through the examination system that was promoted especially by the two Southern Tang emperors Li Jing and Li Yu. Scholars replaced bureaucrats, whose authority had previously been conferred by the state. But as the Southern Tang political fortune deteriorated after the 960s, many scholar-officials, either rejecting or discouraged with political involvement, retreated permanently to the mountains. Dong Yuan's *Riverbank* eloquently illustrates the theme of reclusion. The imposing landscape composition, painted in monochromatic ink with light color on silk (now darkened with age), features in the foreground a pavilion at the river's edge. A scholar wearing cap and gown, accompanied by his wife and child and a boy servant, sits by the railing to watch the gathering storm, the waters rising in choppy, netlike waves and their roiling caps breaking against the rocky shores. Both in the foreground and beyond the pavilion, great pines and deciduous trees along the riverbank bend ominously in the wind. Behind the pavilion, a steep foothill ascending toward the left in a series of thrusting boulders in murky dusk is framed by a waterfall rushing down to the river on the left and the distant vista of a mist-covered river valley on the right. Scurrying along the narrow twisting

37 Dong Yuan's *Wintry Groves and Layered Banks* was listed in late Northern Song imperial collection catalogue *Xuanhe huapu* (preface dated 1120). For a thorough study of this masterpiece, see Takenami, vol. 3: 57–106; vol. 4: 97–110.

38 Fong, “Archaism as a ‘Primitive’ Style.”

39 See Fong, “Prologue,” 1.

FIGURE 24 Landscape Illustrations and Fragmentary Text from Chapter Thirteen of the Imperial Commentary on the Buddhist Canon (Tripitaka) Commissioned by Emperor Taizong (r. 976–997), 1108. Detail of Scholar's Cottage (Bizangquan). Three wood-block printed handscrolls; ink on paper. Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Louise H. Daly, Anonymous and Alpheus Hyatt Funds; 1962.11.1-3



mountain paths in the evening gloom, returning field workers and a young herder riding his water buffalo head home toward the courtyard compound; inside the compound a servant woman prepares the evening meal, while another woman carries a tray of food along the covered porch.

The theme of reclusion is continued in *Wintry Groves*, but the tone has become much bleaker — perhaps reflecting the deteriorating political fortunes of the Southern Tang state — as narrative detail has been greatly curtailed. In a middle-ground cluster of houses three figures look out on the impending storm as a porter approaches and two other travelers make their way along a path that leads through tree-topped hillocks to a small wooden landing (see FIG. 13). The treatment of figures who look out on the landscape and those who move through it is similar to that in *Riverbank*, but in *Wintry Groves* the figures are barely visible and no one is stirring in the isolated dwellings that dot the remainder of this vast expanse of water and low-lying marshland. The focus of *Wintry Groves* has shifted from a description of the human world to an evocation of wintry bleakness.

A close analysis of Dong Yuan's brushwork in *Wintry Groves* with its round, center-tip brushstrokes, provides another link to *Riverbank*. Dong Yuan's signature in the lower left corner of *Riverbank*, which reads *Beiyuan fushi chen Dong Yuan hua* (North Park's Assistant Commissioner, [His Majesty's] servitor Dong Yuan painted this), offers an opportunity to compare specific brush-handling habits.⁴⁰ The late eminent calligraphy connoisseur Qi Gong (1912–2005) has compared Dong's handwriting with that of the great eighth-century master Yan Zhenqing (709–785), whose round brushwork with a centered brush tip (*yuanbi zhongfeng*) dominated late Tang calligraphy.⁴¹ In executing such brushstrokes, the writer exercises maximum control by keeping his brush straight and upright with all his fingers moving together with, as it were, a centered body and mind. As both the Chinese written script form and Chinese landscape art are based on graphic schemata, enlarged details of Dong Yuan's *Riverbank* and *Wintry Groves* show how Dong has drawn his tree branches and wave patterns in both paintings with the same calligraphically centered brushwork. Recent developments in using laser scanning of patterns of carbon deposits on silk painting surfaces will be able to offer new scientific proof of how these two works were made by the same hand.⁴²

⁴⁰ See Qi Gong, "On Paintings Attributed to Dong Yuan," esp. 90; and Chen Pao-chen, "Yishu diwang Li Houzhu," 41–76.

⁴¹ See Zhu Guantian, "Epoch of Eminent Chinese Calligraphers," 224–31.

⁴² I owe Professor Ruby Lee and Howard Lee of Princeton University for my awareness of such new "surface-physics" laboratory experiments.

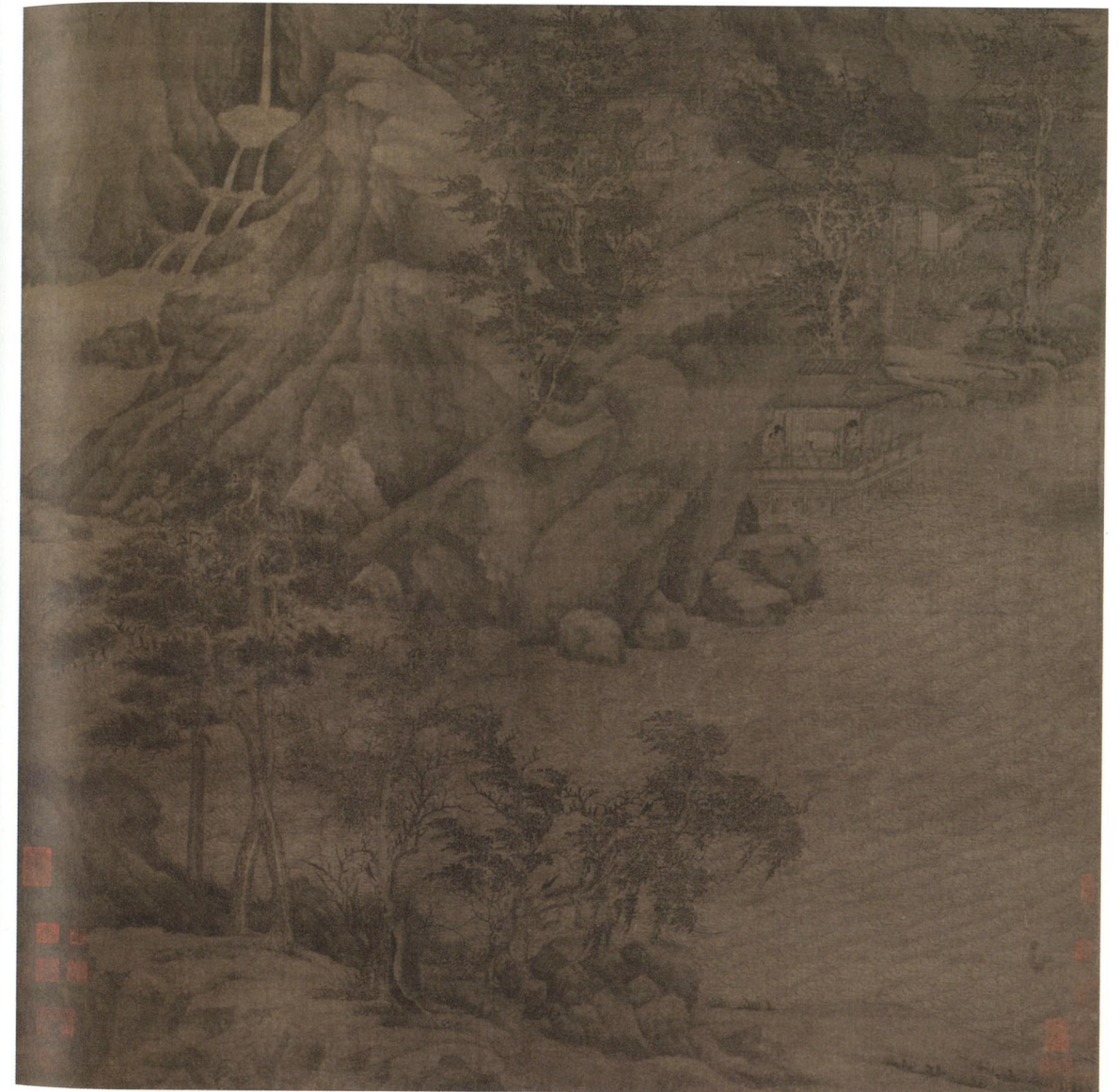


FIGURE 25 Detail of figure 12.
Dong Yuan, *Riverbank*

The shifting emphasis from narrative content in *Riverbank* to lyrical expression in *Wintry Groves* finds a precedent in the literature of the time. Writing about poetry in the mid-eighth century, Wang Changling (active ca. 700–756) observed that poetic concepts had historically passed through three successive stages: objective description (*wujing*), which dealt with the objective world; affective description (*qingjing*), which was concerned with emotion; and, finally, ideational description (*yijing*), which dealt with aesthetic ideas.⁴³

In the tenth century Jing Hao characterized “thought” (*si*) as a mental state through which “imagination crystallizes into form.”⁴⁴ If we draw a parallel with Dong Yuan’s landscape art, we notice that between *Riverbank* and *Wintry Groves*, Dong’s earlier objective descriptions were superseded by an affective and ideational monumental style concerned with an aesthetic idea. Unlike *Riverbank*, Dong’s *Wintry Groves* has scant narrative content. Rather, it is a lyrical evocation — the embodiment of winter with its wind-swept branches, bare earth, and frozen waters. Where *Riverbank* gives naturalistic descriptions, *Wintry Groves* offers calligraphic abstractions. Where human figures provide a narrative focus in *Riverbank*, there is only feeling and emotion in *Wintry Groves*. In the former, convoluted detailed shapes of rocky boulders and softly rolling earthen banks are descriptive of the Jiangnan landscape; in the latter, evenly formulated rolling banks with parallel hemp-fiber texture patterns evoke feelings of wintry desolation. Thus, in returning to an archaic visual tableau of a flat distant-view, Dong Yuan in *Wintry Groves* learned to both materialize and transcend the natural world. While both masterworks show a round brushwork, the kinesthetic effect of his twisting-and-raveling hemp-fiber brush pattern in *Wintry Groves* enables Dong to turn his representation of the Object (*zhuang wuxing*) into an expression of the Self (*biao wuyi*).⁴⁵

“Schema and Correction”: A Cross-Cultural View

In *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (1960), E. H. Gombrich describes pictorial representation as “making before matching [reality]” through a process of “schema and correction.” “Every artist has to know and construct a schema before he can adjust it to the needs of portrayal,”⁴⁶ he writes. “Archaic art starts from the schema ... and

43 Yu-kung Kao, “Chinese Lyric Aesthetics,” 47–90.

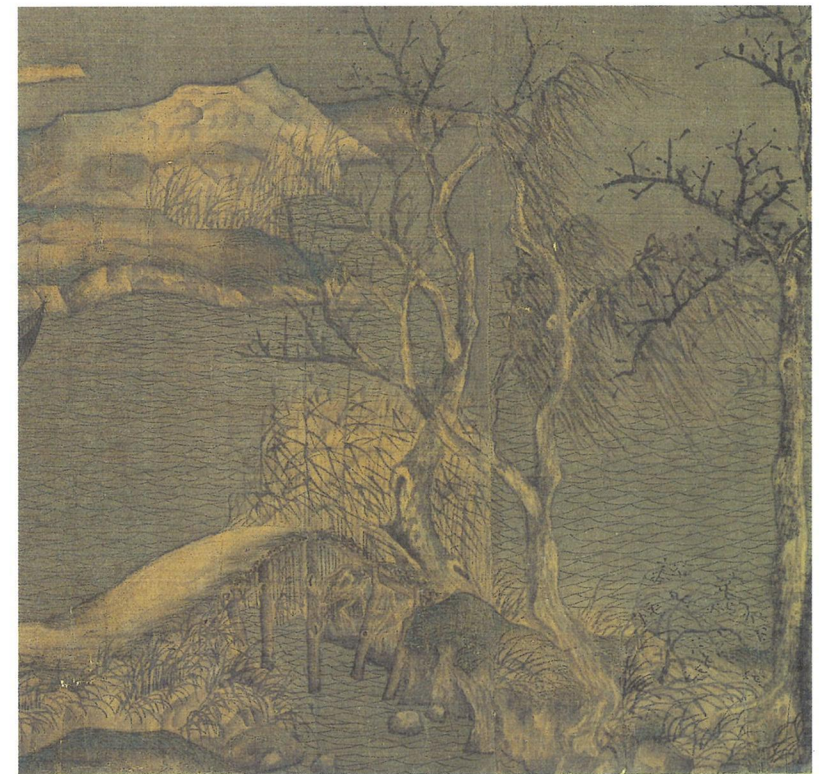
44 See Munakata, *Ching Hao's (Jing Hao's) "Pi-fa-chi,"* 12.

45 For “*zhuang wuxing* 狀物形” and “*biao wuyi* 表吾意,” see Fong, “Prologue,” 1ff.

46 Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*, 116ff.

FIGURE 26 Detail of figure 15.
Zhao Gan, *First Snow along
the River*

FIGURE 27 Detail of figure 13.
Dong Yuan, *Wintry Groves
and Layered Banks*



the conquest of naturalism may be described as the gradual accumulation of corrections due to the observation of reality." He concludes that "in the Western tradition, painting has indeed been pursued as a science ... All the works of this tradition that we see displayed in our great collections apply discoveries that are the result of ceaseless experimentation."⁴⁷

In his last book, *The Preference for the Primitive: Episodes in the History of Western Taste and Art* (2002), Gombrich argues that in "the field of image-making... there is a law of gravitation here which pulls the untutored artist away from the higher zones of mimetic relationships toward the piecemeal and schematic, toward the base line."⁴⁸ In Chinese painting history, however, the "law" worked in an opposite direction, pulling the tutored artist away from mimetic likeness (*xingsi*) back toward the higher (*fugu* or archaizing) zone of the schematic.

Dong Yuan's transformation from his early unadorned naturalism (without exaggeration and sentimentality) in *Riverbank* to a simple calligraphic formulation of hemp-fiber texture patterns in *Wintry Groves* proved to be a gauntlet that the artist threw down to challenge all later painters who followed him. When artists during the critical Song-Yuan transition in the late thirteenth century similarly felt that they had reached a cul-de-sac in the mastery of *xingsi*, or form-likeness, they looked back and saw how Dong's earlier complex, emotion-filled naturalism was superseded by his later simplified, archaizing visual schema, resurrecting an archaic conceptual visual tableau of a flat distant-view. Together, these two pivotal works by Dong Yuan, in returning from the representation of the Object back to the presentation of the Self, epitomized the eighth-century master Zhang Zao's epigrammatic summary of artistic creation: "Reaching outward to emulate Creation, and turning inward to master the Mind."⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Gombrich, *Art and Illusion* 34.

⁴⁸ Gombrich, *Preference for the Primitive*, 280.

⁴⁹ Fong, "Prologue," 1ff.

5 Sacred and Humanistic: *Five Hundred Luohans* at Daitokuji