

4 Ming Dynasty Revivalism

AS THE DYNASTY that restored Chinese rule after the Mongol conquest, the Ming imperial government officially espoused a policy of revivalism, which permeated the political, cultural, and intellectual life of the period. By early Ming times landscape painting had become inextricably bound to Sung and Yüan models. While amateur painters in the Lake T'ai area continued to work in the late Yüan recluse-artist's calligraphic idiom, professional painters gathered at the court under the patronage of early Ming emperors restored the realistic and monumental styles of the Sung period. The continued development of the Sung and Yüan brush idioms during the following two centuries inspired a passionate concern with method, the codification of techniques, and the understanding and mastering of painting in a systematic manner. Reacting to technically proficient but superficial painters, Ming scholar-artists, under the influence of the Neo-Confucian School of the Mind, sought creative truth, not only in pictorial forms, but also within their own psyches. While inferior painters became captives of their craft, the superior ones achieved a tremendous range of flexibility, intensively studying ancient styles of calligraphy, painting, and poetry, and practicing Ch'an meditation and other philosophical disciplines.

As Ming landscape art evolved, painters and painting critics debated and struggled with issues of imitation and self-expression, rebellion and authenticity. But arguments about methods, models, schools, and inspiration only led to increasing fragmentation and extreme polarization of views and approaches, resulting in endless rivalry and partisan polemics. In describing the eccentric and fantastic painters of late Ming times, James Cahill (1967, 1982) successfully portrayed a picture of conflict, discord, and breakdown in late Ming China that seems to mirror his perception of our own modern-day world.¹ Nevertheless, at the end of the Ming period, painters and theorists began to devise unique stratagems to achieve a new integration.

The Last of the Recluse Painters

Huang Kung-wang's (1269–1354) *Dwelling in the Fu-ch'i'un Mountains*, dated 1350 (cf. fig. 67), represents the acme of naturalism in Yüan landscape art. In the 1360s and 1370s, at the end of the Yüan dynasty and the beginning of the Ming, landscape painting exhibited a new expressionist style and a growing tendency to display brushwork and surface abstraction. Wang Meng's (ca. 1308–1385) remarkable *Dwelling in the Ch'ing-pien Mountains* (*Ch'ing-pien yin-chü t'u*), dated 1366 (fig. 119), has been described by Max Loehr as a picture that "seems not so much to describe a passage of mountain scenery as to express a terrible occurrence . . . an eruptive vision."² Finding the painting "decidedly unintelligible in its presentation of space and form, disturbingly unnatural in its lighting," James Cahill regards the work "as the product of some extraordinary burst of creative genius that evidently proved unrepeatable."³

The stylistic genesis of this painting can nevertheless be traced to several sources, all of them lying outside the concern for naturalistic representation. First is Kuo Hsi's *Early Spring* of 1072 (cf. fig. 49), which seems to owe its inspiration more to psychological projection—images seen in the clouds, on a blank piece of silk, or on a battered, uneven plaster wall—than to a season in nature. In the Yüan dynasty many leading painters had an active interest in Taoism: according to Taoist beliefs in geomancy (*feng-shui*; wind and water), a powerful life-energy pulsates through mountain ranges and rivers and streams in patterns known as *ch'i-mo* (breath-veins).⁴ Two examples of this interest in the concept of *feng-shui*, contemporary with Wang Meng's *Dwelling in the Ch'ing-pien Mountains*, are *Cloudy Mountains* (*Yün-shan t'u*) by the Taoist painter Fang Ts'ung-i (ca. 1300–1378), dated in the late 1360s (The Metropolitan Museum of Art; fig. 120), which has mountains that resemble a dragon ascending into the clouds; and Hsü Pen's (1335–1380) *Streams*

and Mountains (*Ch'i-shan t'u*), dated 1372 (Cleveland Museum of Art; fig. 121), in which the mountain forms also reflect this concept of breath-veins. In Wang Meng's masterpiece as well as Fang's and Hsü's paintings, the charged brushwork, with ink dots and lines rolled up and swept along in endless whirling vortexes, describes not only the natural forms of peaks and valleys, but also the surging supernatural energies that pulsate through them.

Wang Meng, a native of Wu-hsing, and Hsü Pen, who had painted his *Streams and Mountains* while visiting Wu-hsing, most likely knew the handscroll attributed to the Northern Sung master Yen Wen-kuei (fl. ca. late 970s–ca. 1030) *A Buddhist Monastery in Autumn Mountains* (cf. fig. 64), which was then in the collection of Shen Po-hsüan in Wu-hsing. The serpentine, dragonlike mountain forms of the late Yüan clearly owed their schematized mountain folds to the archaic formula, which through surface patterns had given landscape painting an expressive coherence and logic as compelling as any offered by naturalism. In their works Wang Meng and Hsü Pen showed great creative ambition in resurrecting the monumental style of the Northern Sung—an ambition that was shared, in a different way, by Ni Tsan (1301–1374) late in his life (cf. fig. 118). Whereas Ni Tsan maintained his sense of self in his stylistic transformation, always tempering and moderating his feelings, Wang Meng and Hsü Pen exploited the monumental idiom for melodramatic effect. This literal borrowing of the earlier style provoked Ni's remark that he had “attained the ideas of Ching [Hao] and Kuan [T'ung]” in a way that “Wang Meng and others could [not] have imagined in their dreams.”

In different ways the intensely expressive works of Ni Tsan, Wang Meng, and Hsü Pen accurately convey the psychic unease of the artists during the anxiety-filled years at the end of the Yüan and the beginning of the Ming periods. The first Ming emperor Chu Yüan-chang (r. 1368–98), a man of humble origins who was extremely suspicious and vindictive, harbored an intense dislike for the arrogant Chiang-nan intellectuals, whom he blamed for the

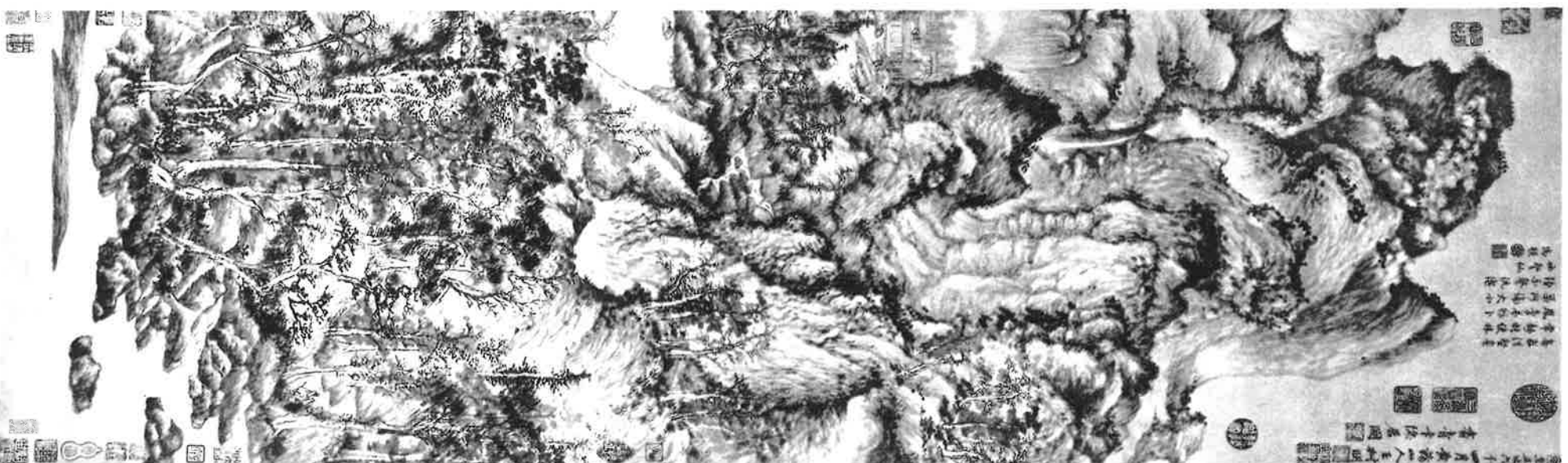


Fig. 119. Wang Meng, *Dwelling in the Ch'ing-pien Mountains* (*Ch'ing-pien yin-chü t'u*). Dated 1366. Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper. 141.0 x 42.2 cm (4 ft. 7½ in. x 16⅝ in.). Shanghai Museum



Fig. 120. Fang Ts'ung-i, detail, *Cloudy Mountains* (Yün-shan t'u). Undated, late 1360s. Handscroll, ink and light color on paper. 26.3 x 144.5 cm (10¹/₈ in. x 4 ft. 8³/₄ in.). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



Fig. 121. Hsü Pen, *Streams and Mountains* (Ch'i-shan t'u). Dated 1372. Hanging scroll, ink on paper. 67.9 x 26.0 cm (26³/₄ x 10¹/₄ in.). Cleveland Museum of Art

stubborn resistance of his archenemy Chang Shih-ch'eng during the protracted siege of Su-chou in 1367. Summoned to the new capital, Nanking, to serve, such leading Chiang-nan painters as Shen Chu (fl. ca. 1370), Chou Wei (fl. ca. 1370), and Chao Yüan (fl. ca. 1360-75) were put to death, in one way or another, for incurring the emperor's wrath. Other notable Chiang-nan artists—Wang Meng, Hsü Pen, Ch'en Ju-yen (ca. 1331-1371), among others—also died tragically. By about 1385 an entire generation of Chiang-nan scholar-artists had disappeared from the scene, effectively bringing to an end the burst of brilliant creativity in late Yüan landscape art.

A small hanging scroll painting on silk, by an unidentified artist, *Hermitage under Pine Trees* (*Sung-feng shu-wu*), in the Edward L. Elliott Family Collection at Princeton (no. 11), is evidently a work produced in the Chiang-nan region in the late 1360s or the early 1370s. The painting, of a secluded hermitage hidden behind tall pine trees under a towering mountain peak, follows a compositional scheme similar to Wang Meng's *Dwelling in the Ch'ing-pien Mountains* of 1366; the central peak, with its surging, overlapping folds, once again recalls the archaic mountain forms in the handscroll *A Buddhist Monastery*. Although the

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painting exhibits knowledge of three-dimensional structure in the mountain and although the tree forms are typical of those of the fourteenth century, the painter chose to develop the composition in other ways: he divided the vertical picture plane geometrically into well-defined, carefully balanced units and devised intricate formal interplays among shapes, textures, and light and shade patterns throughout the painting. In the two equal halves of the picture surface the mountains occupy the upper half, and trees the lower; the jagged silhouette of the peak above is echoed by the twisted trunk and branches of the ancient pine below; the zigzag pattern of the waterfall in the upper right is answered by a similar pattern of the shoreline of the mountain stream in the lower left corner; the texture pattern of the mountains contrasts with the foliage patterns of the trees, yet the mountains and the trees are united by the carefully clustered round moss dots. In thus dealing with the problems of surface organization through patterns, shapes, stylized brushstrokes, and two-dimensional textures, the anonymous late fourteenth-century painter prefigured important landscape developments during the Ming period.

The first of the Ming painters who carried on in the Chiang-nan recluse tradition could scarcely have expected better treatment from their emperor than their late Yüan predecessors had received. The life and work of Wang Fu (1362-1416), who lived in early Ming times but was temperamentally a typical late Yüan painter, represent the transformation that took place within the Chiang-nan scholar-artist tradition at the beginning of the fifteenth century.

Born in Ni Tsan's hometown of Wu-hsi in 1362, the year before Chang Shih-ch'eng proclaimed himself prince of Wu in Su-chou, Wang Fu was almost six years old when the first Ming emperor ascended the throne in Nanking in early 1368. After passing his first degree in 1376 and seeking employment in Nanking two years later, he became implicated in some misadventure, most likely the same famous treason case of Hu Wei-yung in 1380 that reportedly caused over the years the deaths of more than 15,000 unfortunate souls, including Wang Meng,⁵ and was banished to the northern border post of Ta-t'ung, in Shansi, where he endured a life of hardship for twenty years. In 1399 or 1400 he was allowed to return to Wu-hsi. He went to Nanking in 1403 to serve as a calligrapher at the Imperial Palace Library, and in 1413 and 1414 he attended the Yung-lo (Ming Ch'eng-tsu) emperor's (r. 1403-25) retinue during the emperor's visits to Peking. He died in Peking in 1416.

During his childhood, in about 1370, Wang Fu saw in the Wu-hsi home of a P'an Sung-ch'üan a painting by Ni Tsan, then the most famous living scholar-artist in Chiang-nan. Young Wang Fu was so impressed by the painting that nearly forty years later, while serving as a calligrapher in Nanking in 1408, he could still recall the composition, executing a copy from memory for one of P'an's sons, a physician in Nanking. On this painting, entitled *Remembering Ni Tsan's "Wu-t'ung Tree and Bamboo by a Thatched Pavilion"* (*I Ni Yün-lin wu-chu ts'ao-t'ang t'u*), now at The Art Museum, Princeton University (no. 13), Wang Fu's inscription reads, in part:

When I was a boy I once saw in the home of the venerable [P'an] Sung-ch'üan a painting by Master Ni Yün-lin [Ni Tsan], *Wu-t'ung Tree and Bamboo by a Thatched Pavilion* [*Wu chu ts'ao-t'ang t'u*], done in color and inscribed with a poem:

Sparse *wu-t'ung* leaves bring drops of morning dew,
Hanging vines shade the green pond.
In a spotless pavilion in the wilderness,
I read a book on a long autumn day.

There were a few more words in a colophon with a date, which I can no longer recall. Critics of the time considered it a work of the untrammeled class [*ti-p'in*]. This was almost forty years ago, and no one knows where the painting is today. Meanwhile, both Master Ni and the venerable old gentleman [Sung-ch'üan] have passed away. Yet the wonderful way the painting conveyed its ideas, whenever I think of it, is still vivid in my eyes. . . .

Today, while on vacation with some free time, I sat at my desk with an inkstone, and did this work on paper in imitation [of Ni Tsan], which I will present to K'o-ch'eng. Although my work can never approach [Ni Tsan's] in resonance and untrammelled purity, it may preserve some of his compositional features.

On the first day of the tenth lunar month of the *wu-tzu* year, the sixth year of the Yung-lo era [October 19, 1408], Wang Meng-tuan [Wang Fu] wrote this.

This work by Wang Fu, which exemplifies early Ming scholar-painting, clearly sets the direction of development, in content as well as in style, for scholar-painting during the Ming period. A serious, self-motivated, and inner-directed work, the scholar's painting expressed the artist's mind and soul. Though freely bestowed upon men of like minds, it was never to be possessed, either through purchase or by force, by unworthy admirers—among them the rich and powerful who often desired such works for reasons repugnant to the artist. One anecdote about Wang Fu, reminiscent of the sort of stories told about Ni Tsan, relates that one night while living in Nanking Wang heard beautiful flute music being played next door and painted a bamboo scroll for the flutist. The man turned out to be a wealthy merchant, who, delighted by the unexpected gift, made the unhappy mistake of offering Wang a lavish gift of silks in exchange for another painting. Deeply offended, Wang not only refused, but also retrieved his original gift and tore it up.⁶

On special occasions, as with this work done for Doctor P'an, the scholar-painter produced a work expressly for a friend, to communicate special sentiments or thoughts. In this case he frequently added an inscription or colophon with a poem or remarks explaining the circumstances that gave rise to such sentiments. The poem or written remarks enhance the viewer's understanding of the intent (*chih*) of the painting, but the painter also had to communicate through his painting style. In this work, since Wang Fu was "remembering" Ni Tsan, he used his version of the Ni Tsan idiom to identify Ni's special qualities, a method he was able to employ whenever an evocation of Ni Tsan seemed appropriate, although Ni may not be directly mentioned in the title or colophon.

Indeed Wang Fu appears to have so closely identified himself with Ni Tsan that his feelings were best expressed through Ni's images.

Wang Fu was the first to encounter the dilemma that confounded every later painter working in Ni Tsan's style: it could too easily lend itself to oversimplification or exaggeration. In order to succeed, Wang wisely chose to err equally in each direction. Instead of painting with a variety of texture strokes and dry washes (*jan*), and blurring and blending (*hu-t'u ch'i-pi*) them as only Ni Tsan could, Wang Fu built his forms (fig. 122) with a single type of brushstroke: an angular, "oblique" stroke done with the flicking motion. To achieve Ni's lonely and desolate feeling, Wang exaggerated the attenuated forms of the trees, dramatizing the mood of alienation with harsh angular strokes.

Wang's rock and tree forms and his treatment of spatial relationships are highly realistic, but, like the painter of *Hermitage under Pine Trees* of roughly the same time, Wang divided his design into well-defined



Fig. 122. Wang Fu, detail, *Remembering Ni Tsan's "Wu-tung Tree and Bamboo by a Thatched Pavilion"* (I Ni Yün-lin Wu chu ts'ao-t'ang t'u), no. 13

formal units that balance the picture plane geometrically. In Ni Tsan's compositions (cf. figs. 108, 118), the foreground shoreline, the river, and the distant shore progress from front to back in separate horizontal stages; they derive from the panoramic scheme of *Wintry Groves and Layered Banks* attributed to Tung Yuan (cf. fig. 32). Ni's foreground elements remain a self-contained statement: starting at the water's edge at the bottom of the picture, they constitute the beginning of the pictured world, a realm distinctly separate from the viewer's world. Similarly Ni's background elements, while receding in depth along a continuous ground plane, are conceived as a far-distance statement, with forms that begin and end in the world of the landscape itself. In Wang Fu's work the tree branches, slopes, and shorelines intersect the borders of the picture at carefully measured points, and diagonal lines of the slope and the shore form a V at the bottom of the painting, echoed and counterbalanced by the inverted V of the treetops. The foreground elements of slope and shore have become triangular segments cut off by the lower borders of the painting. The painter's consciousness of the frame of the painting makes it part of the viewer's world.

Representation of space had ceased to be a challenge, and the early Ming painter turned his attention to surface organization and the rich interplay of brushstroke and ink, line and mass, surface and depth—creating brushwork and texture patterns that are visually absorbing and emotionally expressive.

The Era of the Professional Painter

Despite Wang Fu's recognized achievement as a painter, he was employed as an official calligrapher at the Imperial Palace Library during the Yung-lo era. The painting specialists recruited under imperial patronage during the fifteenth century were required to be professional craftsmen able to fulfill the needs of the official Ming taste, which called for a return to the Sung monumental manner.

The so-called Ming Painting Academy (Hua-yüan) enjoyed powerful support during the reign of the artist-emperor Hsüan-te (Ming Hsüan-tsung; r. 1426–35), and remained strong through the Hung-chih reign of Emperor Ming Hsiao-tsung (1488–1505).⁷ Reviving certain practices of the Sung Painting Academy developed under the artist-emperor Sung Hui-tsung (r. 1101–25), Ming emperors rewarded outstanding court painters with official titles; but Ming Academy painters were part of the inner palace service staff (*nei-kuang*), and did not enjoy the same rank as court officials. Working mostly in two of the inner palace service buildings, the Hall of Benevolence and Wisdom (Jen-chih-tien) and the Hall of Martial Brilliance (Wu-ying-tien), the painters reported to the palace eunuchs and received the same titles and pay as palace guards.⁸

Sung Academy painters had maintained a system of training and promotion through different academic ranks; Ming palace painters never fostered a cohesive academic goal or standard. Recruited from all parts of the country—many from the commercially prosperous coastal regions of Chekiang, Fukien, and Kuangtung provinces—these artists represented the ablest of the professional painters of the time. At the imperial palace they served every visual, didactic, and decorative need of the emperor and his vast palatial estate, adorning his chambers with religious and historical illustrations, birds and flowers, landscapes, architectural ornaments, and any other subject the court commanded them to paint.

One of the leading landscape masters during the Hsüan-te era was Li Tsai (fl. ca. 1426–36), a painter from P'u-t'ien, Fukien. A handscroll dated 1424, illustrating T'ao Ch'ien's (365–427) "Homcoming" ("Kuei-ch'ü-lai-ts'u"), which Li painted in collaboration with Ma Shih and Hsia Chih (both early 15th century), now in the Liaoning Provincial Museum, shows the return to the Southern Sung style in both figure and landscape art. In one of the scenes, "Sitting by a Limpid Stream Composing Poems" ("Lin ch'ing-liu erh fu-shih"; fig. 123), Li Tsai's portrayal of the seated poet T'ao Ch'ien recalls the standing portrait of Li Po by Liang K'ai (fl. early 13th century), in the Tokyo National Museum (fig. 124). Liang K'ai captured the walking poet both as a luminous source of divine inspiration and as a vividly volumetric and real human form in a radically simplified brush drawing that combines definition and modeling in each

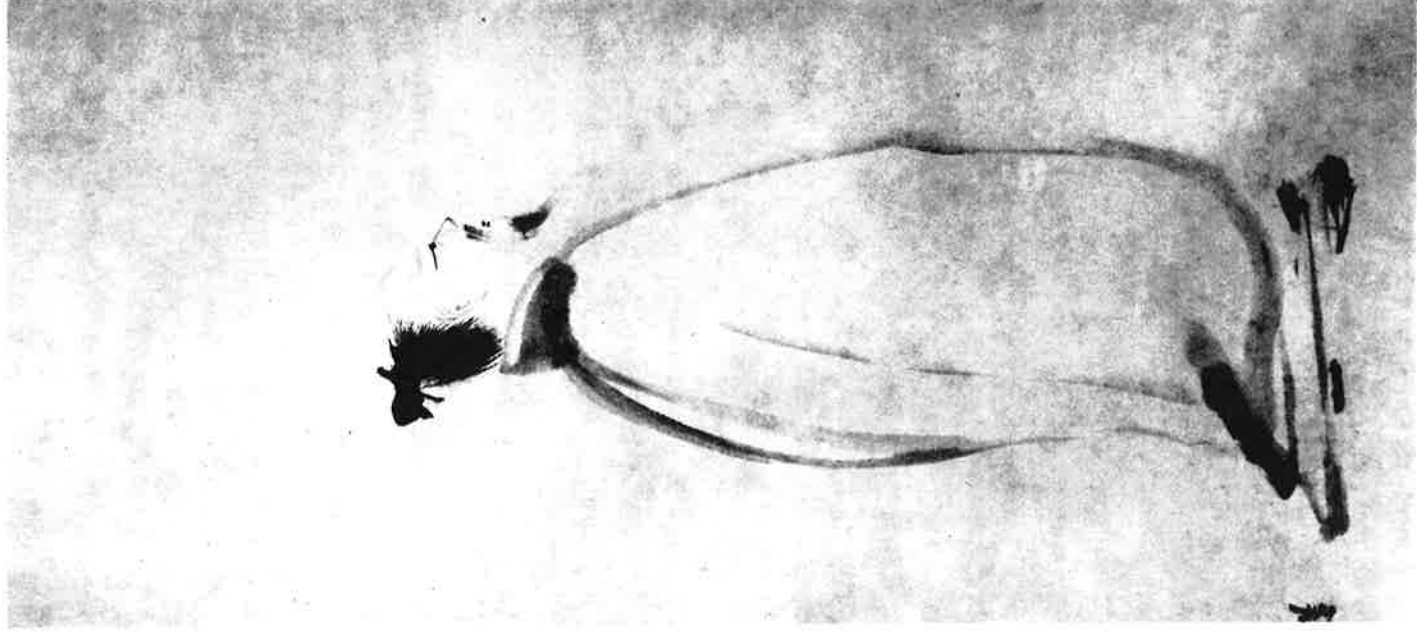


Fig. 123. Li Tsai, "Sitting by a Limpid Stream Composing Poems," detail, T'ao Yüan-ming's Ode on "Homcoming" (Kuei-ch'ü lai-hsi). Dated 1424. Handscroll, ink and light color on paper. 28.0 x 74.0 cm (11 x 29¹/₈ in.). Liaoning Provincial Museum

Fig. 123a. Detail, fig. 123



Fig. 124. Liang K'ai, *Li Po Chanting a Poem* (Li Po hsiang yin t'ü). Undated, early 13th century. Hanging scroll, ink on paper. 80.8 x 30.4 cm (31³/₄ x 12 in.). Tokyo National Museum



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brushstroke. Li Tsai, by contrast, tended to stress, beneath the convention of a simple brush style, representational realism, using ink-wash modeling (fig. 123a). In describing the landscape setting for the figures, Li Tsai placed the river diagonally across the horizontal composition so that the seated poet on the right gazes into the far distance to the left; the space thus created is physically measured, cut off, and framed by the four borders of the composition.

In "Clouds Rising through the Peaks" ("Yün wu-hsin i ch'u hsiu"; fig. 125), another section of the same handscroll, Li Tsai adopted the early thirteenth-century Academy painter Hsia Kuei's ax-cut (*fu-p'i*) idiom; boldly applied brushstrokes, now clearly treated as formulas, create strong surface patterns (fig. 125a). Again, the seated poet in the right-hand corner stares into the distance to the left, and, with the distant peaks on the left brought forward into the picture plane, the scenery is once again measured and bounded by the frame. In Hsia Kuei's one-corner composition *Sailboat in the Rain* (cf. fig. 54) the fore-



Fig. 125. Li Tsai, "Cloud Rising through the Peaks," detail, T'ao Yüan-ming's "Homecoming" (Kuei-ch'i lai-hsi). Handscroll, ink and light color on paper. Dated 1424. 28.0 x 83.0 cm (11 x 32⁵/₈ in.). Liaoning Provincial Museum



Fig. 125a. Detail, fig. 125

ground shore, the river, and the shoreline beyond the river all lie parallel to the picture plane. The composition is much the same flat-distance scheme as the eighth-century *Hawk and Ducks* (cf. fig. 18): the elements in the three superimposed planes, all viewed from the front, are held in a dynamic momentum and tension, pushing and pulling toward the two sides of the horizontal plane. Li Tsai divided his compositions diagonally into opposing triangular patterns. With all of the elements turned to the side and placed in the same foreground plane, the opposing diagonal forces are carefully balanced within the picture surface.

Upon hearing the works of one of the early Ming palace painters compared to those by the Southern Sung academicians Hsia Kuei and Ma Yüan (fl. ca. 1190–1264), the Yung-lo emperor is said to have complained that the simplified styles of Ma and Hsia represented merely “fragments of mountains and left-over waters, a reflection of the partial empire of the Southern Sung.”⁹ Clearly, as a symbol of the restored empire, Ming Academy landscape painting had to substitute fullness for emptiness, monumental grandeur for simplicity, and engagement for retreat.

By all accounts the most accomplished and esteemed painter of the mid-fifteenth century was Tai Chin (1388–1462) from Ch'ien-t'ang (Hang-chou prefecture in Chekiang province), who was regarded as the founder of the Che School of painting.¹⁰ Son of a professional painter and, according to a late seventeenth-century tradition, also trained as a silversmith,¹¹ Tai Chin followed his father to the capital in the early 1420s. Having studied in the professional painting studios in Hang-chou, he was equally accomplished in figural and landscape art, commanding a wide repertory of styles and subject matter. He was presented to the Hsüan-te emperor through the introduction of a eunuch named Fu, but fell victim to the jealousies of powerful Academy painters, who effectively prevented him from a successful career at the palace. He nevertheless enjoyed wide esteem among the leading scholar-officials in the capital: the well-known calligrapher and bamboo painter Hsia Ch'ang (1388–1470), later minister of the Court of Imperial Sacrifices, for example, praised Tai as “a gentleman of wide and elegant learning.”¹² According to one recent study, in about 1441 Tai returned to Hang-chou,¹³ where he lived as a professional painter and died in 1462.

An outstanding and typical work in the Hsia Kuei idiom by Tai Chin is an unsigned hanging scroll on silk, *Returning Late from a Spring Outing* (*Ch'un-yu wan-kuei*), in the National Palace Museum, Taipei (fig. 126). To achieve the smooth and rich patterns favored by his wealthy patrons, Tai worked mostly on silk, the traditional medium of professional painters. In this painting evening mist suffuses the valley, rising through the verdant hills. A mildly intoxicated, slightly disheveled gentleman (fig. 126a)—no doubt a retired, successful scholar-official—returning late from a spring outing, knocks on the gate of his walled country estate in the lower right corner; behind him a valet holds his tired donkey, and trailing farther behind, on the road lined with blossoming peach trees at the other end of the bridge, servants slowly carry his folded parasol, empty picnic baskets, and portable stove; inside the gate a servant holding a lantern rushes across the front courtyard to answer the master's knock. In the distance farmers resting hoes on their shoulders return along a dike to their thatched cottages among the weeping willows, where a woman tends her chickens. The serenity of the landscape, combined with apt descriptive details, celebrates the good life of a prosperous era; the scene seems to exude a soft, scented air of contentment.

Compared to Ma Yüan's *Banquet by Lantern Light* (*Hua-teng shih-yen t'u*), also in the National Palace Museum, Taipei (fig. 127), Tai Chin's painting is at once more realistically descriptive and more sumptuously decorative. Instead of a concentrated poetic vision, Tai Chin preferred a profusion of genre details: the bedraggled donkey would be quite out of place in an elegant Southern Sung painting, for example. The figures in Tai's landscapes, always vividly drawn, are animated earthlings carrying out their daily lives. Tai's use of the Ma Yüan–Hsia Kuei idiom as a calligraphic formula is both felicitous and masterly: virtuoso brushwork, silky ink wash, and tasteful touches of color give the painting the rich, smoothly finished look of a tapestry. Instead of the stepped progression into depth seen in Southern Sung compositions, Tai used a continuous diagonally receding ground plane, tilted upward into the two-dimensional picture plane. In place of the three-dimensional background mountain of Yüan paintings (cf., e.g., fig. 118), Tai painted his

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Fig. 126a. Detail, fig. 126

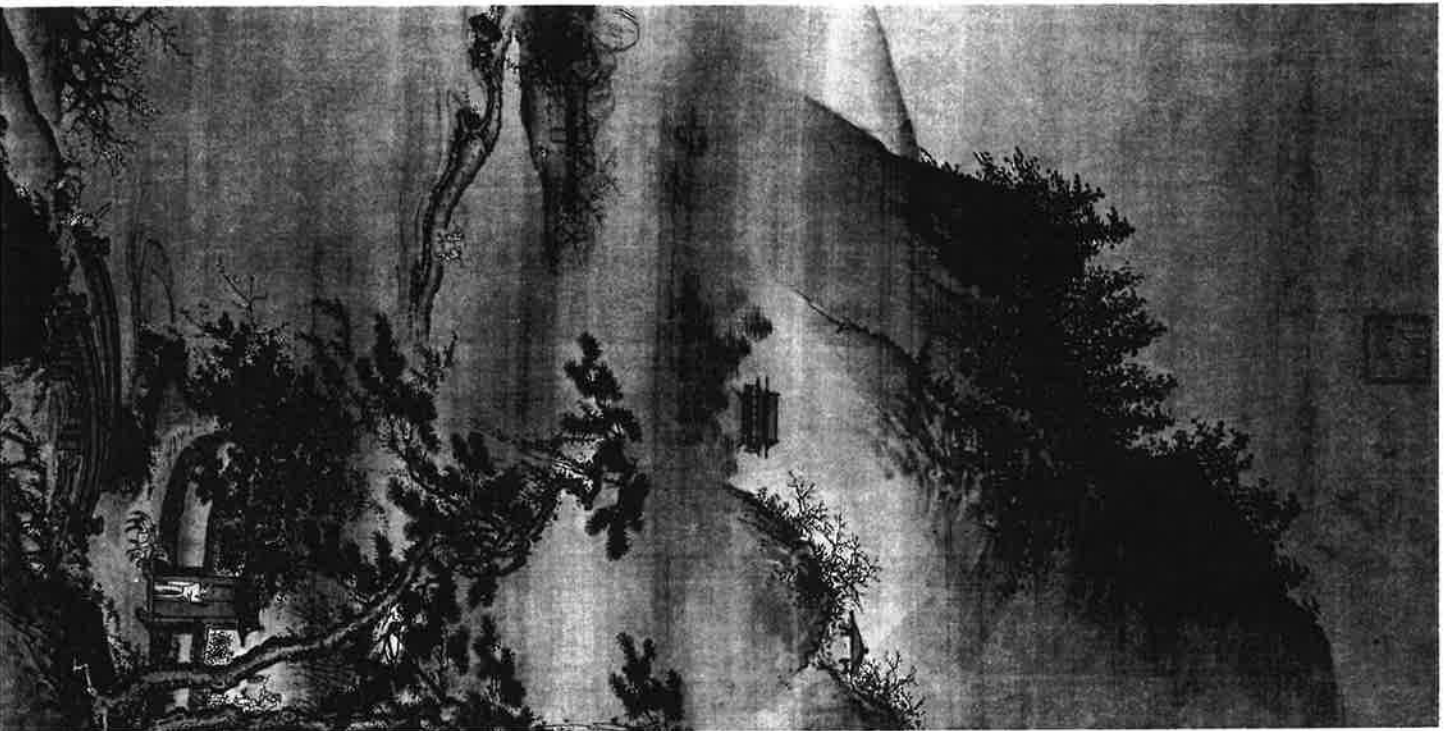


Fig. 126. Tai Chin, *Returning Late from a Spring Outing* (*Ch'in-yu wan-kuei*). Undated, ca. 1440. Hanging scroll, ink and light color on silk. 167.9 x 83.1 cm (5 ft. 6 1/8 in. x 32 3/4 in.). National Palace Museum, Taipei

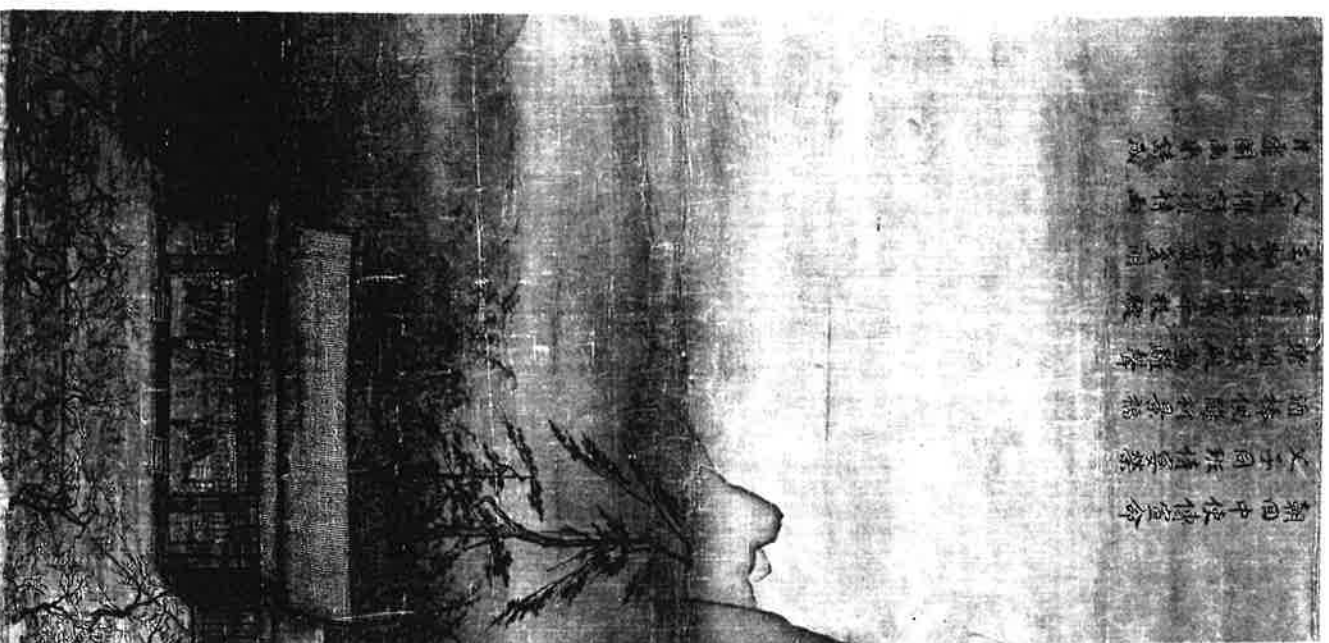


Fig. 127. Ma Yüan, *Banquet by Lantern Light* (*Hua-teng shih-yen t'u*). Undated, early 13th century. Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk. 111.9 x 53.5 cm (3 ft. 8 in. x 21 in.). National Palace Museum, Taipei

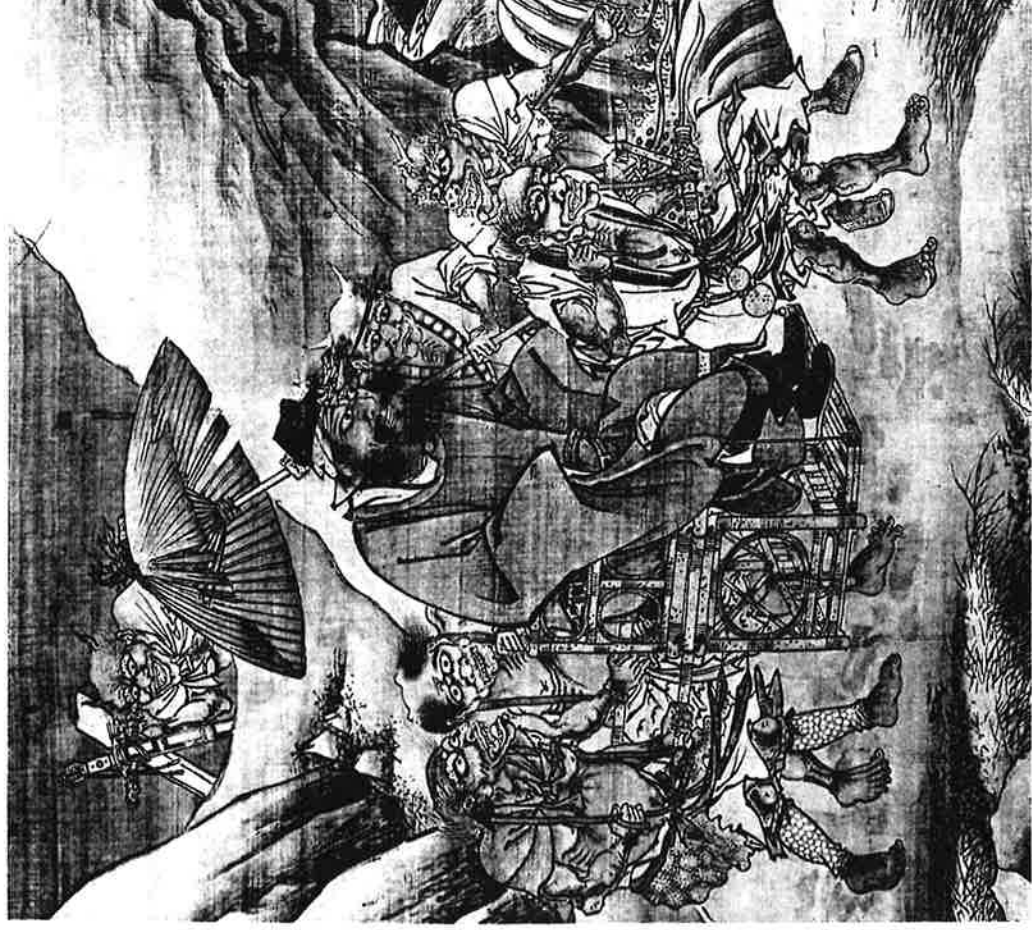


Fig. 128. Tai Chin, *A Nocturnal Outing of the Demon Queller Chung K'uei* (*Chung K'uei yeh-yu t'u*). Undated, ca. 1450. Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk. 189.7 x 120.2 cm (6 ft. 2⁵/₈ in. x 3 ft. 11³/₈ in.). Palace Museum, Peking



Fig. 129. Chou Chi-ch'ang, detail, one of *Five Hundred Lohans* (*Wu-pai lo-han t'u*). Dated 1178-81. Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk. Daitoku-ji, Kyoto

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mountain peaks to rise like a flat screen in the picture plane, obstructing the view and thereby directing attention to the graceful and often intricate surface patterns.

A diligent student of ancient models, Tai was equally conversant in other Sung Academy styles. In narrative subjects, such as *Six Buddhist Patriarchs* (*Ta-mo lin-tai tsu-shih t'u*), now in the Liaoning Provincial Museum, and *Seeking the Tao in Cave Paradise* (*Tung-t'ien wen-tao t'u*), in the Palace Museum, Peking,¹⁴ he used the precise descriptive technique of the early thirteenth-century academician Liu Sung-nien (ca. 1150–after 1225); in large landscape compositions depicting the four seasons, he adopted the monumental manner of the Northern Sung masters Kuo Hsi and Li T'ang (ca. 1070s–ca. 1150s).

In the hanging scroll *A Nocturnal Outing of the Demon Queller Chung K'uei* (*Chung K'uei yeh-yu t'u*), in the Palace Museum, Peking (fig. 128), Tai Chin painted a folklore subject in the popular style of religious representations. Tai's depiction of demon figures may be compared to those by the Southern Sung religious painter Chou Chi-ch'ang in *Five Hundred Lohans* (*Wu-pai lo-han t'u*), dated 1178 (fig. 129). The vivid theatricality of Tai's drawing, in carrying on the realism of the Sung professional painting tradition, also suggests a relationship to the newly risen popular dramas of the Yüan and the quasi-religious cycles of plays and novels, such as *The Journey to the West* (*Hsi-yu chü*) by Wu Ch'eng-en, of the Ming period.¹⁵ Tai's virtuosic landscape setting, in the ax-cut (*fu-p'i*), devil-face (*kuei-mien*), and crab-claw (*hsieh-chao*) idioms of Li T'ang and Kuo Hsi, while serving the theatrical representation in a functional way, testifies to the high standards of popular illustrations of the time.

A totally different style is seen in Tai Chin's *Five Deer under Tall Pine Trees* (*Ch'ang-sung wu-lu*), in the National Palace Museum, Taipei (fig. 130), an unsigned work with an inscription by Wen Cheng-ming (1470–1559) identifying its painter as Tai Chin. A stylistic confirmation of the attribution may be found in a comparison with two recently published signed works by Tai in the Palace Museum, Peking—an album leaf, "Three Egrets under Pine Trees" ("San lu t'u"), and a handscroll representing Yang Wei-chen's (1296–1370) *Elegant Gathering under Mount Nan-p'ing at West Lake, Hang-chou* (*Nan-p'ing ya-chi t'u*, dated



Fig. 130. Tai Chin, *Five Deer under Tall Pine Trees* (*Ch'ang-sung wu-lu*). Undated, ca. 1460. Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk. 142.5 x 72.4 cm (4 ft. 8 7/8 in. x 28 1/2 in.). National Palace Museum, Taipei

1462).¹⁶ The unusual feature shared by these three works is the use of round brushstrokes (*yüan-pi*) in a loose and untrammelled manner. The exuberantly full composition of *Five Deer* is built primarily of two contrasting types of brushstrokes: the mountain, tree, cloud, and deer forms are first drawn with a round curling brushstroke in a grass-script manner; after modeling with a light ink wash, the mountains are finished by a layer of long horizontal dots, applied with great verve and enthusiasm. This seemingly eccentric technique represents Tai Chin's homage to the late eleventh-century amateur landscape style of Mi Fu (1052-1107), whose renowned Mi dot idiom was transmitted through the works of the early Yüan scholar-painter Kao K'o-kung (1248-1310). In reducing landscape painting to pure brushstroke idioms, Tai Chin the professional painter added a dimension to his art: beyond pictorial representation, he shared the rising critical interest among late fifteenth-century scholar-painters and theorists in the purely formal problems of style in painting.

Two Philosophers of the School of the Mind

In their quest for objective truth Northern Sung thinkers had proposed that, while the highest reality is *li* (the metaphysical principles that underlie the physical universe), objective principles and the subjective mind are neither discrete nor mutually exclusive. While in theory principles constitute a world of their own, in reality they can be found only within concrete objects, and then apprehended only through the mind of the experiencing self. Two thinkers, Ch'en Hsien-chang (1428-1500) and Wang Shou-jen (Wang Yang-ming; 1472-1529), developed the Neo-Confucian School of the Mind (*hsin-hsüeh pai*).

Born in 1428 to a well-to-do family in Hsin-hui, Kuangtung province, Ch'en Hsien-chang attained his second provincial degree in 1447, but twice, in 1448 and 1451, failed to pass the metropolitan examination in the capital. After visiting for some months in 1454 with the Neo-Confucian scholar Wu Yü-pi (1392-1469) in Kiangsi, he returned home, determined to become a sage. For several years, he assiduously studied Confucian and Neo-Confucian texts. Then, convinced that learning depended on personal insights, or "self-acquired" (*tzu-te*) knowledge, he embraced the Buddhist and Taoist practices of meditation, and devoted himself to "quiet sitting" (*ching-tso*) as a method of self-cultivation. He started teaching in his native village of Pai-sha. In 1466 he again went to Peking, and in 1469 failed a third time to pass the metropolitan examination. Returning home he concentrated on teaching and study and achieved renown as a teacher and thinker. In 1482 he went to Peking for the last time. The emperor granted him an honorary position at the Han-lin Academy, but he begged to return, pleading that he was in ill health and that his aging mother needed him at home. He died in 1500. In 1584, by imperial decree, a tablet in his honor was placed in the official temple of Confucius. Only four Ming scholars were so honored.¹⁷

Ch'en Hsien-chang's philosophy centered on the cultivation of the inner self through freedom, independence, and spontaneity. The Sung Neo-Confucian scholars Ch'eng I (1033-1107) and Chu Hsi (1130-1200) had defined the metaphysical *li* as "what is beyond shapes" (*hsing-erh-shang*) and the physical *ch'i* (ether) as "what is within shapes" (*hsing-erh-hsia*) and had considered the mind (*hsin*) as ether. By emphasizing the objective, empirical side of knowledge, Chu Hsi's "investigation of things leading to extension of knowledge" (*ko-wu chih-chih*) taught that the mind could reach out toward the object. Chu Hsi believed that though the mind may contain the *li*, it may not be equated with it. In other words, he considered the equation of principle with nature (*hsing*)—a designation for principle as contained by the mind—to be correct, but that equation of the principle with the mind to be wrong.¹⁸ Ch'eng I's elder brother Ch'eng Hao (1032-1085), followed by Lu Chiu-yüan (1139-1193), on the other hand, seeing little distinction between mind and nature—therefore, between mind and principle—emphasized the union of the mind with all things through spiritual cultivation. Ch'en Hsien-chang, who began studying Chu Hsi's approach under Wu Yü-pi, discovered truth through the intuitive method of Lu Chiu-yüan. Only through long years of solitary struggle and "quiet sitting" did Ch'en learn to understand the principle through personal

experience and direct observation, by what he called *t'i-jen wu-li* (a personal experience of the principles of things).¹⁹ Yet Ch'en never went as far as Lu Chiu-yüan in equating mind with principle. Ch'en did not deny the objective existence of the principle; he merely insisted on the union of the subjective and the objective through self-acquired knowledge: through quiet meditation, he believed, the mind becomes one with the universe, "perfectly forming one body with all things" (*hun-jan yü wu t'ung-t'i*).²⁰

Besides his roles as a teacher and thinker, Ch'en Hsien-chang was also a gifted poet and calligrapher. Known for his individualistic style of grass, or cursive, script, he is said to have used, in his later years, a coarse brush made of straw or rush (*mao-lung*). In a handscroll by Ch'en, *Poems on Plum Blossoms* (*Mei-hua ping chung tso*), written in 1491, in the John B. Elliott Collection at The Art Museum, Princeton University (no. 16), the rough and natural brushstrokes, made with a stiff and blunt-tipped brush, illustrate perfectly Ch'en's statement "My learning is based on the natural."²¹ For Ch'en an empty and detached mind acquired through "quiet sitting" was essential both for understanding and for creativity. Though similar to the Taoist concept of something self-existing and self-perpetuating, Ch'en's naturalism, as pointed out by Jen Yu-wen (1970), was Confucian in content and dynamic in principle.²² To Ch'en the essential characteristic of nature was "growth and growth, transformation and transformation" (*sheng-sheng hua-hua*), and he proposed that "utmost nothingness possesses utmost activity" (*chih-wu yü chih-tung*). In the Elliott scroll myriad variations multiply from the same simple, blunt, and straightforward brushwork, as quiescence and utter self-possession give rise to infinite movement and activity. Ch'en's calligraphy owes no allegiance to any particular ancient model; it shares the spiritual inheritance of the Ch'an Buddhist masters, who strove for intuitive self-enlightenment.

Wang Shou-jen (Wang Yang-ming), born in 1472 in Yü-yao, Chekiang province, son of a successful scholar-official, was twenty-eight at the time of Ch'en Hsien-chang's death. Although there is no record of any formal contact between these two great thinkers, Wang must have been influenced by Ch'en or Ch'en's followers. From an early age, Wang's interests were wide ranging, from knight errantry—horsemanship, archery, military strategy—to Taoism, Buddhism, and literary pursuits; but in his study of Neo-Confucian thought, he experienced a personal development similar to Chen's. For nearly ten years, between 1489 and 1498, he struggled with the doctrine espoused by Chu Hsi of the "investigation of things" (*ko-wu*), the idea that all things, including a single blade of grass or a tree, must embody within them the supreme principle. In one exercise, he investigated and pondered over a piece of bamboo until he became ill from the effort; then, in 1508, while living in exile in northern Kueichou, he suddenly realized that "to understand the truth of the sages, one's own nature is self-sufficient." From then on, "he taught his students exclusively about extending one's innate intuitive knowledge" (*chih liang-chih*).²³

Passing the metropolitan examination in 1499 (having failed it in 1493 and 1496), Wang enjoyed an exceptionally fruitful political and military career. In 1506 he was exiled to Kueichou for having raised his voice against a powerful eunuch. While in exile he formulated the epoch-making theory that "knowledge and action are one" (*chih-hsing ho-i*): "Knowledge is the beginning of action, and action the completion of knowledge."²⁴ In 1510 he was recalled to service, and for the next dozen years he played an important role in the political and military affairs in the south. He suppressed banditry in four successful campaigns in 1517 and 1518 in modern Fukien, Kiangsi, and Kuangtung provinces, putting down the rebellion of Prince Ning in 1519 in Kiangsi. As governor of Kiangsi, he repaired flood damage and lifted the tax burden of the people. After his father died in 1522, Wang Shou-jen remained at home and devoted himself to lecturing and writing. In 1527 he was called once again to lead pacification campaigns against aboriginal rebels in Kuangsi. By the conclusion of that campaign, he was exhausted and ill; he died on his homeward journey in early 1529. In 1584 his tablet was ordered by imperial decree to be placed in the official Confucian temple.

Wang Shou-jen's doctrine of extending intuitive knowledge into action gave Ming thought a dynamic purpose. Since he based many of his ideas on the Ch'an Buddhist doctrine of sudden enlightenment, and since he frequently borrowed Buddhist idioms in his teachings, orthodox Confucianists attacked him

vigorously for spreading "false learning." In the second half of the sixteenth century, some of Wang's followers, who indulged in extreme hedonistic behavior in the name of intuitive knowledge, were denounced as "crazy Ch'an" Buddhists. As a philosophy of action, Wang's teaching became popular in Edo and Meiji Japan (17th-19th centuries), as well as in twentieth-century Republican China.

A handscroll that preserves three family letters by Wang Shou-jen, addressed to a nephew named Cheng Pang-jui (personal name, Pao-i), now in the John B. Elliott Collection at Princeton (no. 22), bears at the beginning a portrait of the philosopher-soldier-statesman seated at his desk, brush in hand, with the recipient of the letters, respectfully attending to one side. The portrait is done in the plain-line drawing (*pai-miao*) style by an anonymous early fifteenth-century painter. The letters date from 1523-25;²⁵ they were mounted as a scroll after Wang's death in 1529 by Cheng, the owner of the letters, who both commissioned the portrait and requested the colophons by four of Wang's distinguished pupils, Huang Wan (1480-1554), Hsiao Ching-te (fl. 16th century), Huang Hung-kang (1492-1561), and Yeh Liang-p'ei (*chin-shih*, 1523), the third of which is dated 1531. The portrait shows Wang with a lean face and a full beard, seated slightly stooped, with a scroll-like backrest wedged between his body and the curved back of the chair; always frail, Wang had to be carried in a sedan chair during his last campaign just before he died. Wang's fine calligraphy, done in a highly cultivated running-script style in the manner of the *Preface to the Sacred Teaching in Wang Hsi-chih's Style* by Huai-jen, depicts the philosopher and man of action as an artist of uncommonly refined but conservative taste and temperament.

The Scholar-Amateur

Born in 1427 to an established scholar-gentry family in Su-chou, the center of the scholar-painting tradition in the late Yüan period, Shen Chou (1427-1509) inherited much of his artistic and social lifestyle from family tradition. His great-grandfather Liang-ch'en is said to have been a friend of Wang Meng. His grandfather Ch'eng was called up for government service during the Yung-lo era (1403-24), but resigned soon afterward to pursue the quiet life of retirement at home. Shen Chou's father, Heng-chi, and elder uncle, Chen-chi, had studied classics and painting with Ch'en Chi, son of another well-known late Yüan painter Ch'en Ju-yen (ca. 1331-1371); Ch'en Chi, who excelled in bamboo painting, had taught Hsia Ch'ang, the scholar-official and bamboo painter from Su-chou who had befriended Tai Chin. Ch'en Chi's son Ch'en K'uan taught Shen Chou. Ch'en K'uan owned a number of important Yüan paintings, including Huang Kung-wang's *Stone Cliff at the Pond of Heaven* (*T'ien-ch'ih shih-pi*) and Wang Meng's *Heavy Snow at Mount T'ai* (*T'ai-tsung mi-hsieh*), which was painted for Ch'en Ju-yen in 1370.²⁶ To celebrate the birthday of his teacher Ch'en K'uan, in 1467, Shen Chou painted the large hanging scroll *Towering Mount Lu* (*Lu-shan kao*; now in the National Palace Museum, Taipei) in the Wang Meng style. Following the examples of his grandfather, father, and uncle, the gentle, even-tempered Shen Chou stayed away from official examinations and government service, preferring a quiet life of reading and painting in retirement. Upon the death of his father in 1477 (when Shen was already fifty), he pleaded that he had to stay home in order to care for his aging mother. Although the exact reasons for Shen Chou's reluctance to serve are not clear, it is highly possible that the violent deaths of Wang Meng, Ch'en Ju-yen, and other Su-chou artists and intellectuals in the early Ming years persuaded generations of the Shen family to avoid the center of trouble.

According to Shen Chou's illustrious pupil Wen Cheng-ming (1470-1559), the master specialized in small pictures until he was forty, in about 1466. In the 1470s and 1480s Shen imitated and experimented with a wide range of Sung and Yüan styles, including a large silk hanging scroll in the archaic blue and green idiom, *Hsieh An and His Ladies in the Eastern Mountain* (*Hsieh An tung-shan t'u*), dated 1480 (Wango H. C. Weng collection), which follows a similar composition by Tai Chin.²⁷ Following in the tradition of the Su-chou painters, however, Shen, who was also renowned for his calligraphy in the Huang T'ing-chien

MING DYNASTY REVIVALISM

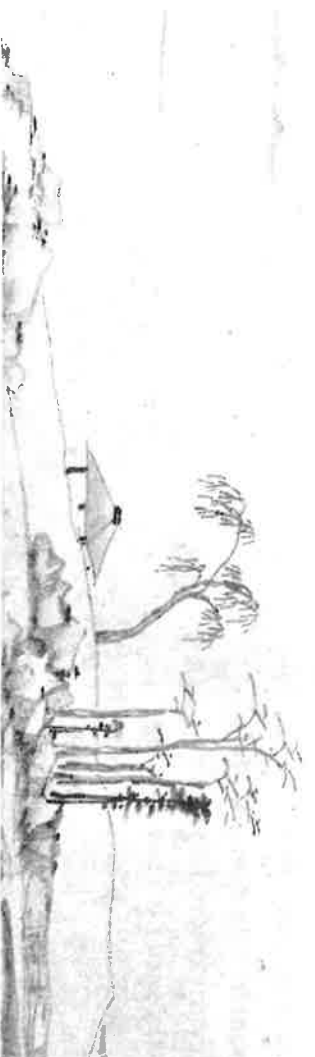


Fig. 131a. Shen Chou, detail, *Autumn Colors among Streams and Mountains* (*Ch'i-shan ch'iu-se*). Undated, ca. 1480. Handscroll, ink on paper. 19.8 x 640.2 cm (7³/₄ in. x 21 ft.). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



Fig. 131b. Shen Chou, detail, *Autumn Colors among Streams and Mountains*

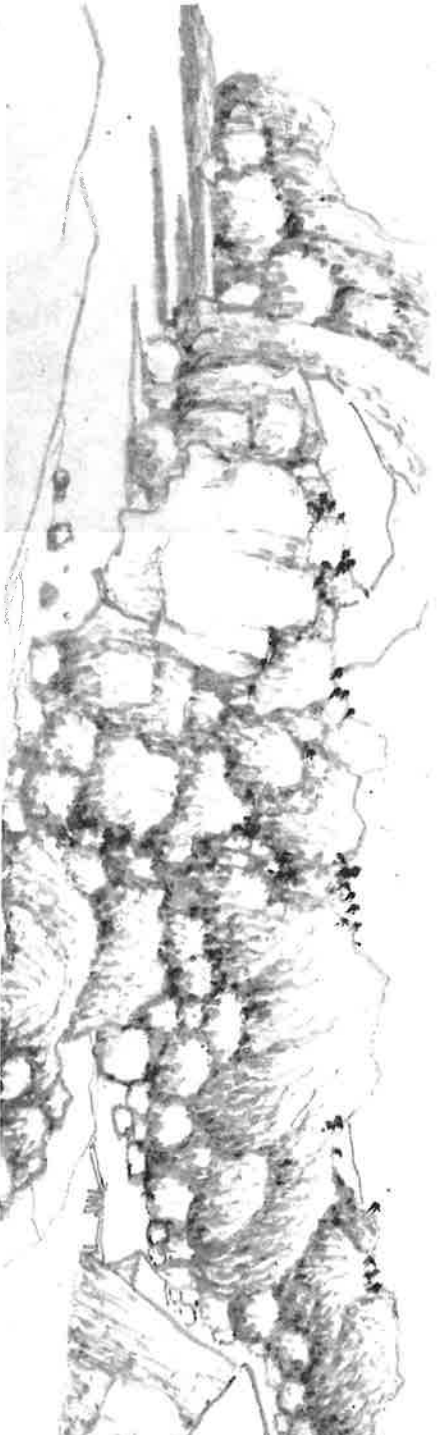


Fig. 131c. Shen Chou, detail, *Autumn Colors among Streams and Mountains*



Fig. 131d. Shen Chou, detail, *Autumn Colors among Streams and Mountains*

style, was most comfortable with the calligraphic landscape idioms of the late Yüan masters.

In a long handscroll, *Autumn Colors among Streams and Mountains* (*Ch'i-shan ch'iu-se*), done about 1480, now in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (figs. 131a-d), Shen explored four Yüan painters' landscape idioms—those of Ni T'san, Huang Kung-wang, Wang Meng, and Wu Chen (1280-1354)—as related brush styles varying in expressive qualities; he moved from one to the next in rapid, smooth-flowing shifts. In a colophon appended to the handscroll Shen commented, "Ni T'san's method is sparse [*lüeh*], but mine is complex [*fan*]. Yet though his method is sparse, his meaning is ample. This is why he is said to be inimitable."²⁸ Beginning with the familiar Ni T'san motifs of sparse trees, barren rocks, and an empty pavilion (fig. 131a), Shen developed Ni's angular texture strokes (as seen in Wang Fu's *Remembering Ni T'san's "Wu-t'ung Tree,"* dated 1408; cf. no. 13) into a more complex, longer texture pattern that reflects the style of Huang Kung-wang and an expansive shift in mood (fig. 131b). Then, turning his brush tip inward to form round, dense, curling, and stippling texture strokes, Shen created rock forms that contain the same controlled energy as those by Wang Meng (fig. 131c). Finally, in the last section of *Autumn Colors*, he used simple round brushstrokes to represent rolling shores and blunt and stubby trees, evoking the serene and melancholy mood of Wu Chen (fig. 131d). By practicing the different brush idioms of the Yüan painters one after another in the long handscroll format, Shen Chou succeeded in treating the theme of autumn mountains in a wide range of moods and interpretations. Similarly, in an album of twenty-two leaves, painted over a period of five years for a man named Chou Wei-te and completed in 1482 (now in the Chung-hsing-lu collection), Shen Chou used the album format to explore, develop, and expand on a full range of Sung and Yüan manners in a succession of individual but related compositions.²⁹

In an important hanging scroll in the National Palace Museum, Taipei, *Walking with a Staff* (*Ts'e-chang t'u*), painted about 1485 (fig. 132), Shen Chou used the Ni T'san idiom to develop a poetic vision entirely his own. Though immediately recognizable as a work after Ni T'san, the painting uses more than just Ni T'san's brush method. Confronted with his need for a richer language to communicate his "meaning," Shen borrowed Huang Kung-wang's fuller hemp-skin texture pattern to re-create a quiet, seemingly austere landscape. Extending Wang Fu's ideas of formal interplay of brushstrokes and surface patterns (cf. no. 13),

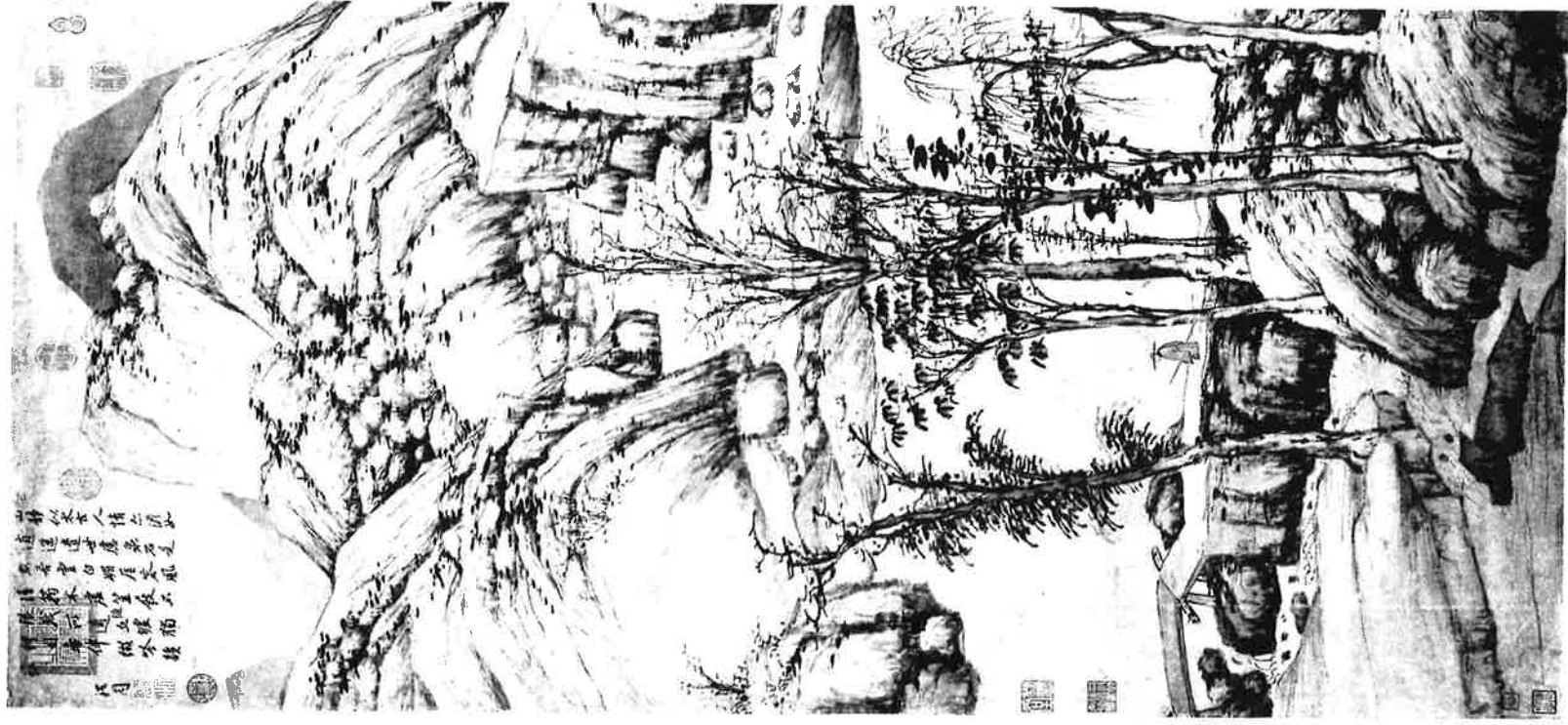


Fig. 132. Shen Chou, *Walking with a Staff* (*Ts'e-chang t'u*). Undated, ca. 1485. Hanging scroll, ink on paper. 159.1 x 72.2 cm (5 ft. 2 5/8 in. x 28 3/8 in.). National Palace Museum, Taipei

MING DYNASTY REVIVALISM

Shen Chou treated individually realistic landscape forms in compositions made of carefully constructed contrasts and balances, in which brush patterns mirror, echo, and interlock. In comparing Shen Chou's *Walking with a Staff* with a composition by Ni Tsan, Jon Bourassa (1981) observed that "Shen's work is a balance of . . . parts which are held together more by artistic devices than through conformity to natural order."³⁰

In the upper left corner of *Walking with a Staff*, Shen Chou inscribed a poem:

The mountain is quiescent as if in remote antiquity;
 Man's feelings are tranquil and harmonious.
 In blissful leisure, forgetting all worldly care,
 I live peacefully among streams and rocks.
 White clouds enhance the beautiful cliffs;
 A fresh breeze sweeps through the empty bamboo and trees.
 My sun hat and clogs do not restrain me
 From exploring any hillocks and wild land—
 Walking alone without a companion,
 Lightly humming a poem, with a slow and gentle rhythm.

The poem and the painting describe perfectly the lifestyle and approach of Shen Chou, who depicted himself in the painting as gently reciting a verse while walking with a staff through serene mountain surroundings. Although there was no personal contact between Shen Chou and Ch'en Hsien-chang, who were exact contemporaries, Shen's painting parallels Ch'en's philosophical teaching. In imitating earlier styles, Shen did not copy, but instead depended on intuitive knowledge self-acquired through quiet meditation.

In an essay entitled "Night Vigil" ("Yeh-tso"), inscribed above a well-known painting of the same title, dated 1492 (now in the National Palace Museum, Taipei), Shen Chou wrote of waking one cold night, sitting quietly with a flickering lamp under a pale moon, and hearing sounds he had never heard before. He reflected that he had always sought knowledge through books, and had never achieved a state of outward quiescence [*wai-ching*] and inward repose [*nei-ting*], but that on that particular night he had "acquired sounds and colors through a quiescent and reposeful state of mind." Once possessed, these sounds had the effect of cleansing man's mind, spirit, and feelings, and helping him to express and realize his intent [*chih*] and meaning [*i*] Tonight's sounds and colors are no different from those of other nights, yet upon reaching my ears and eyes, they suddenly and wondrously become one [*ho*] with me. . . . When the sounds die down, and the colors disappear, my intent, brimming and overflowing, alone remains. What is this so-called intent? Is it, indeed, within me, or outside me? Is it found in external things, or is it expressed only when interacting with things? . . . Through mental fasting [*chai-hsin*] and sitting alone [*ku-tso*] by the light of a bright candle deep into the night, I must pursue the principles of affairs and things, as well as the wondrous workings of the mind and the body; by using this method for self-cultivation and responding [*ying*] to things, I shall surely acquire [*te*] understanding.³¹

Central to Shen Chou's beliefs, as to Ch'en Hsien-chang's, was the concept *te*, which means, as a verb, "to acquire," and, as a noun, "acquisition" or "insight." Instead of bookish knowledge or learning, Shen Chou sought intuitive response (*ying*) and understanding, when the mind becomes one (*ho*) with things; this intuitive approach applies to Shen's understanding of nature, as well as to his study of the ancient masters' brush styles. Ch'en Hsien-chang had spoken of *kan-ying*, impression and response; as explained by Jen Yu-wen (1970), Ch'en believed that "when the subjective mind is impressed or stimulated by objective phenomena, natural feelings are aroused and natural and proper responses are expressed."³² Stimulated by the sounds and colors in a proper way, Shen Chou spoke of "expressing and realizing his intent and

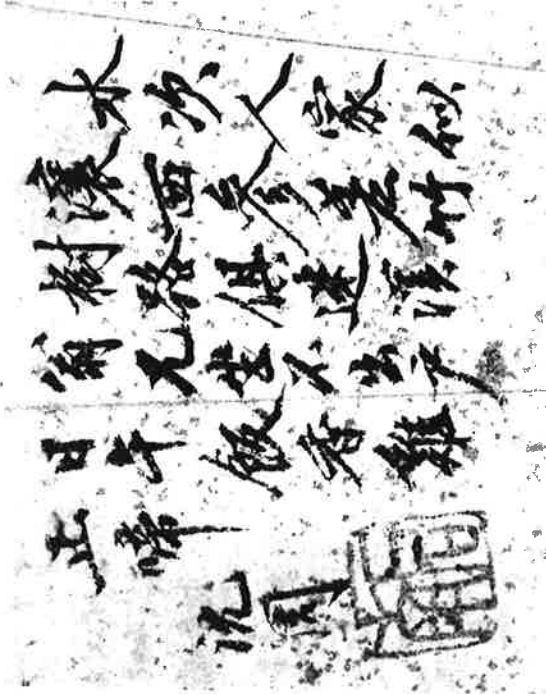


Fig. 133a. Shen Chou, detail of inscription, *Home by the Stream* (*Shui tz'u jen-chia*), no. 14A

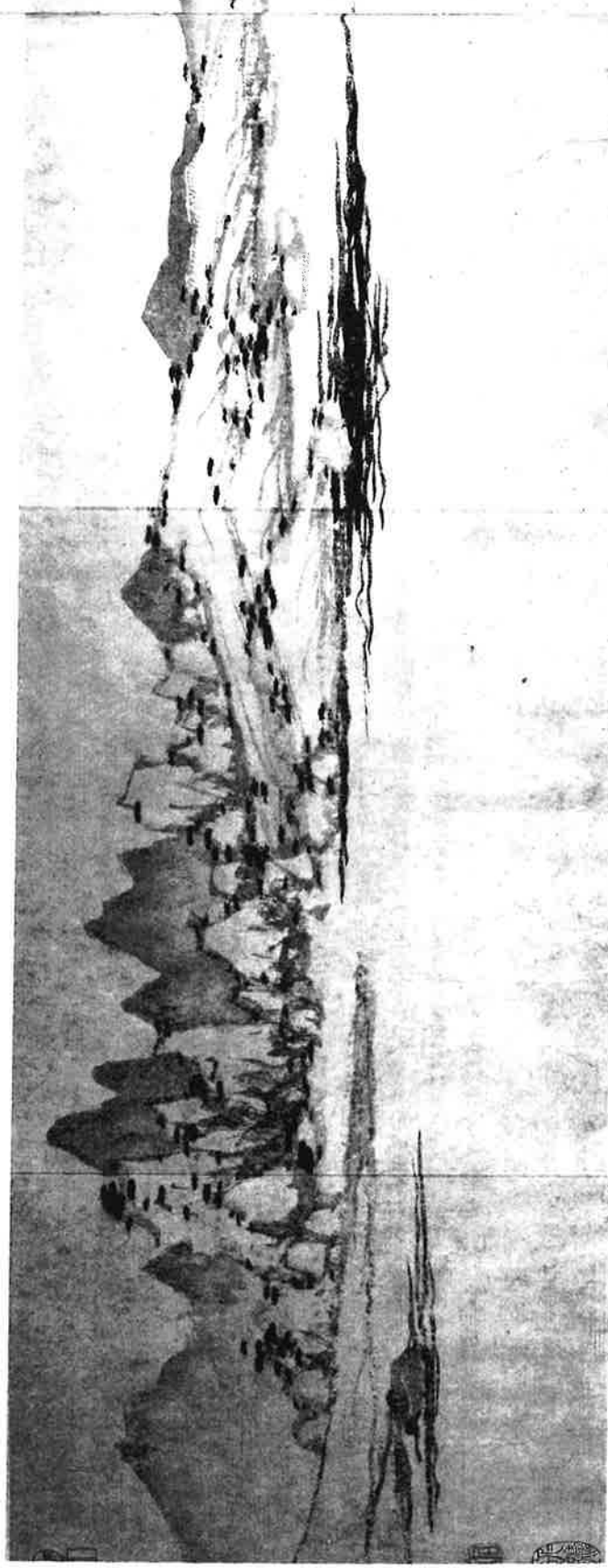


Fig. 133b. Shen Chou, detail, *Home by the Stream* (*Shui tz'u jen-chia*), no. 14A

meaning." The purpose of poetry and painting, for Shen Chou, was to "speak one's intent" (*yen-chih*). This intent is expressed only when it interacts with things through mental fasting and quiet meditation, as taught by the third-century B.C. mystic Chuang-tzu.³³ Ch'en Hsien-chang spoke of quiescence as a dynamic principle, a preparation for action. Shen Chou saw it as a means of acquiring understanding and of fully expressing his intent and meaning.

In *Walking with a Staff*, the mountain is "quiescent." Because the artist's feelings are "plain and harmonious," his drawing naturally expresses a quiet feeling. Even the bamboos and trees are described by the artist as empty or vacant (*hsi*), the precondition for receptiveness and creativity. James Cahill (1978) wrote, "Such drawing, rather than analyzing and defining the objects of the picture intellectually, from outside, seems to become the brush-equivalent of those objects, identical with them."³⁴ Sung painters sought nature in art; Shen Chou *became* nature in his painting.

The philosopher-artist's spirit of quiescence permeates every one of Shen's works. In a fan painting, *Home by the Stream* (*Shui-tz'u jen-chia*), painted about 1490, in the Edward L. Elliott Family Collection (no. 14A) Shen's inscription reads:



A home by the stream faces water flowing west,
Bamboos and trees, high and low, obscure mountain paths.

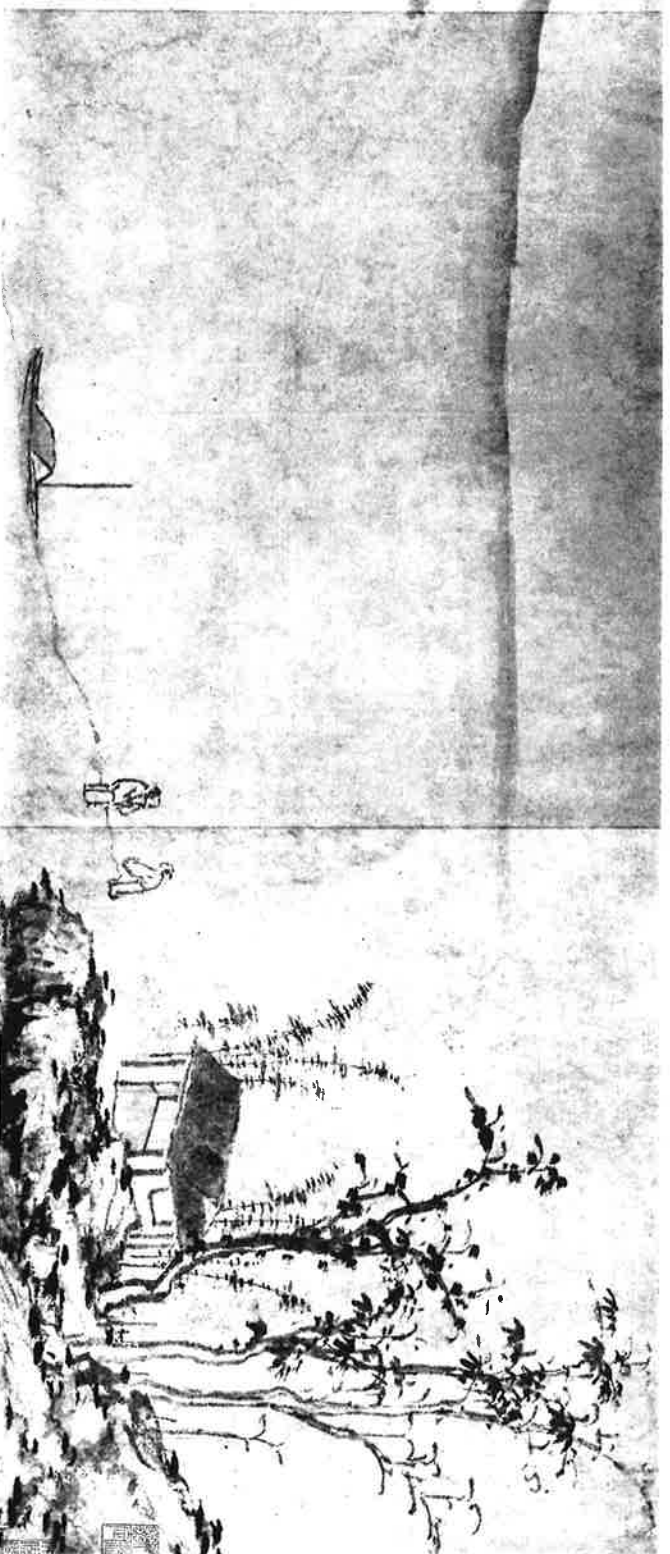
Watching the stream an old man sits, seldom leaving his door,

At noon he smells a delicious meal and hears the rooster crowing.

Just as the poem expresses total contentment, so is the painting a masterly lesson in compositional stability and repose. In the 1490s Shen Chou increasingly preferred the strong and firm brush idiom of Wu Chen, striving for utmost simplicity and clarity, and greater strength in surface design. Shen's trees (fig. 133a) resemble well-formed characters: individual brushstrokes in his painting, like those in his calligraphy (fig. 133b), which follows Huang T'ing-chien's style, reflecting Huang's precept of "driving every stroke with full force" (*pi-chung yung-li*).³⁵ Chiang Chao-shen (1976) links Shen's blunt and stiff brushwork with the Southern Sung-Che School tradition and sees it as evidence of Shen's effort to reconcile the Southern Sung and Yüan styles.³⁶ In the Princeton fan painting a strong, bare-branched tree occupies the center of the composition, bending over and sheltering the two-storied building in which the gentleman-scholar is seated. Resembling wrought-iron grillwork, the tree is done in round and blunt seal-script brushwork (cf. fig. 87). This and other trees, two of them covered with foliage done in short ax-cut strokes, all heavily brushed in dark ink, serve as a foil in the left-hand foreground. The stream in the right foreground runs diagonally to the left, into the distance. The interlocked diagonal shorelines are bounded and set off by the horizontal range of distant mountains, done in a smooth, light ink wash; three contrasting, dark patches of mountain peaks, closely hugging the light-colored mountain silhouette, stretch horizontally across the picture plane, further enhancing the stability of the composition.

In a handscroll *Saying Farewell: In the Style of Ni Tsan* (*Fang Yün-lin Sung-pieh*), painted about 1500, in The Art Museum, Princeton University (fig. 134), Shen Chou followed the Ni Tsan idiom once again. The broad river runs diagonally from lower left to upper right, separating the foreground in the lower right corner from the distant shoreline in the upper left. The Ni Tsan idiom is an ideal choice for the scene: in front is a cottage under some sparse trees; nearby two friends stand by the foreground shore bowing to each other to say farewell, while a small boat waits to ferry the traveler to some distant shore. Compared to Tai Chin's *Returning Late from a Spring Outing* (cf. fig. 126), Shen's painting has little descriptive content. As a more severe kind of imaginative triumph, the work shows landscape elements merely as brisk and impulsive brushwork, and it succeeds as no representational description can in conveying the extremes of

Fig. 134. Shen Chou, *Saying Farewell: In the Style of Ni Tsan* (*Fang Yün-lin Sung-pieh*). Undated, ca. 1500. Handscroll, ink on paper. 163.0 x 29.0 cm (5 ft. 4 1/8 in. x 11 3/8 in.). The Art Museum, Princeton University



IMAGES OF THE MIND

Fig. 135. Tang Yin, *Seeing Off a Guest on a Mountain Path* (*Shan-lu sung-k'ö*). Undated, ca. 1505–10. Hanging scroll, ink and light color on silk. 118.0 x 61.0 cm (3 ft. 10½ in. x 24 in.). The Art Museum, Princeton University



Fig. 135a. Detail of inscription, fig. 135

feeling—sorrow, regret, urgency, and delay—between two parting friends. Shen Chou enriches the sparse style of Ni T'san with the long hemp-skin texture pattern of Huang Kung-wang, the dense and curling strokes of Wang Meng, and the round, stubby ones of Wu Chen. The outwardly quiet scenery bristles with powerful pincerlike brushstrokes, sprinkled dots, and ink dabs, all of which, applied with passion and speed, manifest control, precision, and ease. As a meditation on style, the painting displays Shen Chou's ability to achieve richness in sparseness, activity through quiescence. In "acquiring" and transforming the various brush idioms of the Yüan masters into his own style, he painted neither to please others nor merely to be stylish, but in quiet assertion of his natural unalienable selfhood.

A Professional Amateur

Tai Chin and Shen Chou represent antithetical approaches to painting of the second half of the fifteenth century, Tai the professional and Shen amateur ideals. The two modes merged in the life and art of the early sixteenth-century Su-chou painter T'ang Yin (1470–1524).

Son of a merchant, T'ang Yin spent a profligate youth indulging in drinking and debauchery, but because of his literary talent was nevertheless befriended by Wen Lin (1445–1499), the father of Wen Cheng-ming, and other prominent scholars and officials in Su-chou. Placing first in the provincial examination in Nanking in 1498, he became involved in an examination scandal in the capital in the following year, thereby forfeiting forever an official career.³⁷ Disgraced and impoverished he turned to writing and painting for a living, and led the life of a dissolute artist. He is said to have started painting at the age of seventeen. His early works, influenced by Shen Chou, resemble those of the young Wen Cheng-ming, but later he studied under the leading Su-chou professional painter Chou Ch'ên (ca. 1450–1535). In his popular paintings of beautiful women, T'ang Yin was also influenced by such professional painters as Wu Wei (1459–1508) and Tu Chin (fl. ca. 1465–1500), whom he met in Nanking in 1498.³⁸ T'ang Yin died in 1524.

A silk hanging scroll, *Seeing Off a Guest on a Mountain Path* (*Shan-lu sung-k'o*), in the DuBois Schanck Morris collection in The Art Museum, Princeton University, bears an old attribution to the late Northern Sung master Li T'ang (fig. 135). The false attribution was based on a questionable cipher by the Sung emperor Hui-tsung, as well as fake imperial seals of the Hsüan-ho (1119–25) and Shao-hsing (1131–62) eras. Shen C. Y. Fu has identified this painting as a genuine work by T'ang Yin.³⁹ The composition, previously known by a typical Sung title, *Travelers among Streams and Mountains* (*Ch'i-shan hsing-li t'u*), has been renamed, according to the sense of the poem, and is inscribed at the top with a poem (fig. 135a):

In front of Mount Nü-chi, traversed by
wild paths,

The sound of whispering pines mixes with that
of a waterfall.

Striking his pony once, he rides into the sunset.
With wind in my ears, I see my guest on his way.



Fig. 135b. Detail, fig. 135

The elegant calligraphy, which is executed in the square running-script style of Yen Chen-ch'ing (709–785; cf. fig. 69), though not signed, is clearly from T'ang Yin's hand; it compares closely with T'ang's *Odes to Fallen Flowers* (*Lo-hua shih*), dated about 1505, in the John B. Elliott Collection at Princeton (cf. no. 20). According to Chiang Chao-shen's study of T'ang Yin's life and art (1976), after T'ang returned home from disgrace in Peking in 1499—when he was about thirty—he worked vigorously in Chou Ch'en's Southern Sung Academy idiom, while writing his calligraphy in the square and level manner of Yen Chen-ch'ing, until about 1506, when he was about thirty-seven, when he switched his writing style to the more elongated, diagonal manner of Li Yung (678–747; cf. fig. 93).⁴⁰ In *Seeing Off a Guest*, which can be dated to about 1505–10, cottages at the mouth of a mountain inlet overlook a shallow bay; two men, a woman, and a child stand at the windows watching a guest riding off over a bridge; above the cottages great pine trees lean over the side of a cliff on the right; fishing boats rest at anchor in the bay; and, beyond the distant shoreline, silhouettes of other cottages are faintly visible under a tall mountain largely obliterated by mist. The painting, done in the Li T'ang–Hsia Kuei ink-wash style, is a romantic evocation of the monumental Sung landscape tradition.

A similar composition by T'ang Yin is seen in a painting, in the Shanghai Museum, entitled *Spring Visit to Mount Nü-chi* (*Ch'un-yü Nü-chi-shan*; fig. 136), which is the first of a superb series of four scrolls representing landscapes of the four seasons.⁴¹ On the painting, T'ang's signed poem (fig. 136a), in calligraphy closely resembling that on the Princeton scroll, reads:

Spring snow atop Mount Nü-chi is melting;

Tender branches sprout from the roadside apricot trees.

As I promised to visit here on this day,

I carry my wine and my lute over a rustic bridge.

T'ang Yin wrote easily and was said to have turned out reams of poems, often playful in tone and sprinkled with lively colloquial expressions. But here he borrowed an old poem, attributed to the T'ang poet Yang Shih-e (*chin-shih*, 785), and found in Kuo Hsi's *Lofty Aims in Forests and Streams* (*Lin-ch'üan kao-chih chi*). Yang's original poem, as recorded by Kuo Hsi's son Kuo Ssu, is entitled, "Looking at Mount Nü-chi" ("Wang Nü-chi-shan"), and it reads:

Spring snow atop Mount Nü-chi is melting;

Tender branches sprout from the roadside apricot trees.

I wish to visit there, yet do not know when;

Looking at it in vexation, I turn my carriage around at a rustic bridge.⁴²

This adaptive type of poetic borrowing illustrates T'ang Yin's working method. Located in Honan in northern China, Mount Nü-chi was probably no more than a name to T'ang Yin, yet a series of monumental compositions by him, of which the Shanghai and Princeton paintings are the earliest extant examples, bear poetic inscriptions specifically referring to it. Apparently T'ang's inspiration for this theme was Kuo Hsi's treatise on painting, in which the author credits Yang Shih-e's poem "Looking at Mount Nü-chi" as one of the many ancient verses that inspired his paintings. In re-creating a monumental landscape composition in the Northern Sung grand manner, T'ang appropriately found his inspiration in a poem that had stirred a Northern Sung master, rather than referring to a poem of his own. Yet he rewrote the second half of the poem, redirecting the mood from quiet contemplation to active participation, thereby providing a strong narrative focus—similar to that of Tai Chin's *Returning Late from a Spring Outing* (cf. fig. 126). A clearly defined story line was apparently important to art patrons of his time. Thus, while Yang Shih-e's poem voices the wistful sentiment "I wish to visit there, yet do not know when; / Looking at [the mountain] in vexation, I turn my carriage around at a rustic bridge," T'ang Yin's verse pledges the more specific promise "to visit here on this day," and the painting pictures his spring visitor followed by his servant carrying wine and his lute over a rustic bridge.

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Fig. 136. T'ang Yin, *Spring Visit to Mount Nü-chi* (*Ch'ün-yü Nü-chi-shan*). Undated, ca. 1505. Hanging scroll, ink and colors on silk. Shanghai Museum

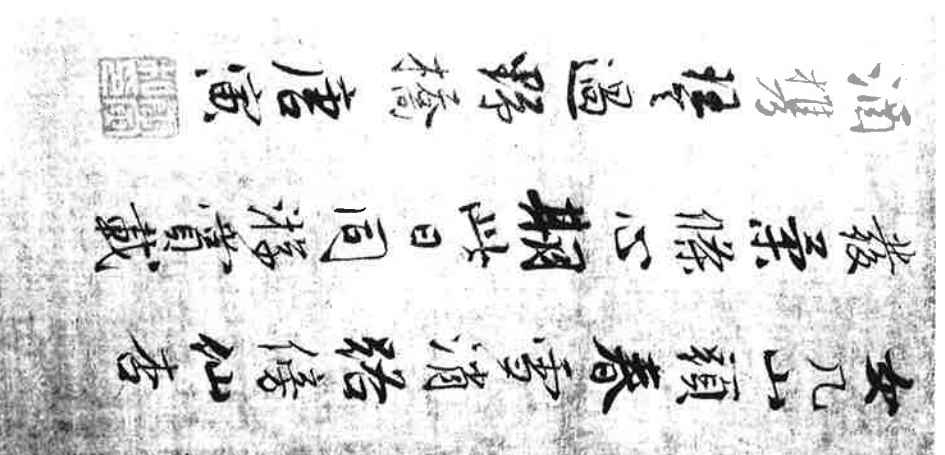


Fig. 136a. Detail of inscription, fig. 136

In *Spring Visit*, T'ang repeats a V-shaped mountain motif three times along the right-hand border. As the first of a series of four scrolls (meant to be hung from right to left), this composition, with its heavily weighted right side, is followed by one weighted on the left side, which has boulders ringing the lower edge on three sides of the composition; the third scroll shows a pond in the foreground and boulders ranging across the middle of the picture, and is followed by the final, winter scene, representing a snowy peak, in the Fan K'uan (ca. 960–1030) idiom, rising in a straight vertical plane in the left half of the painting.⁴³

Seeing Off a Guest was clearly painted after *Spring Visit*. The artist repeated the magnificent group of pine trees as the dominant motif (fig. 135b), but rearranged the landscape elements: scallop-shaped boulders now ring the lower edges of the picture, and the cottages and the “rustic bridge” are made to follow the circular edge of the bay in the foreground, while faraway mountains, half hidden in the mist in the upper right corner, circle back into view on the opposite side. In thus clarifying and further developing the monumental composition, T’ang Yin established a poetic theme with Mount Nü-chi as the subject matter. Setting the scene with the first two lines, “In front of Mount Nü-chi, traversed by wild paths, / The sound of whispering pines mixes with that of a waterfall,” his poem goes on to describe the activities depicted in his painting.

In *Whispering Pines on a Mountain Path* (*Shan-lu sung-sheng*; in the National Palace Museum, Taipei), which according to Chiang Chao-shen may be dated to 1516 (fig. 137), T’ang Yin continues with the Mount Nü-chi theme:

In front of Mount Nü-chi, traversed by wild paths,

The sound of the whispering pines harmonizes closely with that of the waterfall.

As I listen quietly with total attention,

I feel the spirit of Tao rising within me.

In this imposing composition, T’ang combines elements from *Spring Visit* and *Seeing Off a Guest*: the foreground boulders stand away from the lower border to form a more tightly knit mass in the middle distance; the great pine trees now grow from the left; and the earlier V-shaped mountain motif has become a commanding central massif, reminiscent of the great central peaks found in the Northern Sung landscapes by Fan K’uan (cf. fig. 48) and Li T’ang (cf. fig. 50).

Clearly, what distinguishes T’ang Yin from the common professional painter is his ability to exploit fully the formal and expressive potential of his paintings. When Chou Ch’en, T’ang’s teacher, was asked why his art was not the equal of his pupil’s, Chou replied, “Compared to Master T’ang, I lack only a few thousand volumes of books.”⁴⁴ Such a statement, though perhaps apocryphal, reaffirms the accepted notion that fine art, as a product of learning, belonged to the privileged domain of a scholar. With its technical virtuosity, T’ang Yin’s painting has a visual impact that never fails to amaze and impress; combined with his poetry, it conveys a spirit that is engaging and fun-loving, yet often deeply melancholy.

In technical brilliance and lightninglike intelligence, T’ang Yin had no equal. In mastering the ancient brush idioms, he pushed the resources of painting to their natural limits—and beyond. The secret of his extraordinarily versatile brushwork lies in his training in calligraphy, particularly in the fluid, running script style of Li Yung, which he favored in his later years. His brushstrokes move like quicksilver and bursts of flame, spinning out densely intertwining tree branches; turning angular, ax-cut beginnings into thin, round, and wet hemp-fiber strokes; and freely juxtaposing scribbled wire-mesh patterns with flat ink-wash areas. His ink technique has a deeply sensuous quality: rich charcoal blackness is daringly contrasted with an abundance of silky transparent gray. The effective use of languid ink wash heightens the dynamic energy of his brushwork. In *Traveling by Donkey with Poetic Thoughts* (*Ch’i-lü shih-i*), in the Shanghai Museum (fig. 138), although the landscape forms nearly fill the composition, the painting, because of the contrasting use of ink tones, does not look full. The mountains almost seem to rock and sway in sympathy with the emotion of the poem, which expresses the grief and desperation of a poverty-stricken, failed scholar:

Failing despite my begging, I bundle up my books and return home,

Riding a mule again up the blue hills.

My face covered with wind, frost, and dust,

I meet my country wife, dressed in straw.

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Fig. 137. T'ang Yin, *Whispering Pines on a Mountain Path* (*Shan-lu sung-sheng*). Undated, ca. 1516. Hanging scroll, ink and light color on silk. 194.5 x 102.8 cm (6 ft. 4⁵/₈ in. x 3 ft. 4¹/₂ in.). National Palace Museum, Taipei

Every element of this painting—brushwork, contrasting ink tones, and composition—has been carried to an expressive extreme, yet such excesses are essential to T'ang Yin's style. The work seems to stand, as the artist often did in life, on the very edge of decorum, hanging precariously only to be saved from glib theatricality at the last moment by intensity and sincerity of emotion and an infallible sense of style and elegance.



Fig. 138. T'ang Yin, *Traveling by Donkey with Poetic Thoughts* (*Ch'i-lü shih-i*). Undated, ca. 1510. Hanging scroll, ink on paper. Shanghai Museum

Painting Criticism: Toward a Synthesis

Painting criticism, which flourished after the mid-Ming period, followed closely the development in Ming literary criticism. From the beginning of the dynasty to the end of the Ch'eng-hua era (1465-87), poetry and prose writing continued in the Sung and Yüan traditions. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, a time of peace and prosperity, Emperor Ming Hsiao-tsung (Hung-chih, r. 1488-1506) ruled as perhaps the most humane of the Ming emperors. Hung-chih's senior grand secretary Li Tung-yang (1447-1516), a

leading poet and calligrapher, dominated the literary world by sponsoring a generation of younger literary talents. One of these followers, Li Meng-yang (1427-1529), a close friend of Wang Shou-jen's, became the leader of the literary revival (*fu-ku*) movement that swept the country in the early years of the sixteenth century.

Protesting against the ornate style in contemporary poetry and the so-called examination hall style (*t'ai-ko t'i*) in prose writing, Li Meng-yang argued that the proper model for prose should be the high prose style of the Ch'in and Han dynasties and for poetry the style of the High T'ang. Li took up the ideas of the Southern Sung critic Yen Yü (1180-1235), who, in comparing poetry with Ch'an Buddhism, spoke of sudden enlightenment (*sun-wu*) and of following the primary principle (*ti-i*)—or the Great Vehicle (Mahayana)—which Yen compared to the poetry of the Han, Wei, Tsin, and High T'ang.⁴⁵ For Li Meng-yang the choice of the right models, like that of the primary principle, was simply a matter of setting for oneself the highest possible standards.

In discussing the problem of following models, Li stressed the importance of methods: "In the creations of the ancient master builders . . . every hall was different, and every door was not alike; yet in executing the square and the circle, no one could avoid using the ruler and the compass. . . . The ruler and the compass represent the methods [*fa*]." By "methods" Li had meant fundamental standards, rather than techniques and styles. While styles may change, standards can never be abandoned: "If someone can do without the ruler and the compass, he must still be able to execute the square and the circle, then he may forget about [the ruler and the compass]."

As the leader of the early seven masters (*ch'ien-ch'i-tzu*)—beside Li the others were Ho Ching-ming (1483-1521), Hsü Chen-ch'ing (1479-1511), Pien Kung (1476-1532), K'ang Hai (1475-1540), Wang T'ing-hsiang (1474-1544), and Wang Chiu-szu (fl. ca. 1508)—Li Meng-yang saw the imitation of ancient models as taking place in a dualistic—indeed paradoxical—situation of continuity and change:

[T]he great buildings of the past were sometimes huge, sometimes grand and solitary, sometimes ornate, and sometimes remote and lonely. . . . Yet large or small, they never failed to conform to [the rules of] the square and the circle. . . . As long as they shared these common rules, [different works] could be individually lonely or remote, ornate or grand, or solitary or huge. After staying the same for a while, [the forms] began to shift and change, turning into [different styles]. . . . Such is the essence of transformation [*pien-hua*]. Thus, without any attempt to adhere to the same methods, these same methods shall prevail; and without any attempt to be different, everyone shall speak in a different manner.⁴⁶

Under the influence of the Neo-Confucian School of the Mind, the revivalists agreed that the "truth" of an ancient master was discovered only in one's own mind. By the second half of the sixteenth century, when Wang Shih-chen (1526-1590) succeeded Li Meng-yang and Li P'an-lung (1514-1570) as the leader of literary society—Li P'an-lung and Wang Shih-chen were among the later seven masters (*hou-ch'i-tzu*)—it was commonly accepted that the proper way to imitate was through individual transformation (*pien*). To achieve correspondence (*ho*) with an ancient model, one must first learn departure (*li*) from it, or as Wang Shih-chen explained,

If one's own method corresponds [*ho*; with the ancient method], one must try his best to express himself; if one's method departs [*li*; from the ancient method], one must concentrate on returning [to the ancient method]. When there is departure in correspondence, and correspondence in departure, one will then attain enlightenment [*wu*].⁴⁷

Toward the end of the sixteenth century, during the Wan-li era (1573-1619), the revivalist doctrine of the later seven masters was vigorously attacked by antirevivalists led by the Yüan brothers of the Kung-an (Hunan) School. The Yüan brothers were not only great admirers of the paramount individualist Li Chih

(1527–1602), who had advocated the truth (*chen*) of the “childlike mind” (*t’ung-hsin*) uncontaminated by learning, but were also profoundly interested in the vernacular literature of popular theater and novels. Arguing that the truth of literature lies in the newness of “transformation,” Yüan Hung-tao (1568–1610) pointed out that “there is no literature that survives a hundred years without change. As there are originators, there will be those at the end of a stream, and because of those at the end of a stream, there will again be originators.” Rather than seeing change as a way to return to the old, Yüan insisted on change in order to be “true” to oneself: “If my face cannot resemble your face, how can I make it resemble some ancient master’s face?” In other words, he concluded, “an able painter follows things [in nature], not people; an able scholar follows his own mind, not the Tao [of some ancient sages]; an able poet follows the myriad phenomena around him, not some earlier poet.”⁴⁸

Throughout the fifteenth century Ming painters had continued in the Sung and Yüan landscape styles without much theoretical discussion. While the Painting Academy and Che (Hang-chou) School professional painters worked proficiently in the Southern Sung ink-wash tradition, bringing new triumphs of realism, monumentality, and craftsmanlike perfection to their works, the amateur painters of the Wu (Su-chou) School carried on the calligraphic brush tradition of the late Yüan recluse-painters of that region, cultivating restraint and naturalness in their art as valuable qualities of the scholar and gentleman.

Although the professional and the amateur painters followed different earlier models, no overt preference for one set of ancient styles over another had been expressed by writers before the middle of the sixteenth century. In a poem describing how he “tried to follow the strengths of many recent painters [of the early Ming] as well as the ancient masters,” Tu Ch’iung (1397–1474), a Su-chou scholar-painter and an older contemporary of Shen Chou’s, contrasted Wang Wei’s (699–759) ink-wash painting with the gold and green style of the two Lis: Li Ssu-hsün (651–716) and his son Li Chao-tao (fl. ca. 670–730). While pointing out that “Ma [Yüan] and Hsia [Kuei] had formed their own stiff and hard manner, quite different from the [strange and eccentric] school [of Mi Fu and Mi Yu-jen (1072–1151)],” and placing all the Yüan painters he named in Wang Wei’s school, Tu mentioned, along with Wang Wei and the Mi tradition, a number of Northern and Southern Sung painters—Ching Hao (fl. ca. 870–930), Kuan T’ung (fl. ca. 907–23), Kuo Chung-shu (ca. 910–977), Tung Yüan (fl. 937–76), Chü-jan (fl. ca. 960–80), Wang Shen (1036–after 1089), Li T’ang, and Yen Tzu-p’ing (fl. ca. 1164–81)—whose stylistic lineages Tu did not attempt to classify definitively.

While the calligraphic styles of the four great masters of the late Yüan—Huang Kung-wang, Wu Chen, Ni Tsan, and Wang Meng—could be demonstrably related to Tung Yüan’s hemp-fiber texture strokes, it was neither easy to characterize all other Northern Sung painters by definite texture patterns nor possible to trace simple lineages among them. Unlike the poetry critics, who could point to the works of a single period, the High T’ang, as the ideal model or primary principle that embodied all the methods and rules, the painting critics could use neither Sung nor Yüan painting as their exclusive model; instead they had to follow one theoretical tradition, which they called the Southern School, that might be proven to be superior to all others.

By the middle of the sixteenth century, painting criticism was enlivened by rival opinions championing respectively for the professional and the amateur schools of painters. In 1545 Li K’ai-hsien (1502–1568), a scholar, dramatist, poet, and a northerner, from Shantung, wrote *Painting Classifications of the Chung-lu Academy* (*Chung-lu hua-p’i*), in which Tai Chin was placed in the first rank while Shen Chou was relegated to the fourth (out of six).⁴⁹ In his *History of Painting in the Wu Prefecture during Our Illustrious [Ming] Dynasty* (*Kuo-ch’ao Wu-chün tan-ch’ing chih*; preface dated 1563), Wang Chih-teng (1535–1612), a native of Su-chou, rated Shen Chou as the principal artist in the divine class and Wen Cheng-ming in the excellent class.⁵⁰ Ho Liang-chun (1506–1573), another Wu scholar from Hua-t’ing, Kiangsu, and author of *Painting Discussions at the Four Friends’ Studio* (*Ssu-yu-chai hua-lun*; completed in the 1560s), viewed Tai Chin as “the best among the professional painters,” but, as a professional, somehow “limited by his personal qualities.” Ho saw as

the "correct," or Orthodox, tradition (*cheng-mo*) the succession of painting styles from the Northern Sung masters through Chao Meng-fu (1254–1322), Kao K'o-kung, and the four great masters of the late Yüan, to Shen Chou and Wen Cheng-ming, namely the Wu School.⁵¹

At the end of the sixteenth century, another scholar-artist from Hua-t'ing, Mo Shih-lung (ca. 1538–1587), a friend and older fellow townsman of Tung Ch'i-ch'ang's (1555–1636), began to apply lessons of Ch'an Buddhism to the study of painting. By analogy to Ch'an Buddhism, which was divided into a Southern and a Northern School, respectively representing the "sudden awakening" (*tun-wu*) and "gradual awakening" (*chien-wu*) approaches to enlightenment, Mo Shih-lung suggested that landscape painting could also be divided into Southern and Northern Schools—the Southern made up of scholar-painters who "entered the land of Tathagata Buddha in a single leap," the Northern by professional painters who "became Bodhisattvas only after a long and meritorious record of hardship."⁵² Tung Ch'i-ch'ang began to sort out the problem, accepting Tu Ch'ung's and Ho Liang-chun's list of "correct" painters as the Southern School:

In Ch'an Buddhism there is a Southern and a Northern School, which first separated in the T'ang period, in painting a similar division into a Southern and a Northern School also appeared in the T'ang period. But the people involved were not divided between southerners and northerners. The Northern School followed Li Ssu-hsün, father and son, who painted landscapes with colors; their manner was transmitted in the Sung period by Chao Kan (fl. ca. 961–76), Chao Po-chü (fl. ca. 1120–62), [Chao] Po-su down to Ma [Yüan], Hsia [Kuei], and others. The Southern School began with Wang Mo-chieh [Wang Wei], who first used a light ink-wash technique, transforming the outline method; it was transmitted by Chang Ts'ao (late 8th century), Ching [Hao], Kuan [T'ung], Tung [Yüan], Chü[-jan], Kuo Chung-shu, Mi father and son [Mi Fu and Mi Yu-jen], down to the four great masters of the Yüan. . . .⁵³

Although the "Southern School" theory, as such, was incomplete (it did not deal fully with Li Ch'eng and Fan K'uan), illogical (it did not refer to a Southern style of painting), and historically without justification (therefore meaningless), it nevertheless provided the painters with a brilliant focus and a well-defined approach. Tung's message was plain: if a painter were only to stress "sudden awakening" by following the Southern School tradition of Tung Yüan, Chü-jan, and the four Yüan masters, his painting would naturally be truthful and life-enhancing.⁵⁴

For the scholar-painters "sudden awakening" had long meant awakening to the ancient methods. In their heated polemics against professional painters of the Che School, the issue that most troubled the scholars was neither the difference in their respective models, nor the social status of the professional painter, but a wild, seemingly pretentious and uncontrolled approach in some of the middle and late Ming professional painting. Beginning in the late fifteenth century, a number of painters, inspired by Taoist ideas of freedom and individuality, had adopted the words *k'uang* ("wild" or "crazy") and *ch'ih* ("foolish" or "stupid") as parts of their artistic names. Shih Chung (Hsü Tuan-pen; 1437–ca. 1520), a musician and painter born in Nanking, called himself Ch'ih-weng, "Old Fool." On *Bare Trees and Rocks* (*K'u-mu shih t'u*), dated 1506, in the Edward L. Elliott Family Collection at The Art Museum, Princeton University (no. 17), the artist wrote:

Old Fool freely lets his brush write forests and streams,
A useless failure now in his seventieth year.
He has experienced all the [romantic] moonlight in snow and flowers in the breeze.
In old age he is too poor to buy more flowers.

Outwardly a dullard (he reportedly did not learn to talk until he was seventeen), Shih Chung did not pursue an official career, and he disguised his personal disappointments and sorrows with drinking, and "wild" and



Fig. 139. Shih Chung, detail, *Bare Trees and Rocks* (K'ü-mu shih t'ü), no. 17

“foolish” behavior. In both calligraphy and painting, Shih’s rough and unkempt brushwork (fig. 139), reflecting a stubborn, nonconformist personality, closely parallels Ch’en Hsien-chang’s blunt and “natural” calligraphic style (cf. no. 16): individual brushstrokes, simple, direct, and unmodulated, enter and exit, twist and turn in an abrupt, insolent manner in both artists’ works. Shih’s unbridled vitality contrasts sharply with the manner of his contemporary Shen Chou (cf. figs. 133a, b), a model of cultured strength, civility, and balance. Yet Shih Chung, a talented poet and songwriter, was acquainted with Shen Chou, and the literary and artistic establishment accepted his eccentricities as a recognized form of nonconformity, the reverse side—even the necessary counterpart—of Confucian probity and earnest pursuit for truth. Shih



Fig. 140. T'ang Yin, detail, *The Lofly Scholars* (Kao-shih t'ü). Undated, ca. 1520. Handscroll, ink on paper. 23.7 x 195.8 cm (9³/₈ in. x 6 ft. 5¹/₈ in.). National Palace Museum, Taipei



Fig. 141. Wang E, detail, *Winter in the Mountains* (*Tung-ching*). Undated, ca. 1500. Hanging scroll, ink and light color on silk. 183.0 x 104.0 cm (6 ft. x 3 ft. 5 in.). The Art Museum, Princeton University

Chung's "type" appears in a handscroll entitled *The Lofty Scholars* (*Kao-shih t'u*; fig. 140), datable to about 1520, by T'ang Yin, another nonconformist. James Cahill (1978) described the scholars as "not so much 'noble' as pompous, with their upturned faces and strutting demeanors."⁵⁵ As talented failures, the arrogant scholars became an increasingly familiar feature of late Ming culture and society, and their affected rudeness seemed to lend, if nothing else, certain poetic dignity to a life otherwise characterized by frustration.

Many professional painters who had aspired to the same values as the scholar-painters probably felt like failed scholars. Yet their attempts to mimic eccentric "scholarly" lifestyles and painting techniques met with violent condemnation from the gentleman-scholars. When striving for a spirit of freedom in their works, Ming Painting Academy and Che School professional painters, who did not have the scholar's benefit of years of training in fine calligraphy, often adopted a reckless kind of virtuoso brushwork that in fact looked very much like Shih Chung's (fig. 141; cf. fig. 139). In the late sixteenth century, increasingly rough and crude brushwork in certain Che School paintings led to stern censure by scholar-critics, who called them the "evil," "aberrant," or "heterodox" (*hsieh-hsieh*) school, "reaching pretentiously for an attitude of wildness [*t'u-ch'eng k'uang-t'ai*] but achieving nothing."⁵⁶

If uncouth and coarse techniques merely offended, the idea that they might represent serious art proved positively threatening to Orthodox scholar-critics. In the intellectual context of the late sixteenth century, the commonly recognized issue was *pien*, or transformation. Change there must be, so everyone agreed, but was it to be change merely for the sake of newness—the untested and the unknown—or change as a necessary means for *fu-ku*, or return to ancient verities?

Successful answers to this question, both theoretical and stylistic, were provided by Tung Ch'i-ch'ang, whose proposal of a revolutionary revivalism—a Great Synthesis (*ta-ch'eng*) of the Sung and Yüan methods achieved through intuitive understanding—along with radical technical innovations, opened up a new direction, with vastly expanded new horizons for painting. By equating painting with calligraphy and turning landscape elements into diagrammatic formulas and pure, abstract brushwork, he revitalized landscape painting. By the time a new generation of talented artists took over under a new dynasty, in the second half of the seventeenth century, brilliant new landscape styles emerged. Yet no painter of that prolific new era could look back and say that he might have done the same without Tung Ch'i-ch'ang.

NOTES

1. See James Cahill, *Fantasies and Eccentrics in Chinese Painting* (New York: Asia House Gallery, 1967); James Cahill, *The Compelling Image: Nature and Style in Seventeenth-century Chinese Painting* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982).
2. Max Loehr, "Studie über Wang Meng (die Datterten Werke)," *Sinica* 14, no. 5/6 (1939): 273-90.
3. James Cahill, *Hills beyond a River: Chinese Painting of the Yuan Dynasty, 1279-1368* (New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1976), p. 122.
4. For a discussion of *feng-shui* and its relation to painting, see John Hay, "Huang Kung-wang's *Dwelling in the Fu-ch'un Mountains*, The Dimensions of a Landscape" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1978).
5. See Hok-lam Chan, "Hu Wei-yung," in L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang, eds., *Dictionary of Ming Biography: 1368-1644* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1976), vol. 1, pp. 638-41.
6. The story is found in *Ming-shih* (History of the Ming dynasty) as cited in Oswald Siren, *Chinese Painting: Leading Masters and Principles* (New York: Ronald Press, 1956), vol. 4, p. 119.
7. For a discussion of the Ming Painting Academy, see Harrie Vanderstapen, "Painters at the Early Ming Court (1368-1435) and the Problem of a Ming Painting Academy," *Monumenta Serica* 15 (1956): 259-301; 16: 316-46; Suzuki Kei, "Min no ga-in sei ni tsuite" (A study on the organization of the Ming Painting Academy), *Biijussui* 15, no. 4/60 (1966): 95-106; Suzuki Kei, *Mindai kaiga shi kenkyū: Seppa* (A study of Ming dynasty painting history: the Che School) (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1968), esp. pp. 137-48, 151-83.
8. Today, the Wu-ying-tien (Hall of Martial Brilliance) in the former imperial palace compound in Peking is occupied by the Committee for the Preparation of Exhibitions of Archaeological Relics of the State Administrative Bureau of Museums and Archaeological Data (Kuo-chia wen-wu shih-yeh kuan-i chü).
9. Yeh Sheng, "Ch'ang-ling so shang shu-hua-chia" (Calligraphers and painters appreciated by the Yung-lo emperor), in *Shui-tung jih-chi* (Diary of east of the river), Chung-kuo shih-hsüeh ts'ung-shu, vol. 25 (1980; repr. ed., Taipei: Hsüeh-sheng shu-chü, 1965), *chüan* 3, p. 11b.
10. For Tai Chin, see Suzuki Kei, *Mindai kaiga shi kenkyū: Seppa*, pp. 15-37, 151-62; Ch'en Fang-mei, *Tai Chin yen-chiu* (A study of Tai Chin) (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1981); Mo I-ch'in, "Tai Chin yü Che-p'ai" (Tai Chin and the Che School), *Ku-kung po-wu-yüan yüan-kan*, no. 4 (1981): 3-15.
11. See Ch'en Fang-mei, *Tai Chin yen-chiu*, p. 11.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 45 ff.
14. For an illustration of *Six Buddhist Patriarchs*, see Liaoning Provincial Museum, ed., *Liao-ning-sheng po-wu-kuang ts'ang-hua chi* (Catalogue of the painting collection in the Liaoning Provincial Museum) (Peking: Wen-wu ch'u-pan-she, 1962), vol. 2, pl. 15; for *Seeking the Tao in Cave Paradise*, see *Ku-kung po-wu-yüan yüan-kan*, no. 4 (1981): 44.
15. For a recent translation of Wu Ch'eng-en, *Hsi-yu chi*, see Anthony C. Yu, *The Journey to the West* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976).
16. See Mo I-ch'in, "Ming-tai kung-t'ing yüan-i yü Che-p'ai hui-hua" (Ming dynasty Che School painting), *I-yüan lo-ying* 13 (1981): 35-37, pls. 20-22.
17. See Jen Yu-wen, "Ch'en Hsien-chang's Philosophy of the Natural," in William Theodore de Bary, ed., *Self and Society in Ming Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), pp. 53-92; Huang P'ei and Julia Ching, "Ch'en Hsien-chang," in L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang, eds., *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, vol. 1, pp. 153-56.
18. For recent discussions of Chu Hsi's philosophical system, see Mou Tsung-san, *Hsin-t'i yü hsing-t'i* (Mind and human nature) (Taipei: Cheng-chung shu-chü, 1969), vol. 3, esp. pp. 130-54; and Wei-ming Tu's review of Mou Tsung-san's work, "Hsin-t'i yü hsing-t'i" (Mind and human nature), *Journal of Asian Studies* 30, no. 3 (May 1971): 642-47.
19. Jen Yu-wen, "Ch'en Hsien-chang's Philosophy of the Natural," p. 72.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 64.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 66-69.
23. See Tang Chun-i, "The Development of the Concept of Moral Mind from Wang Yang-ming to Wang Chi," in William Theodore de Bary, ed., *Self and Society in Ming Thought*, pp. 100-108.
24. See Wing-ist Chan, "Wang Shou-jen [Wang Yang-ming]," in L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang, eds., *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, vol. 2, pp. 1408-16.
25. For an alternative date, 1515-16, see Chiang I-han, "P'u-lin-ssu-tun ta-hsüeh mei-shu-kuan ts'ang Wang Yang-ming san-cha chüan" (Wang Yang-ming's three letters in the collection of The Art Museum, Princeton University), *Ming-pao yüeh-kan* 10, no. 1 (January 1975): 58-65.
26. Pien Yung-yü, *Shih-ku-t'ang shu-hua hui-ko* (Classified record of calligraphy and painting of Shih-ku Hall) (Taipei: Cheng-chung shu-chü, 1965), vol. 4, *chüan* 21, p. 299.
27. Oswald Siren, *Chinese Painting: Leading Masters and Principles*, vol. 6, pl. 177.
28. Roderrick Whitfield, *In Pursuit of Antiquity: Chinese Paintings of the Ming and Ch'ing Dynasties from the Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Earl Morse* (Princeton: The Art Museum, 1969), pp. 50-51.
29. For a discussion of Shen Chou's album painted for Chou Wei-te, see James Cahill, *Parting at the Shore: Chinese Painting of the Early and Middle Ming Dynasty* (New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1978), pp. 88-89.
30. Jon Bourassa, "The Life and Work of the Literati Painter Yao Shou (1422-95): The Early Years," in Suzuki Kei *senrei kanrei kinen: Chügoku ega-shi ron* (Celebrating Professor Suzuki Kei's sixtieth birthday: collected essays on Chinese painting history) (Tokyo: Yoshikawa, 1981), pp. 101-2.
31. National Palace Museum, Taipei, comp., *Ku-kung-shu-hua lu* (A descriptive catalogue of the painting and calligraphy in the National Palace Museum) (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1965) vol. 3, *chüan* 5, pp. 295-96; for an alternative translation, see James Cahill, *Parting at the Shore*, p. 90.
32. Jen Yu-wen, "Ch'en Hsien-chang's Philosophy of the Natural," p. 73.
33. Ch'ien Mu, "Jen-chien-shih" (Chapter on human world), in *Chuang-tzu tsan-chien* (Notes and commentaries to Chuang-tzu) (Hong Kong: Tung-nan yin-wu ch'u-pan-she, 1957), p. 30.
34. James Cahill, *Parting at the Shore*, p. 91.
35. Huang T'ing-chien, *Shan-ku t'i-pa* (Colophons by Huang T'ing-chien), I-shu ts'ung-pien, vol. 22 (Taipei: Shih-chieh shu-chü, 1962), *chüan* 5, pp. 49-51.
36. Chiang Chao-shen, *Kuan-yü T'ang Yin te yen-chiu* (A study of T'ang Yin) (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1976), p. 23.
37. For a sensitive study of T'ang Yin's biography, see *ibid.*, esp. pp. 1-52, 129-44.
38. James Cahill, *Parting at the Shore*, p. 195.
39. Shen C. Y. Fu, while a graduate student at Princeton University in the early 1970s, identified *Shan-lu sung-ko* and another painting in the Du Bois Schank Morris collection at The Art Museum, Princeton University (47-245) as works by T'ang Yin.
40. See Chiang Chao-shen, *Kuan-yü T'ang Yin te yen-chiu*, pp. 99-100.
41. The complete set of four hanging scrolls is illustrated in *T'ang Liu-ju hua-chi* (A collection of T'ang Yin's paintings) (Shanghai: Shanghai jenn-min mei-shu ch'u-pan-she, 1960), pls. 22-25.
42. Kuo Hsi and Kuo Ssu, *Lin-ch'üan kao-chih chi* (Collection of *Lo-fu Aims in Forests and Streams*), in Yü Chien-hua, ed., *Chung-kuo hua-lun lei-pien* (Classified compilation of writings on Chinese painting) (Hong Kong: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1973), vol. 1, p. 641.
43. For an illustration, see *T'ang Liu-ju hua-chi*, pls. 22-25.
44. Sun Tzu-pai, "Ch'ien-yen: T'ang Yin chuan-lüeh ho i-shu chien-chieh" (Foreword: a brief introduction to T'ang Yin's biography and his art), in *T'ang Liu-ju hua-chi*, p. 2.
45. See Kuo Shao-yu, *Chung-kuo wen-hsüeh p'i-p'ing shih* (History of Chinese literary criticism) (Shanghai: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1961), pp. 238 ff.
46. *Ibid.*, pp. 301-2.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 323.
48. *Ibid.*, pp. 372-73.
49. Li K'ai-hsien, *Chung-lu hua-p'ien* (Painting classifications of the Chung-lu Academy), I-shu ts'ung-pien, vol. 12 (1545; repr. ed., Taipei: Shih-chieh shu-chü, 1962), pp. 55-56.

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50. Wang Chih-teng, *Kuo-ch'ao Wu-chün tan-ch'ing chih* (History of painting in the Wu prefecture during our illustrious [Ming] dynasty), in *Hua-shih ts'ung-shu* (Compendium of painting histories) (1963; repr. ed., Taipei: Wen-shih-che ch'u-pan-she, 1974), vol. 3, pp. 1, 3.
51. Ho Liang-chün, *Su-yü-chai hua-lun* (Painting discussions at the Four Friends' Studio), I-shu ts'ung-pien, vol. 12 (Taipei: Shih-chieh shu-chü, 1962), p. 39.
52. Tung Ch'i-ch'ang, *Hua-yen* (The eye of painting), I-shu ts'ung-pien, vol. 12 (Taipei: Shih-chieh shu-chü, 1962), p. 43. According to Tung it was Mo Shih-lung who "divided the *tan* (sudden) and the *chien* (gradual) into the Southern and the Northern schools," p. 46.
53. Ibid., p. 24.
54. According to Tung, artists who "express joyfulness in painting" can expect to live very long lives, whereas hardworking professional painters often die young; *ibid.*, pp. 23-24.
55. James Cahill, *Parting at the Shore*, p. 199.
56. See Richard Barnhart, "The 'Wild and Herodox School' of Ming Painting," in Susan Bush and Christian Murck, eds., *Theories of the Arts in China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 365.