2 China and European Art, 1600–1800

The Seventeenth Century

The Jesuits formed the spearhead of European cultural penetration of China, as they did of Japan. It was their pictures, prints and books that produced the first signs of European influence in Chinese painting, and their writings that in turn brought seventeenth-century Europe the first detailed account of the arts of China. But long before the Jesuits appeared on the scene foreign travellers had gazed in admiring incomprehension at Chinese paintings. An Arab merchant who visited China in the ninth century had reported that 'the Chinese may be counted among those of God's creatures to whom He hath granted, in the highest degree, skill of hand in drawing and in the arts of manufacture'.

Marco Polo, in the service of Kublai Khan in the last decades of the thirteenth century, had plenty of opportunities to see Chinese paintings, but he only mentions the gaudy decorations in the imperial palaces. In the palace at Khanbalik (Peking), for instance, 'the walls and chambers are all covered with gold and silver and decorated with pictures of dragons and birds and horsemen and various breeds of beasts and scenes of battle'. He found similar paintings in a hall of the former Sung imperial palace at Hangchow, and, in P'ing-yang-fu in Shansi, a castle whose hall was decorated 'with admirably painted portraits of all the kings who ruled over this province in former times'. Beyond this he has nothing to say about Chinese art.

Fifty years later Ibn Baṭuṭa, 'The Traveller', was much more enthusiastic. 'The people of China of all mankind,' he wrote, 'have the greatest skill and taste in the arts. This is a fact generally admitted; it has been remarked in books by many authors and has been much dwelt upon. As regards painting, indeed, no nation, whether of Christians or others, can come up to the Chinese, and their talent for this art is something extraordinary.' After this, it is a little disappointing to find that what Ibn Baṭuṭa admired so much was not the towering landscapes of the literati, which he obviously never saw and would not have understood in any case, but the skill in catching a likeness shown by those professional painters at frontier stations whose job it

was to record the features of strangers entering and travelling about the country.

We hear nothing more of Chinese art until the arrival of the Jesuits. By 1557 they were established in the Portuguese colony of Macao, more open and accessible to foreigners than Deshima, but even more remote from the capital. Soon their influence and that of their Dominican and Franciscan competitors spread to Canton and beyond. But our story properly begins with the arrival in Macao in 1592 of the great scholar and missionary Matteo Ricci. Born in Ancona in 1552, Ricci had entered the Jesuit order in 1571 at the age of nineteen, and left Genoa for the Far East six years later. This priest of formidable learning, energy and presence was destined by his scholarship and writings to engage the interest of Chinese intellectuals in European culture, and that of European scholars in Chinese culture, as did no other man in this momentous era of mutual awakening.

Ricci remained in Macao and Kwangtung until 1595, when he headed north. A premature invitation from an official to come to Peking to work on the calendar brought him to the gates of the city, where he waited for two months before returning to Nanking, and it was not until the spring of 1600 that he tried again. Meantime he had not been idle. During the years of waiting he had consolidated the mission in Nan-ch'ang and in Nanking, which during the next fifty years was to become the centre of the one school of Chinese scholarly landscape painting that seems to show unmistakable signs of European influence.

On his way northwards in 1600 Ricci paid his respects to the Viceroy of Shantung at Tsining, to whom he showed a painting of the Virgin and Child with St John the Baptist that he was taking to the Emperor. The Viceroy's wife liked it so much that Ricci gave her a copy painted by a young man of their mission in Nanking; but who this painter was is a mystery. Ricci arrived in Peking in midwinter, and on 25 January 1601 was received in audience by the Wan-li Emperor.

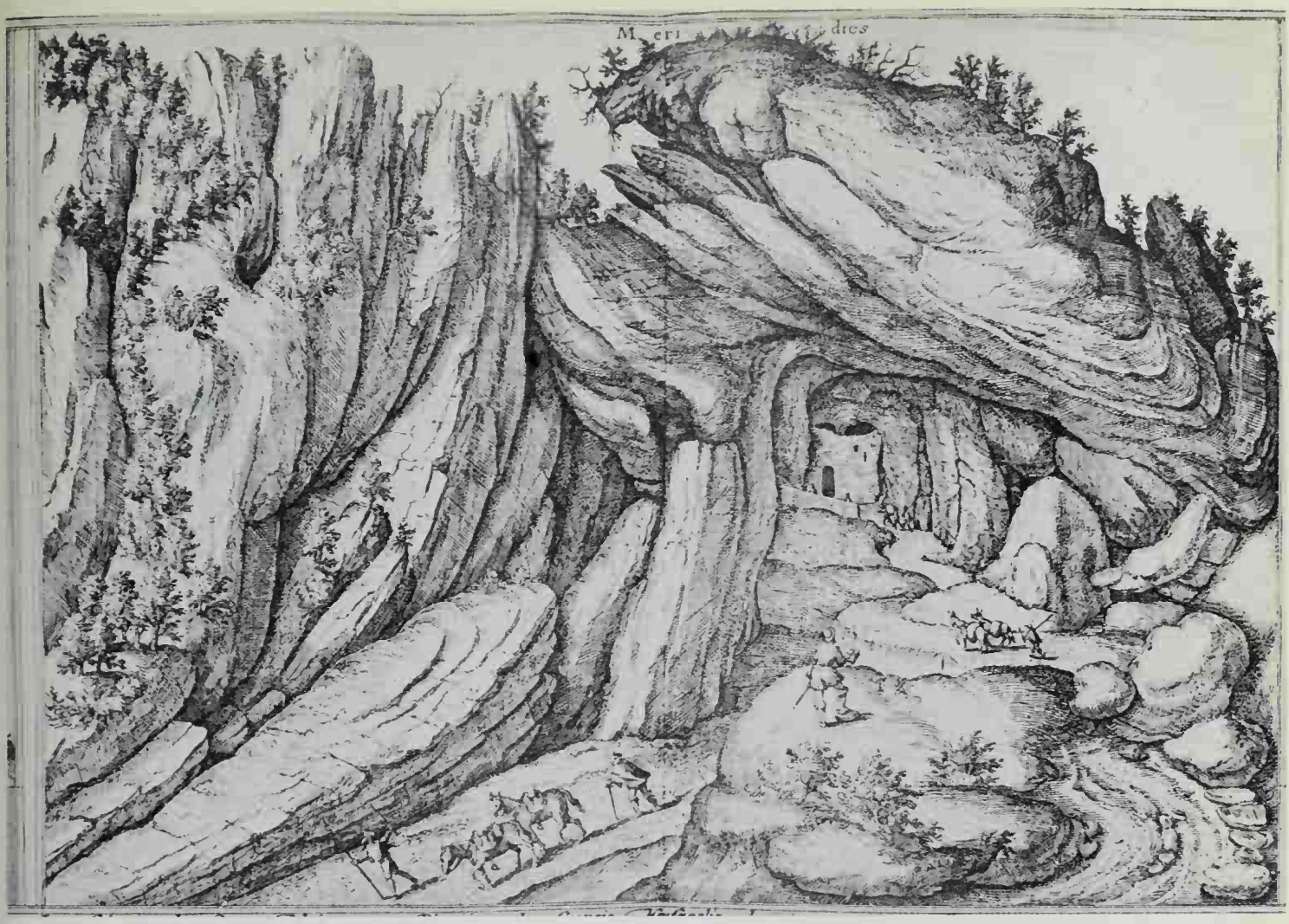
Ricci had only nine more years to live, but in this brief time he laid the foundation for nearly two hundred years of Jesuit influence at the Chinese court. His reputation seems to have preceded him to Peking, for very soon he numbered among his friends many leading intellectuals, some of whom – men of the calibre of Hsü Kuang-ch'i, Li Chih-tsao, and Yang T'ing-yün – became converts. They must have shown him pictures in their collections, for he has a paragraph on Chinese painting in his

wonderful account of China, which until recently was known only in Father Trigault's heavily edited Latin version. It is not very complimentary. 'The Chinese use pictures extensively,' he wrote, 'even in the crafts, but in the production of these and especially in the making of statuary and cast images they have not at all acquired the skill of Europeans. They know nothing of the art of painting in oil or of the use of perspective in their pictures, with the result that their productions are lacking any vitality.' Evidently the paintings and engravings which Ricci brought with him were already being copied, for he goes on, 'I am of the opinion that the Chinese possess the ingenious trait of preferring that which comes from without to that which they possess themselves, once they realize the superior quality of the foreign product.' Here, for once, he was wrong.

He must have been gratified, though hardly surprised, at the intense interest that his own works of art aroused among the gentry. He had with him engravings of Venice, devotional pictures sent from Rome and the Philippines, and a large altarpiece by Giovanni Nicolao, the Portuguese painter-priest 'of less than medium intelligence' whose academies at Nagasaki and Arima were the training ground for Japanese icon painters. Of one of these pictures – very probably a copy of the sixth-century Virgin of St Luke in the church of Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome – the scholar Chiang Shao-shu wrote in the brief section on Western painting in his 'History of Silent Poetry' (*Wu-sheng shih-shih*, 1646): 'Li Ma-tu [Matteo Ricci] brought with him an image of the Lord of Heaven in the manner of the Western countries; it is a woman bearing a child in her arms. The eyebrows and the eyes, the folds of the garments, are as clear as if they were reflected in a mirror, and they seem to move freely. It is of a majesty and elegance which Chinese painters cannot match.'

The first recorded copies of European paintings had been made in Peking for the Italian priest Jean de Monte Corvino, who visited China early in the fourteenth century. The next instance occurred three hundred years later, when Ricci presented to the Emperor an engraving of souls in purgatory, including the Pope, a duke, and an emperor, because Wan-li wanted to know how such dignitaries dressed in Europe. Ricci accompanied the engraving with a description, but as the detail was too fine, the Emperor had his court artists paint an enlarged version in colour, under Ricci's supervision.

It was not until Ricci had been two years in Peking that he had a resident painter of his own attached to the mission. In 1602



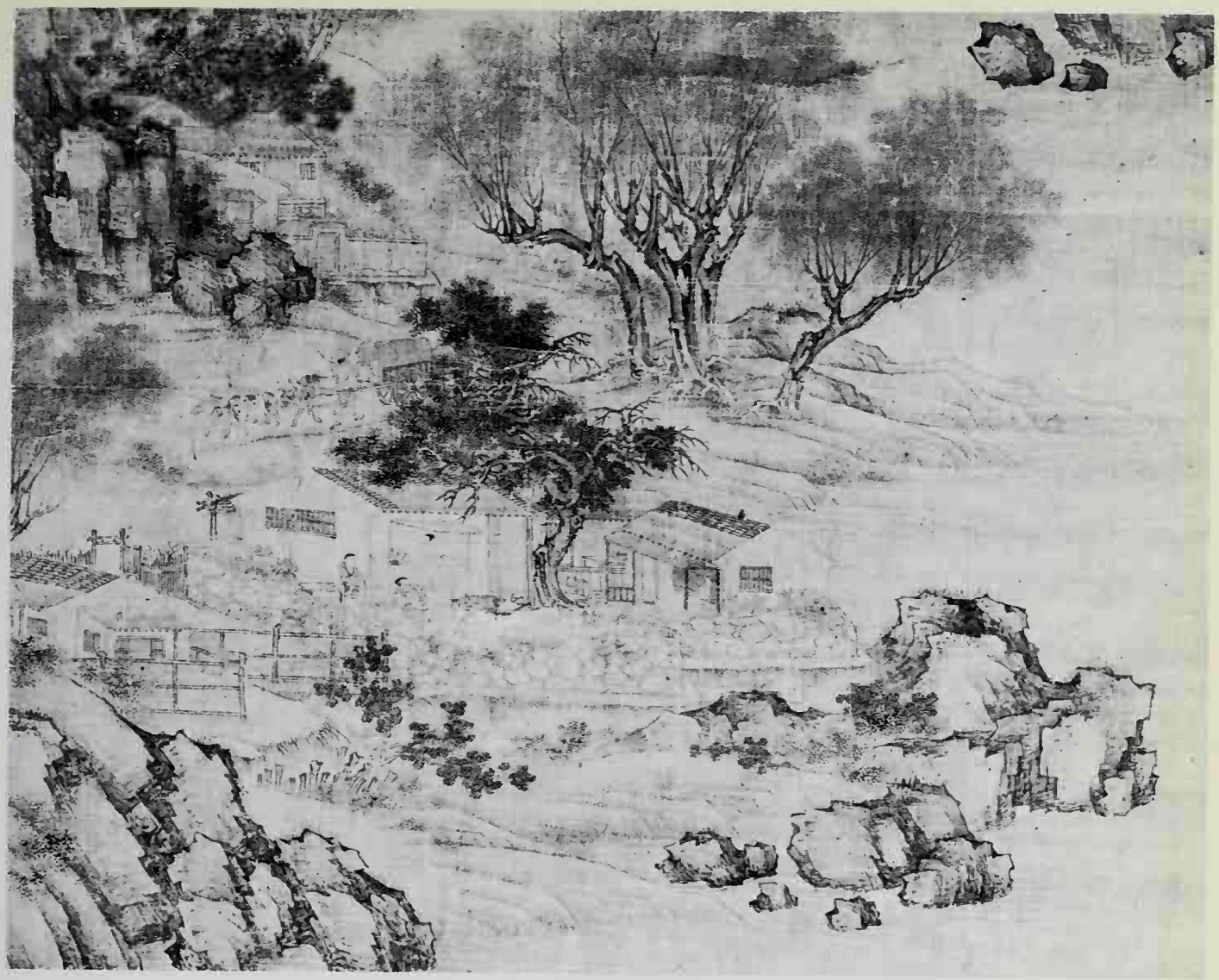
24 G. Hofnagel. *Mount St Adrian.* Engraving (1667) from Georg Braun and Franz Hogenberg, *Civitates Orbis Terrarum* (edition published *c.* 1598)

25 *Mundator Leprosus* ('Healing the Leper'). Engraving from Nadal's Life of Christ, *Evangelicae Historiae Imagines* (1593)

26 *Nuestra Señora de l'Antigua, Seville.* Chinese woodcut print, after Jerome Wierix, in 'Mr Ch'eng's Ink Remains' (*Ch'eng-shih mo-yüan*; 1606)

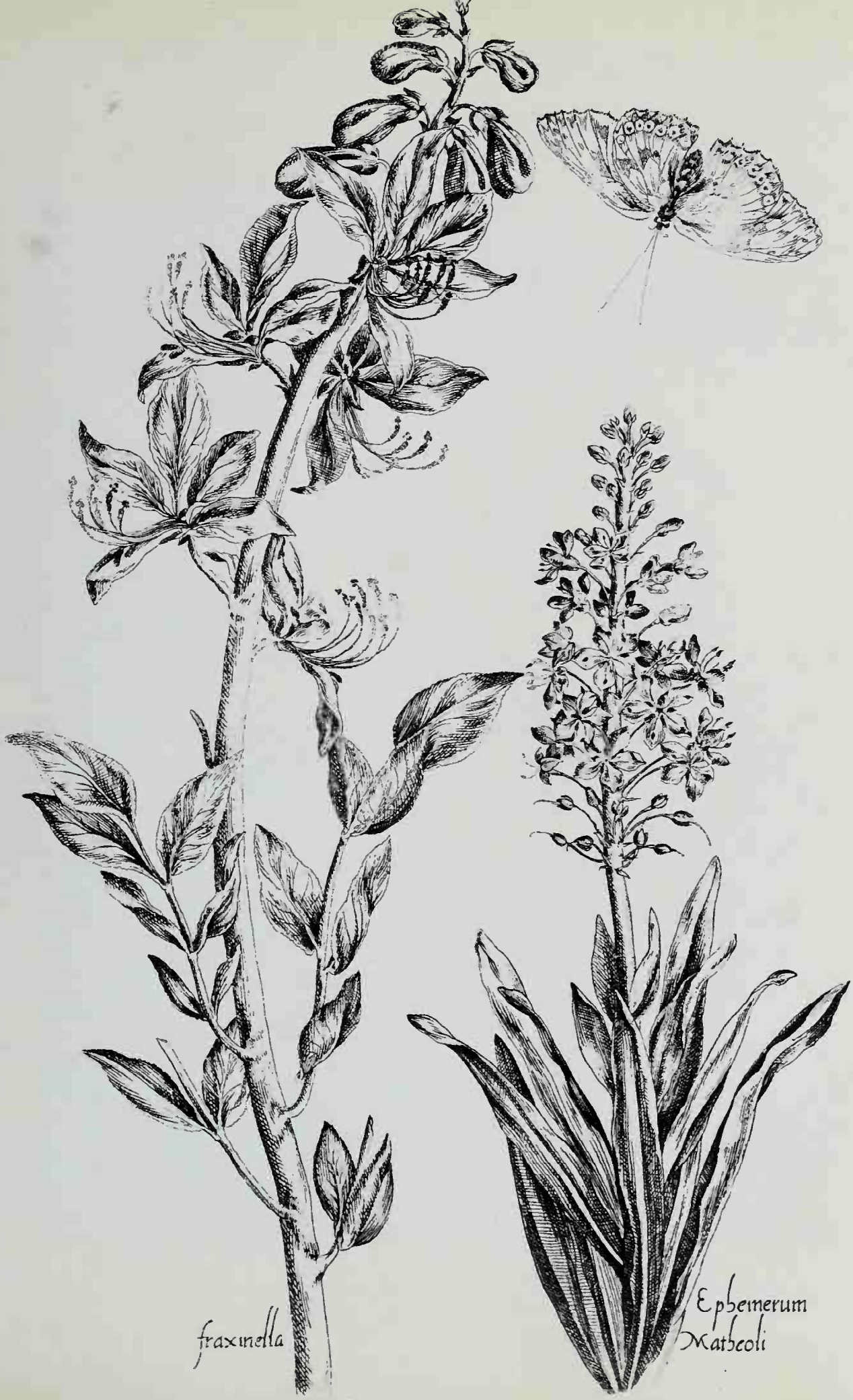
27 Chiao Ping-chen (*fl. c.* 1680–1720). Rural landscape (detail). Hanging scroll. Ink and colour on silk

28 Kung Hsien (*c.* 1640–1689). Landscape. Ink on paper



29 Ch'en Hung-shou (1598–1652). Studies of flowers and butterflies (detail). Album leaf. Ink and colour on silk

30 *Fraxinella* and *Ephemerum Matheoli*. Engraving from Pierre Vallet, ▷
Le Jardin du Roy très Chrestien Louis XIII de France (1608)


fraxinella
Ephemerum
Matheoli

DOMINICA III. ADVENTVS.

Mittunt Iudæi ad Ioannem. ii

Ioan. i. *Anno xxix.* iij

31 *Mittuant Iudaei ad Ioannem* (paraphrase: 'Priests and Levites confront John the Baptist'). Engraving from Nadal's Life of Christ, *Evangelicae Historiae Imagines* (1593)

32 Wu Pin (*c.* 1568–1626). *Occupations of the Months* (detail). Handscroll. Ink and colour on silk. 1608

33 Wu Pin. *Occupations of the Months* (detail). Handscroll. Ink and colour on silk. 1608

34 Fan Ch'i (1616–after 1692). Landscape. Album leaf. Ink and colour on paper

35 Fan Ch'i. Landscape on the Yangtze River (detail). Handscroll. Colour on silk. Second half of the seventeenth century

Jacopo Niva, son of a Japanese father and Chinese mother, arrived from Japan, where he had been a pupil of Nicolao. In 1604 Niva made a copy of the Virgin of St Luke for the high altar of the church in Peking, and in 1606 was decorating the new church in Macao. In the capital he worked in secret with only two Chinese Christian helpers, because he was afraid that if his skill became known he would have to spend all his time painting for the Emperor and high officials, a fate which did indeed befall the Jesuit artists in Peking a century later. In 1610 Niva was sent to decorate a church in Nan-ch'ang, and in the following year executed the wall-paintings for the Buddhist temple which had been given by the Emperor as a tomb for Ricci. Ricci had noted that the Chinese were amazed at his pictures, which seemed to them more like sculpture than painting. Alas, the churches which he decorated were all rebuilt or destroyed, and not a scrap of his work survives.

Among Ricci's presents to the Wan-li Emperor was Ortelius' great folio atlas of the world, *Teatrum Orbis Terrarum* (Plantin, 1579), which included five large engravings: two of the Pope and rulers and nobles of the Holy Roman Empire, a view of Daphne in Greece, another of the Vale of Tempe, and one of the Escurial. We know that this book must have reached Japan as well, for the figure subjects appear from time to time, cleverly adapted and varied, in Namban screens.

Far more richly illustrated was a big six-volume work on the
24 cities and towns of the world, Braun and Hogenberg's *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*, published in Cologne between 1572 and 1616, of which several volumes had by this time reached Peking. Ricci had written of the importance of such books to impress the Chinese literati with the splendours of Western civilization. When he was staying near Canton ten years before he had noted how visitors to the mission were especially attracted by the books on cosmology and architecture. Braun and Hogenberg filled the bill admirably. Father Longobardi was even more imaginative in his requests: when Father Trigault went on his European tour to gather support and material for the China mission Longobardi asked him to bring back a bird of paradise, a lion and a rhinoceros.

In view of the curiosity about Western perspective that was later to be shown at the Chinese court, it is interesting to note that the Jesuit library in Peking contained a number of books on architecture published before 1600 which could well have reached the mission in Ricci's day or shortly after. One copy of

Palladio was brought back by Trigault in 1618; there were three copies of Vitruvius and there was one of Giovanni Rusconi's *Della Architettura*, published in Venice in 1590. Ricci also asked for books on ancient Rome – evidently not in vain, for the library also contained a copy of Theodore de Bry's *Topographia Orbis Romae* (Frankfurt, 1597), in three volumes, illustrated with engravings of the city from its beginnings, showing streets, public baths, monuments, sarcophagi and inscriptions.

We may well wonder what possible relevance such books had to late Ming China, or in forwarding the spiritual aims of the mission. But from the start the Jesuits had visions of building new Renaissance cities in China, such as they were creating in Mexico, South America and the Philippines. Indeed, flushed with their first extraordinary success in Peking, they looked forward to the time, not too many decades hence, when China would be a Christian country, her emperor himself a convert, her cities crowned with magnificent Baroque churches decorated by Chinese followers of Bernini and Rubens.

While the oil paintings brought by the Jesuits were greatly admired it was the illustrated books and engravings that were probably more influential in the long run, for they were more widely circulated and they could much more easily be copied or adapted by Chinese wood-engravers. In 1598 Father Longobardi had written to Rome for devotional books by Father Nadal. 'Particularly to help illiterates,' he added, 'it would be especially valuable if you could send me some books which represent the figures of the faith, the commandments, the mortal sins, the sacraments, and so on. Here all such books are considered very artistic and subtle because they make use of shadows, which do not exist in Chinese painting.'

In 1605 there arrived in Nanking a copy of Nadal's Life of Christ, *Evangelicae Historiae Imagines*, published by Plantin in Antwerp in 1593 with 153 engravings, chiefly by the Wierix brothers, after paintings by Bernardino Passeri and Martin de Vos. Ricci at once wrote for another copy for the Peking mission. These exquisite engravings, in which successive events in the life of Christ are illustrated in detail, with masterly perspective and a dramatic use of chiaroscuro, must have made a profound impression. The simpler European engravings too aroused admiration, even at second hand, and Ricci tells of presenting to a mandarin a copy of Aesop's *Fables*, probably engraved in Japan by students of Nicolao, which the gentlemen treasured 'as if it were a masterpiece of Flemish printing'. 25

The big volumes in which the cities and landscape of Europe are spread across a double folio page, such as Braun and Hogen-
39 berg's *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*, achieved another effect which Ricci does not mention, and certainly would not have thought important. There are features in the style and technique of some seventeenth-century Chinese landscape painters that can only be explained by supposing that they had seen some of these engravings. I will have more to say about this later.

Only in two or three cases can we be sure that the painter actually knew the Jesuit missionaries personally. In 1597 the landscapist and critic Li Jih-hua (1565–1635) wrote a rather extravagant ode to Ricci; ten years later in Peking the painter Chang Jui-t'u was one of a stream of gentlemen visitors who called on the great Jesuit. Ricci gave him a Chinese translation of his essay on friendship, *De Amicitia*. Did Ricci know the great landscape painter and critic Tung Ch'i-ch'ang? Arthur Waley thought he had found a connection between them, which has not been substantiated, and a set of very bad paintings of Christian subjects found by Berthold Laufer in Sian many years ago bear Tung's most improbable signature. If they ever did meet, it would have been through Tung's associates in the Tung-lin Society, a movement dedicated to the reform of the Ming administration. Several of its most prominent members were Christians and very close to Ricci. Such an encounter between the great Jesuit and the most formidable painter and art critic of his day, if indeed it ever took place, would have been a summit meeting indeed.

Towards the end of 1605 the scholar and bibliophile Ch'eng Ta-yu came to Peking from Anhui with a letter of introduction to Ricci from the Viceroy in Nanking, especially to ask him for some specimens of writing to include in a huge miscellany which he was compiling. Ricci obliged, giving him among other things four engravings: of the destruction of Sodom by Crispin de Passe; of Christ and St Peter, by Anton Wierix after Martin de Vos; of Christ on the way to Emmaus, from Nadal's great book, and – an intriguing instance of the peregrinations
26 of a masterpiece – an engraving made in 1597 in Nicolao's academy in Arima after a plate by Wierix, taken from the painting of Nuestra Señora de l'Antigua in Seville. These all appear, somewhat transformed, in 'Mr Ch'eng's Ink Remains' (*Ch'eng-shih mo-yüan*) of 1606, which has the added distinction of being one of the first books ever produced with woodblock illustrations – though not the Biblical ones – in full colour.

By now interest in European art was lively enough for a Father Sambiaso to be able to publish, in 1649, a little monograph in Chinese, *Hua ta, Réponses sur la peinture allégorique*, with a preface by Ricci's friend and collaborator Li Chih-tsao. When, in about 1672, Father Verbiest brought out a large map of the world, Father Aleni accompanied it with a two-volume work on cosmography, *K'un-yü t'u-shuo* (1672), which contained engravings of animals real and imaginary, and of the seven wonders of the world and the Colosseum, the latter derived from the plates engraved by Heemskerck in about 1580. The Seven Wonders were to appear again and again in Chinese illustrated books, and eventually found their way, as did some of the Wierix engravings, into the decoration of early Ch'ing porcelain.

The idea of plasticity, of the rendering of three-dimensional objects as solid forms occupying space – rather than the rendering of space itself – was always foreign to Chinese art. Arbitrary shading and 'painting in relief', as the Chinese critics called it, had been introduced with Buddhist art a thousand years earlier, and had been admired and imitated in some quarters: but these were always looked on as foreign techniques, appropriate for foreign subjects, and faded away as Buddhism lost its hold over China. Now perspective and chiaroscuro aroused the same sort of curiosity. There is in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris a volume of finely engraved plates demonstrating the rules of perspective, with the text in Chinese, adapted from the *Perspectiva pictorum et architectorum* (1698) of Andrea Pozzo, the Jesuit painter whose most spectacular achievement was the decoration of the ceiling of the church of St Ignazio in Rome with a vast allegory of Jesuit missionary work in the four continents. In Peking Father Buglio instructed court painters in the art, and du Halde records that 'he exhibited copies of these drawings in the Jesuits' garden in Peking. Driven by curiosity, the Mandarins came to see them, and were amazed. They could not imagine how one could, on a single sheet, represent the halls, galleries, gateways, roads and alleyways so convincingly that at first glance the eye was deceived.' So fascinated was the Emperor K'ang-hsi by this new art that he asked the Jesuits to send out, with enamellers – another foreign technique for which he had a passion – an expert in perspective.

The mission chose Giovanni Gherardini, a native of Bologna who had worked there and in Modena before he was summoned in 1684 to Nevers, where he decorated the Jesuit church of St Pierre. He then moved on to Paris where he painted

frescoes – strong in perspective, it was said, but weak in colour – for the library of the Jesuit headquarters, now the Lycée Charlemagne. In March 1698 he set sail for China with Father Bouvet and seven other Jesuits on the famous voyage of the *Amphitrite* (see page 96). Arriving in Peking in February 1700, he decorated the new Jesuit church with illusionistic frescoes, including a 'dome' on the ceiling, which amazed Chinese visitors, and gave instruction in perspective and oil painting to students in the Palace. Eleven years later Father Ripa met seven or eight of his pupils and watched them painting Chinese landscapes, in oils, on tough Korean paper. Gherardini, a layman, evidently found the Jesuit discipline too much for him. By 1704 he was back in Europe, and the sole relic of his journey is his frivolous and highly implausible *Relation du voyage fait à la Chine*, which the connoisseur and engraver Mariette dismissed, in his *Abécédario*, as *un badinage continuel*.

In an appendix to his biography of the academic painter Chiao Ping-chen in the *History of Silent Poetry*, Chiang Shao-shu puts into the mouth of Ricci a little lecture on Western art, emphasizing its effects of relief and chiaroscuro. Chiang says that Chiao Ping-chen grasped the idea and modified it somewhat, but that 'it did not correspond to scholarly taste, and consequently connoisseurs have not adopted it'. Chiao Ping-chen, who probably learned perspective from Father Verbiest in the Imperial Observatory, where he was employed, put his skill to good use in the well known series of forty-eight paintings which he made for the *Keng-chih t'u*, 'Illustrations of Rice and Silk Cultivation', executed for the Emperor in 1696 and soon after engraved on wood and widely circulated. Much less well known are his scroll paintings. The country scene illustrated on
27 page 51 combines with immense charm and delicacy a traditional composition, an almost Dutch feeling for genre, and a sound, if somewhat timid, use of Western perspective.

The landscape painter Wu Li (1632–1718) is the best known among all the Chinese artists who came in contact with European culture. A native of Chekiang, he grew up in scholarly circles in Ch'ang-shu, where the French Jesuits had a mission. He got to know them well, and in 1676 painted a landscape, *Spring Colours in Lake and Sky*, for Father Louis de Rougemont, a protégé of the pious Candide Hsü. In 1681 he was baptised, and in the same year set off for Macao en route to Rome. Afraid, it has been suggested, of a long sea voyage, he chose to stay in Macao, and began his training there as a novice in 1682.

After his ordination as Père Acunha in 1688 Wu Li returned to Kiangsu, to spend the rest of his life, chiefly in the Shanghai area, in the service of the church, to which he gave himself humbly and completely. We know practically nothing of his later years. For a time he seems to have lost touch with many of his former friends and associates. Louis Pfister, quoting an unnamed nineteenth-century manuscript biography of Wu Li, says that he repented of his pagan youth, and called in and destroyed as many of his old pictures and poems as he could lay his hands on, because they contained 'superstitious matter', and that he now composed, instead of poems to his friends, sacred songs to God, the Virgin, and the angels. But an unknown Chinese writer says that the later paintings became even freer and more original. It seems that he did stop painting for a considerable time, only returning to it, and to some of his old friendships, after about 1680. None of his work shows any obvious Western influence, although the negative effects of his isolation from his scholarly friends may perhaps be discerned in a certain hardening of his brushwork in paintings having dates in the 1680s and 1690s. One of his later poems suggests that he never had practised Western techniques. A quatrain that he wrote on a painting for a parting friend in 1704 ends with these lines:

> In my old bag [that is, my repertoire] are no Western
> things at all,
> So I paint a plum branch and present it to you.

Nevertheless, Wu Li must certainly have seen a great deal of Western painting and engraving in the Jesuit mission churches and libraries, and he wrote a brief and sensible account of the differences between Chinese and Western art that is worth quoting. After speaking of customs, he goes on:

> In writing and painting, the differences are just as striking: our characters are made by gathering dots and strokes, and the sound comes afterwards; they begin with phonetics, then words, making lines by scattering hooks and strokes in a horizontal row. Our painting does not seek physical likeness [*hsing-ssu*], and does not depend on fixed patterns; we call it 'divine' and 'untrammelled'. Theirs concentrates entirely on the problems of dark and light, front and back, and the fixed patterns of physical likeness. Even in writing inscriptions, we

write on the top of a painting, and they sign at the bottom of it. Their use of the brush is also completely different. It is this way with everything, and I cannot describe it all.

None of the Chinese seventeenth-century landscapes which seem to hint at the possibility of Western influence are actually direct copies of European works. Rather what emerges, here and there, is a new approach to the rendering of form in nature, and a little widening of the range of subject-matter that can be depicted. In painting mountains, rocks and terrain generally, there is sometimes a sharper edge and a more calculated grading of tone to render form more objectively; the continuously receding ground is made more explicit; the transitions from light to dark produce a more telling and illusionistic chiaroscuro; shading is used to suggest a single light source; most important, the free, calligraphic brushstroke is replaced by an even, close-knit texture of dots and strokes that sometimes suggests engraving, and in the process the ink wash inevitably loses some of its transparency.

Many of these qualities can be found in the landscapes painted by the professional artist Wu Pin in about 1605, and by the Kiangsu painter Chao Tso, active about 1600–30, when the first little wave of Western influence was at its height. That
28 morose eccentric Kung Hsien (*c.* 1640–1689), the greatest of the Nanking painters, achieved a powerful chiaroscuro by stippling. For the 'uncalligraphic' ink blob there is the august precedent of the Sung master Mi Fu; but Mi Fu's ink was, we assume, wet, luminous and transparent, while Kung Hsien's dry, opaque surfaces produce a deadening effect, giving his landscapes an un-Chinese coldness and stillness. Such movement as they possess is expressed in the contorted shapes of rocks and hills rather than in the brushstroke itself. It is hard to believe that Kung Hsien had not seen, possibly at the Jesuit mission in Nanking, engravings such as those in Braun and Hogenberg's *Civitates Orbis Terrarum.*

Occasionally a subject seems to be borrowed straight from
29 Western art. Ch'en Hung-shou's studies of butterflies hovering over flowers may have been inspired by engravings such as those
30 in Pierre Vallet's botanical work *Le Jardin du Roy très Chrestien Louis XIII de France*, published in 1608; while the motif of a group of men seated in a circle on a flattened hilltop, which
31 occurs several times in Nadal's *Evangelicae Historiae Imagines*,
32, 33 is repeated in Wu Pin's handscroll *Occupations of the Months*

(National Palace Museum, Taipei), and in a woodcut view of the scenery near Nanking in the 1608 edition of the Ming pictorial encyclopaedia *San-ts'ai t'u-hui*. Both these motifs, however, appear also in Sung Dynasty painting.

But it is chiefly in details rather than in composition or general theme that these new elements emerge in Chinese seventeenth-century landscape painting: a building carefully mirrored in the water (Wu Pin); a sunset (itself a rare subject outside early Buddhist painting) reddening the sky and reflected in the water, or shooting out its rays in radiating lines (Wu Pin again); smoke curling up from a cottage chimney (Wu Pin); continuously receding ground line (Fan Ch'i); the horizon at 34
sea shown by a sharp straight line across the picture with islands sitting on it, rather than being indicated only by the islands 35
and land-spits (Fan Ch'i); objects shaded to suggest volume (Ting Kuan-p'eng); accurate perspective and foreshortening 37
(Chiao Ping-chen). Most inexplicable except in terms of direct Western influence is a new boldness and realism in the use of colour which appears for the first time after 1600 in the work of artists such as Lan Ying and Hsiang Sheng-mou. A leaf from an album of 1649 by the latter artist depicts with thoroughly un- III
Chinese realism a bare tree against a blue mountain, the sky behind reddened by the setting sun. Such colouristic effects must have seemed much too obvious for cultivated Chinese taste, for they were not repeated in the painting of the literati.

Some of these effects – foreshortening, shading and the receding ground-line, for example – appear in that remarkable monument of late Northern Sung realism, the handscroll *Going* 36
up River at Ch'ing-ming Festival Time, by Chang Tse-tuan. But now, after a lapse of five hundred years, they appear again in company with others that are entirely new. It seems that the revival, or perhaps the rediscovery, of some elements of realism, and the first appearance of others, can only be explained by the stimulus of European art. Every one of these effects that does not involve the use of colour could be accounted for by supposing that the artists had seen engravings like those in Nadal.

Not far from Nanking lies Yangchow, the prosperous city at the junction of the Yangtse and the Grand Canal which by the end of the seventeenth century had become a centre of liberal patronage and eccentric painting. Perhaps in the work of the Yangchow artists Yüan Chiang and Li Yin we see a hint of 38
Western influence, grafted on to their very original interpreta- 39

tion of the landscape style of Northern masters such as Fan K'uan and Kuo Hsi. In fact, the marriage is not an unnatural one, for Northern Sung painting was – on its own terms – highly realistic, and these later painters may have found that the study of European engravings helped them to obtain a monumental antique effect, although the direct evidence for this is lacking. Yüan Chiang was summoned, some time after 1723, to the Palace, where for nearly twenty years he worked alongside the Jesuit painters and craftsmen under conditions bordering on slavery. But the style that suggests that he knew something of Western art was formed long before then, and the datable landscapes of his later years seem to be far less 'European' than those he had painted in Yangchow.

One area in which we might expect to find Western influence is that of portrait painting, for the traditional Chinese portrait is seldom a physical likeness of the subject. It is rather an attempt to capture his 'spirit', or his rôle as emperor, official, scholar or poet; the features, unless he has striking peculiarities, are of little importance. Chinese connoisseurs found in Western portraits a new kind of realism. Writing of those by the Fukienese artist Tseng Ch'ing, who died in Nanking in 1650, the author of the *History of Silent Painting* describes how 'their eyes seem to move and follow you like the eyes of living people', and notes that Tseng Ch'ing used several layers of colours in painting the faces. His surviving portraits are all in ink with only slight colour, but they look straight out of the picture, and the faces are modelled in light and shade. In their directness and realism they have – though the modelling is much subtler – something in common with Ming ancestral portraits, done by craftsmen who so far as we know had no contact whatever with Western art, and whose 'likenesses' were achieved by assembling features out of a pattern-book shown to the subject while alive, or to the grieving relatives after his death.

Certain eighteenth-century court painters, notably Leng Mei, Tsou I-kuei, and Shen Yüan, show unmistakable signs of Western influence in their work. There were other early Ch'ing painters such as Fa Jo-chen, Shang-kuan Chou and Lu Wei in which Western influence is less obvious but still discernible.
40 In the little album-leaf by Lu Wei from the Vannotti Collection, the definition of planes by contrasts of light and dark, the skilful foreshortening of the fence, and the straight row of trees in the distance are technical innovations that the artist might have picked up from the study of Western engravings. Such borrowings

are elusive and difficult to substantiate; they need to be further investigated.

The Eighteenth Century

With the arrival in Peking, in December 1715, of Giuseppe Castiglione, a young Milanese Jesuit trained in Genoa, the court at last acquired a European painter of some quality – a man who was destined to have a considerable impact on Chinese court taste for over half a century. En route, he had spent four years in Portugal, where he had decorated the chapel of the Jesuit Novitiate in Coimbra with frescoes of the life of St Ignatius Loyola. But if he imagined that his career in China would likewise be dedicated to the decoration of Christian churches, he was in for a cruel shock.

Within a short time of his arrival in Peking Castiglione, bearing the Chinese name Lang Shih-ning, found himself at the work-benches in the dismal atelier that occupied one corner of K'ang-hsi's huge, rambling country palace, the Yüan-ming-yüan. In these crowded, malodorous workshops, 'full of corrupt persons', as one of the Jesuits put it, Lang Shih-ning and Father Matteo Ripa, another recent arrival, slaved away at enamelling on porcelain. The Jesuits were prepared to do almost anything to further the aims of the mission – *tout pour l'amour de Dieu* – but this was too much. They petitioned to be excused, and only succeeded by painting so clumsily that the Emperor reluctantly released them, though not to the kind of freedom which they had hoped for. Jean-Denis Attiret, who joined Lang Shih-ning in 1738, complained bitterly that they were forced always to work in the Chinese medium, and never had the time, or energy, for the devotional pictures which they longed to paint. Though loaded with honours, Lang Shih-ning and Attiret found no relief from unremitting labour. In 1754, when he had been working night and day for several weeks in Jehol, painting portraits and commemorative pictures for the Emperor, Attiret wrote to Father Amiot in Peking: 'Will this farce never come to an end? So far from the House of God, deprived of all spiritual sustenance, I find it hard to persuade myself that all this is to the glory of God.' Lang Shih-ning spent the rest of his life in the service of three emperors, K'ang-hsi, Yung-cheng and Ch'ien-lung, gradually perfecting a synthetic style in which with taste, skill and the utmost discretion, Western perspective

and shading, with even on occasion a hint of chiaroscuro, were blended to give an added touch of realism to paintings otherwise entirely in the Chinese manner.

From April 1723, reported Father Amiot,

> Our most dear Castiglione has been daily occupied in the Palace, with his art . . . which has been thoroughly investigated by the 13th Prince and by the Emperor [Yung-cheng], first in enamel painting, then in the usual technique, whether in oil or in watercolour. By imperial order he had to send the ruler whatever he did. It can be said that his works have succeeded in winning the Emperor's favour, for he has on various occasions benignly praised the artist, and sent him gifts, even to a greater degree than his deceased parent. Frequently . . . dishes were sent from the Imperial table; again, the Emperor rewarded him with twelve rolls of the best silk, accompanied by a precious stone, carved in the shape of a seal, with the effigy of Christ our Saviour, on a cross. Latterly he was presented with a summer hat, which gift denotes great honour.

The Emperor Ch'ien-lung (1736–96) was as lavish in his praise of Lang Shih-ning as his father and grandfather before him, and as exacting in his demands. Before long the Jesuit found himself appointed chief architect for the new complex of
41 buildings in the north-east corner of the Yüan-ming-yüan, Ch'ien-lung's 'Garden of the Everlasting Spring', Ch'ang-ch'un-yüan. There Lang Shih-ning designed a series of palaces, pavilions and terraces in an ornate, pseudo-rococo style which vastly pleased the Emperor. These structures, the product of the Jesuit's fertile imagination, lack of professional training, and remoteness from any possible critics, must have given him enormous pleasure too, for this seems to be the one occasion in his career at court when he was able to do exactly what he pleased. Between his pavilions stood huge fountains, worked by machinery designed by Father Benoist, that were Ch'ien-lung's special pride.

Ch'ien-lung filled these remarkable buildings with the furniture, clocks, pictures and mechanical toys sent out by Louis XIV and Louis XV. On the walls of one of the pavilions he hung tapestries designed by Boucher, the *Teintures Chinoises*, which were said to have been based on sketches made in the Forbidden City by Lang Shih-ning's young Jesuit colleague

Attiret. Could Ch'ien-lung have imagined that these charming *chinoiseries* were meant to depict his own court? Perhaps he thought they represented Versailles. Another pavilion was built to accommodate the set of Gobelins tapestries sent out by Louis XV in 1767.

Just as it amused Louis XV to attire his court on occasion in Chinese dress, so in reverse, with Ch'ien-lung. He had himself and his lovely Mongolian consort Hsiang Fei painted dressed up in European armour and helmet, and there exists a charming portrait of the 'Fragrant Concubine', as she was called, dressed *en paysanne*, with a shepherd's crook and a basket of flowers – 42
a figure straight out of Boucher, possibly painted by Attiret or one of his pupils.

When not employed in painting portraits of the Emperor, or historical events in his reign, or decorating the walls of the Yüan-ming-yüan, Lang Shih-ning devoted himself to painting scrolls depicting the Emperor's favourite pets, auspicious plants and horses. Occasionally he painted landscapes, and his tall landscape in the National Palace Museum is, except in some 43
details, a clever pastiche of the manner of the seventeenth-century orthodox literary painter Wang Hui. Perhaps his most successful blending of Chinese and European methods was attained in the long hand-scroll, *A Hundred Horses in a Landscape*, IV, 44
which he painted for Yung-cheng in 1728. The continuous perspective, required by the hand-scroll format, is of course Chinese, but the depth achieved by means of a continuous ground plane is Western, as are the reflections and shadows. But the extreme restraint with which they are used is a concession to Chinese taste; while Chinese conventions for mountains, rocks and trees are transformed by a quite Western realism in the drawing. In all, this is a brilliant synthesis, cleverly calculated to give the Emperor enough of Western realism to delight him, but not so much as to disconcert.

The large panel on silk from a private collection in London V
seems to belong to this group of courtly portraits painted by the Jesuits and their pupils. An elegant young lady sits in a foreign chair, wrapped in velvet, with a fur-trimmed muff, looking tranquilly down at the little servant girl warming her hands at the charcoal brazier, while another brings what looks like a Dutch coffee pot, jug and teapot on a tray of mother-of-pearl. The setting is subdued rococo; the painting of many details, such as the glass bulb-bowl, the landscape over the door, the furniture and brackets, and above all the lively, delicate treat-

ment of the lady's face, with its deft highlights and shadows, proclaim the hand of a European, possibly working with Chinese assistants.

Who this European was is not known. The peculiar charm of the figures is French rather than Italian. In a letter of November 1743 Attiret wrote that he painted chiefly in water-colours on silk, or in oil on glass, and seldom in the European manner, except for his portraits of 'the brothers of the Emperor, his wife and several other princes and princesses of the blood, and certain favourites and other seigneurs'. Not only is the central figure disproportionately large, but her face is painted with a care and realism not devoted to the others. This suggests that it is a portrait, and not merely a decorative composition, though whether it is indeed by Attiret we cannot of course be certain.

In his large compositions Lang Shih-ning sometimes co-operated with a Chinese court painter, the Jesuit putting in the figures, the Chinese the landscape. Among Lang Shih-ning's known collaborators were Ting Kuan-p'eng, Ch'in K'un and T'ang-tai. There was formerly in the Imperial Palace collection an album of illustrations to a section of the ancient *Book of Odes*, in which the landscapes are by T'ang-tai, the buildings by Lang Shih-ning, and the figures and animals by Shen Yüan, one of the artists who produced a series of forty views of the Yüan-ming-yüan.

Perhaps it is the hand of T'ang-tai, collaborating with Lang Shih-ning, that we see in a huge and remarkable painting now
45 hanging in the Stanford Museum, known as the *Night Market at Yang-ch'eng*. The picture is signed with Lang Shih-ning's name and the date 1736, but this may have been added later. The *Night Market* depicts with a wealth of fascinating detail the life along a river bank outside a city wall on a summer night. There are pedlars and boatmen, wine-shops and roadside stalls, drawn in the Chinese medium yet obviously by a European, who has exchanged his pen for a Chinese brush. His handling of light and shadow, of human anatomy and the very texture of walls and roofs could not have been learnt in Peking; and there are details, such as the gentleman stepping ashore from a sampan and a girl in a boat drawing water from the river, which look very French, as though the painter had studied engravings after Watteau and Boucher. In the distance there rises a mountain landscape bathed in moonlight, and executed, unlike those in the *Hundred Horses* scroll, by an unmistakably Chinese hand. It may be that the *Night Market* represents no actual place, but

was painted to give Ch'ien-lung an idea of how his subjects might spend a hot summer night. The origin and history of this painting before the twentieth century are a mystery. It bears no imperial seals, and, like many of the works of the court painters, may have been painted simply as a wall decoration for one of the pavilions of the Yüan-ming-yüan. If so, it must have been taken down long before that great, rambling complex of buildings and gardens began to decay, for it is still in excellent condition.

In 1762 Ch'ien-lung completed the conquest of Turkestan, and his generals returned in triumph to Peking. The Jesuits had shown him engravings after the panoramic battle pictures of Georges Philippe Rugendas of Augsburg (1666–1743), and possibly also others after Jacques Courtas, le Bourguignon (1621–76), and these seem to have inspired the Emperor to celebrate his own victories in similar fashion. Sixteen pictures were executed under the direction of the Jesuits, who presumably made the preliminary drawings and supervised the making of the enlarged coloured versions. In addition to Lang Shih-ning and Attiret, the work was directed by Ignace Sichelbarth (1708–80), who had arrived in 1745 and a few of whose wretched Castiglionesque paintings survive in the National Palace Museum, and by Jean-Damascène Sallusti, an Augustinian father who became Bishop of Peking after the suppression of the Jesuit order in 1773. The sixteen huge battle paintings were hung in the Tzu-kuang-ko, a hall in the western part of the Forbidden City where foreign ambassadors were received. Above them were arranged the portraits of fifty victorious generals, mostly painted by Attiret. 46

In July 1765 the Emperor ordered the Jesuits to make ink copies of the battle pictures to be sent to Europe to be engraved. Lang Shih-ning intended them for Rome, but when the first batch of four reached Canton the French mission there intercepted them and persuaded the Viceroy to direct them to France, whose engravers, they said, were the best in Europe. The drawings arrived in Paris in the autumn of 1766. Bertin, Minister to Louis XV, saw that they were put into the hands of the Director of the Royal Academy, the Duc de Marigny, who, on seeing them, wrote to Attiret that his drawing was very much in the Chinese manner. This must have pleased the Jesuit, for he had said of himself that his own taste, since he had been in China, had become 'a little Chinese'.

The remaining twelve drawings reached Paris by 1772 and

the set of sixteen magnificent plates, meticulously engraved by Le Bas, Saint Aubin and others under the direction of Cochin, was completed two years later. By this time the style had, apart from a vaguely exotic treatment of the mountains, lost all its Chinese flavour. With the exception of a few sets kept back in Paris, the whole edition of two hundred impressions, with the original drawings and the plates, was, at the express order of Ch'ien-lung, sent back to Peking in December 1774.

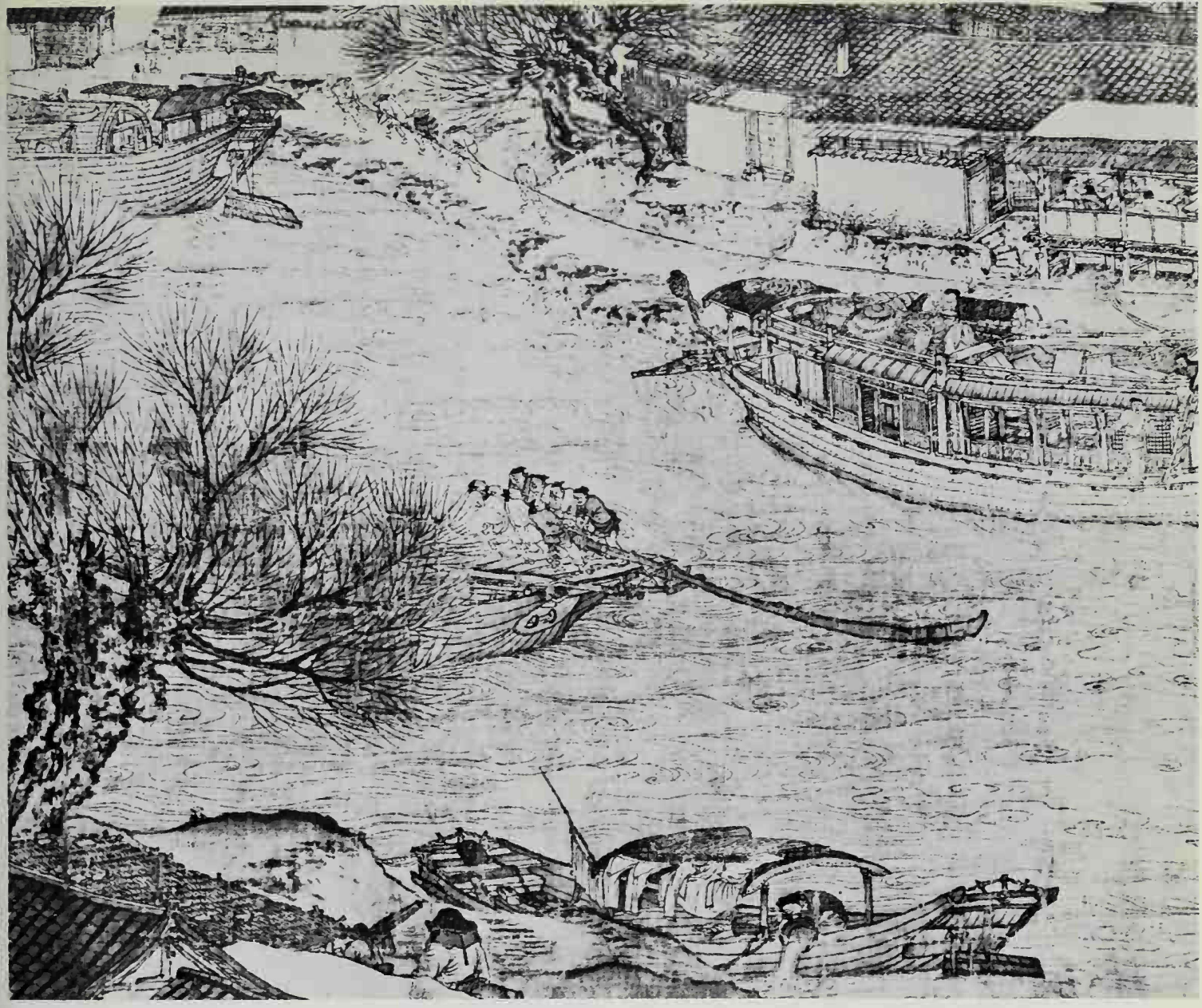
The Emperor presented sets to imperial relatives and deserving subjects, and they were immensely admired. He then set out to show that his own engravers could do just as well. He can hardly have been aware of how little developed the art of copperplate engraving was in China. Very shortly after arriving in Peking in 1711 Father Matteo Ripa had been obliged by K'ang-hsi to execute some Chinese landscapes in oils, for which he was ill-fitted. 'I recommended my efforts to the direction of God,' he wrote, 'and began to do what I had never before undertaken.' The Emperor was satisfied. 'Thus I continued to paint till the month of April, when His Majesty was pleased to command that I betake myself to engraving.' Of this latter art Ripa knew even less. When called upon to engrave the huge maps prepared by the Jesuit Fathers, he had to build his own press and make his own ink. K'ang-hsi was so pleased with the
47 result that he ordered Ripa to make thirty-six engravings, after paintings by court artists, of the summer palace at Jehol. In these, the first copperplates (apart from the maps) engraved in China, Ripa with naïve and cunning charm manages to convey something of the quality of the Chinese brush technique. When these engravings later appeared in England they, and Ripa's descriptions, exerted a major influence on the revolution of English garden design initiated by William Kent.

Ripa left for Europe in 1723, but Lang Shih-ning kept the craft going in the Imperial Printing Office, Ts'ao-pan ch'u, and supervised the delightful set of plates of his fantastic Sino-rococo pavilions in the Yüan-ming-yüan, engraved in 1786. In Ch'ien-lung's lifetime five more sets of campaign engravings were produced by his Chinese craftsmen. The sixth and last, cut in about 1830 after designs by Ho Shih-k'uei, depicts in ten plates the suppression of the rebellion of Jehangir in East Turkestan. These later plates, by many hands, are varied in style and sometimes awkwardly composed, but they show a determined attempt to follow the model of the original Conquests series, even using the same landscape elements over and

over again. Interesting as they are, however, they represent a stream in eighteenth-century court art which had little influence outside the Palace, and soon dried up altogether.

The halcyon days of the Yüan-ming-yüan ended with the abdication of Ch'ien-lung in 1796. By then Father Benoist had long been dead, and his defunct mechanical fountains were being supplied, on special occasions only, by chains of men with buckets. Ch'ien-lung's successors continued to use the royal apartments of the Yüan-ming-yüan, but Chia-ch'ing (1796–1820), weighed down with debts, was rigidly economical, and there were no more extravagances. Already the Yüan-ming-yüan was becoming a place of ghosts and memories, while neglect and pilfering were beginning to take their toll. When Lord Elgin's punitive force put it to the torch in October 1860 only the royal apartments were in decent order. In fact, contrary to popular belief, the British and French managed to destroy only a small part of this vast complex of over two hundred buildings. In spite of the looting that went on for years afterwards there was enough still standing for the Empress Dowager to embark in the early 1870s on a costly restoration. But in the face of popular protests this was abandoned in 1874, and the dismantling was resumed; even the wooden piles were dug up and sold for fuel. Today Ch'ien-lung's great fairy palace, in which, long ago, the Jesuits had staged an Italian light opera, and Hsiang-fei had dressed up as a French peasant girl, has disappeared off the face of the earth.

In 1772 Father Giuseppe Panzi arrived from Paris as a replacement for Attiret. Though his patron dismissed him as obsequious, he sounds from his letters a delightful man, charitable, modest and gay. 'Tout pour l'amour de Dieu!' he wrote home. 'Je suis le peintre, ou mieux le serviteur de la mission pour l'amour de Dieu.' He painted a portrait of the Emperor soon after his arrival, and other portraits of high officials and Jesuit missionaries; but little is known about his work, and it is doubtful whether, with Ch'ien-lung old and tired, and his successor Chia-ch'ing immersed in his inherited problems, Panzi was able to sustain his enthusiasm. He died, very old and obscure, in Peking in about 1812 or a little earlier. We hear of two more European painters in the service of the Chinese court before the curtain descends: Joseph Paris, a mechanic, clockmaker and painter of sorts sent out by the Lazarists in 1784, who worked in Peking for twenty years; and Father de Poirot, who lingered on till 1814.



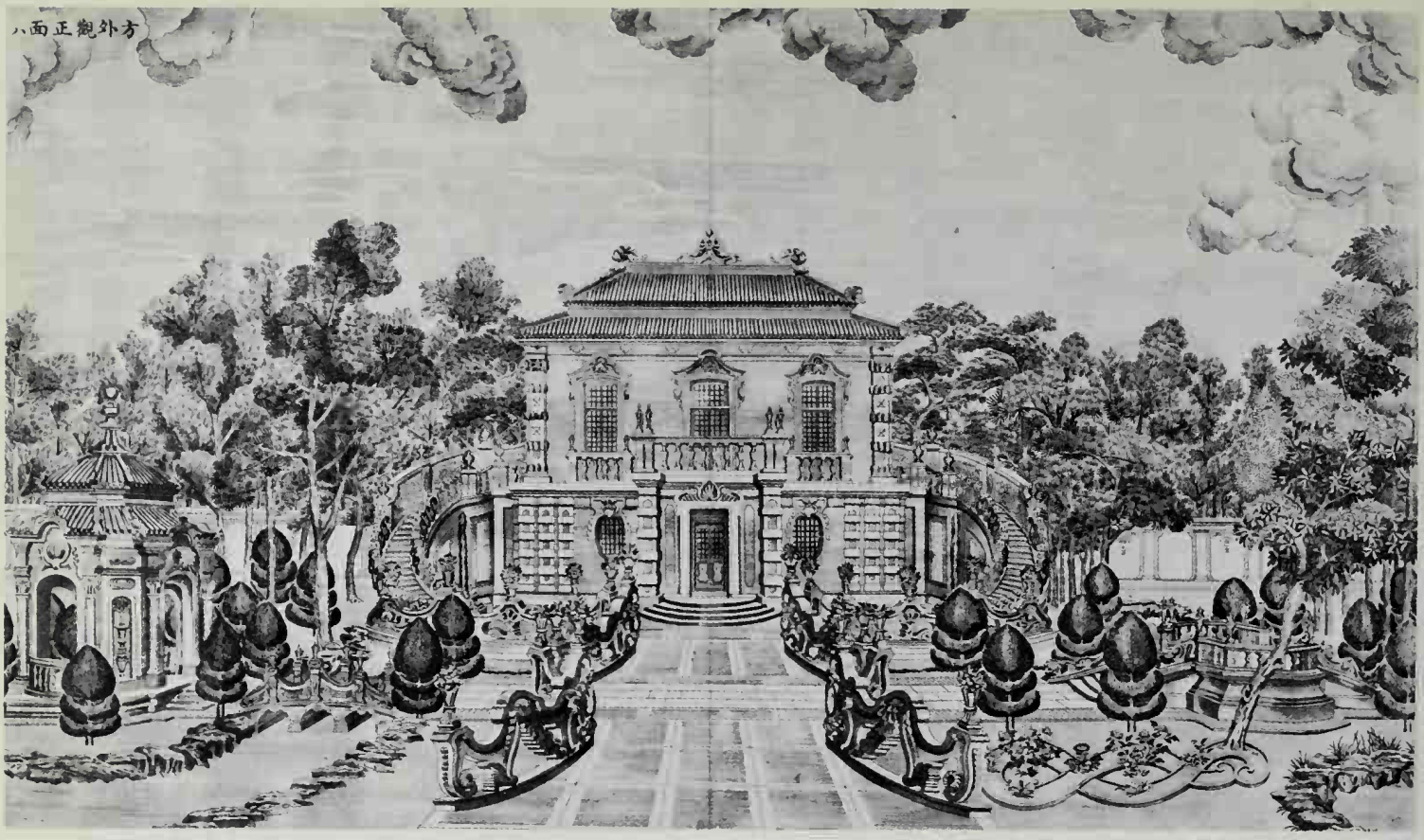
36 Chang Tse-tuan (Northern Sung, early twelfth century). *Going up River at Ch'ing-ming Festival Time* (detail). Handscroll. Ink and slight colour on silk.

37 Ting Kuan-p'eng (*fl. c.* 1714–60). Toyseller at New Year (detail). Handscroll. Ink and colour on silk. Mid-eighteenth century

38 Yüan Chiang (*fl. c.* 1750). Carts on a winding mountain road (detail). Hanging scroll. Ink and colour on silk. 1754

39 *Aquapendente and Tarvisi*. Engravings from Georg Braun and Franz Hogenberg, *Civitates Orbis Terrarum* (edition published *c.* 1598)

40 Lu Wei (*fl. c.* 1700). Landscape. Album leaf. Ink on paper

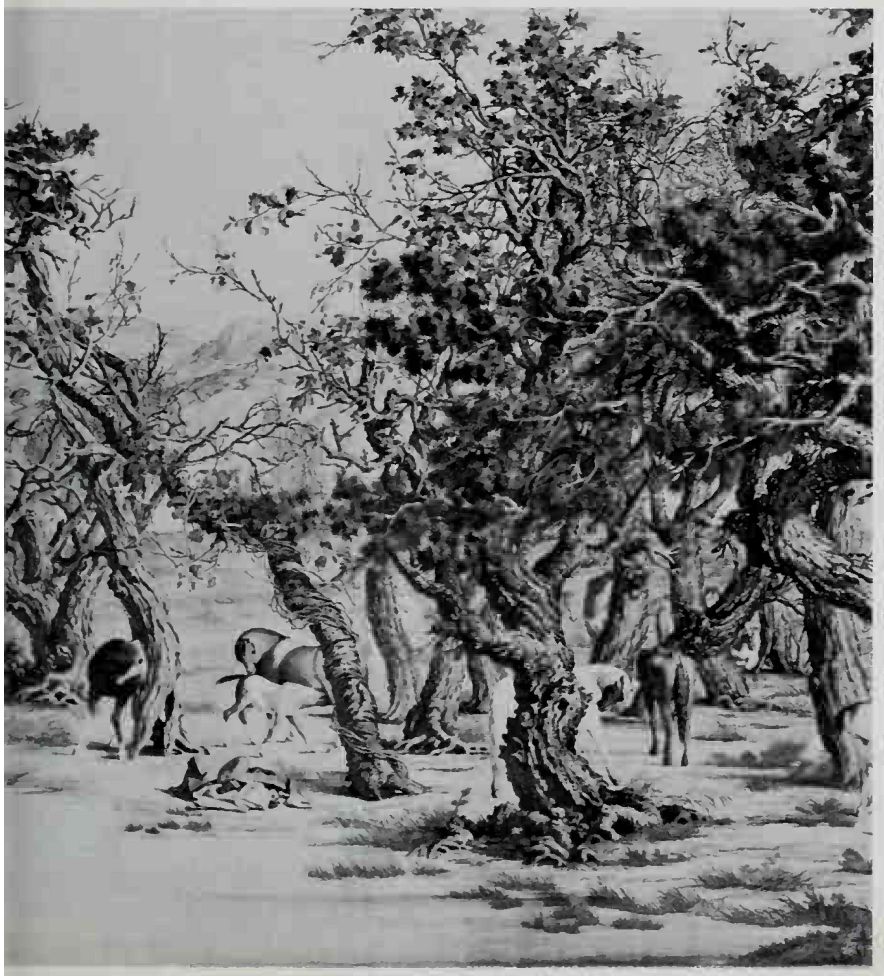


41 Anonymous follower of Lang Shih-ning (Giuseppe Castiglione, 1688–1766). Foreign building in the Yüan-ming-yüan. Engraving. 1783

42 Anonymous. Portrait of Hsiang Fei dressed *en paysanne*. Mid-eighteenth century

43 Lang Shih-ning. Landscape with scholar reading. Hanging scroll. Ink and colour on silk

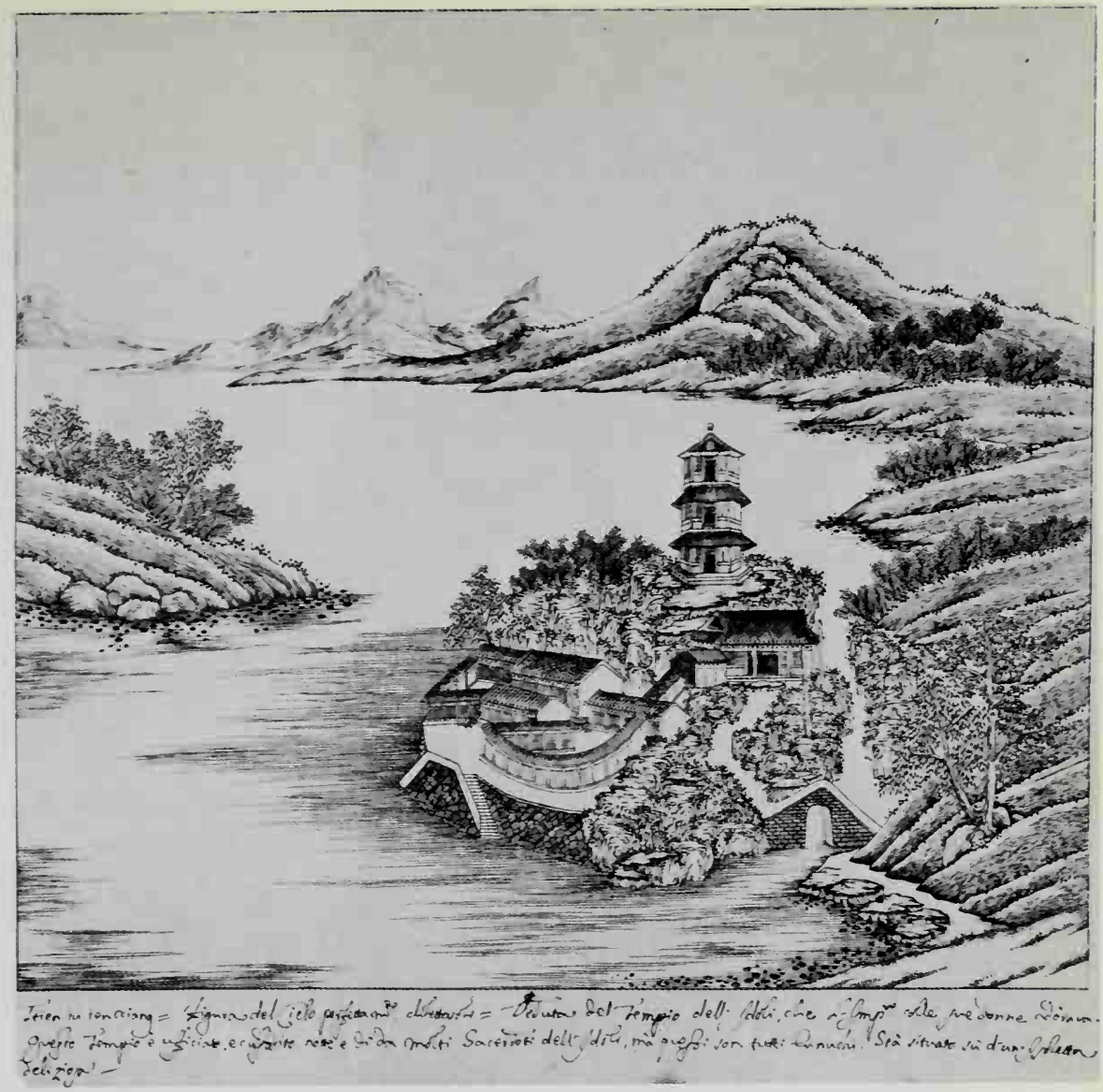
44 Lang Shih-ning. *A Hundred Horses in a Landscape* (detail). Handscroll. Ink and colour on silk. 1728



Opposite page

45 Attributed to Lang Shih-ning. *Night Market at Yang-ch'eng* (detail). Hanging scroll. Ink and slight colour on silk. 1736

46 Anonymous. Ch'en-lung's conquest of Turkestan. Engraving made in Paris after a painting by Jean-Damascène Sallusti. 1770



47 Matteo Ripa. Copperplate engraving from 'Thirty-six Views of the Pi-shu Shan-chuang' (Summer Palace at Jehol). 1712–14

48 Anonymous. Page from one of a set of albums containing Chinese landscape paintings, executed for A. E. von Braam Houckgeest, Dutch Ambassador to the court of Ch'ien-lung. Ink and colour on paper. 1794

49 Anonymous follower of Chinnery. Portrait of a Chinese girl. Oil. Early nineteenth century

50 Lamqua. Riverside at Canton: one of a pair of paintings. Oil. *C.* 1830

51, 52 Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–69). Two Indian noblemen of the Mughal court: man with a falcon and Abd al-Rahim Khan with bow and arrow. Pen and ink with touches of chalk gouache on Japanese paper. *C.* 1654–6. (*Below*) *Winter Landscape.* Reed pen and bistre ink with added wash. *C.* 1647

53 Anonymous. Chinese deities. Engraving from Athanasius Kircher, *China Illustrata* (1665)

54 Anonymous. Lady with a bird. Engraving from Athanasius Kircher, *China Illustrata* (1665)

55 Anonymous. *Higiemondo*. Engraving from Joachim von Sandrart, *Teutsche Akademie der Bau-, Bildhauer- und Malerkunst . . .* (1675)

56 Antoine Watteau (1684–1721). *Chinoiserie*. Panel from Château de la Muette

57 Antoine Watteau. *Chinoiserie*. Panel from a harpsichord. Oil on panel. 1708

P. Gissart Sculp. rue Ste Iacques a l'image Ste Therese C.P.R.

Empereur Chinois

En habit de Ceremonie a la Chinoise

This is a good moment to ask ourselves what the missionary artists accomplished during their two hundred years of dedicated work in China. When we think of the intense interest which they aroused in the seventeenth century we cannot help being surprised that their ultimate achievement was so meagre. Although in the eighteenth century they only painted for the emperors, many scholars and officials at court must have seen their work. Yet hardly one thought it worth mentioning. The influence of Western art, if it did not peter out altogether, trickled like sand down to the lower levels of the professional and the craftsman painters, where it stayed till modern times.

The explanation is not far to seek. In the late Ming period some enlightened intellectuals – as in Japan a century later – looked to the Jesuits for leadership or support, and Western culture was eagerly studied. This was the only time when the literati took Western art seriously. But with the re-establishment of stable authority under the Manchus they no longer needed, or perhaps no longer dared, to associate too closely with the foreigners. From the time of K'ang-hsi until the Opium War, China felt she could afford to ignore European culture. As Ch'ien-lung made plain in his celebrated letter to George III, she needed nothing from the 'Outer Barbarians'. Western thought was almost unknown, Christianity was kept very firmly in its place, Western technology and the Western arts were confined to serving Ch'ien-lung's own domestic and courtly needs. Besides, Western painting had one fatal flaw, which the court artist Tsou I-kuei summed up in these words:

> The Westerners are skilled in geometry, and consequently there is not the slightest mistake in their way of rendering light and shade [*yin-yang*] and distance (near and far). In their paintings all the figures, buildings, and trees cast shadows, and their brush and colours are entirely different from those of Chinese painters. Their views (scenery) stretch out from broad (in the foreground) to narrow (in the background) and are defined (mathematically measured). When they paint houses on a wall people are tempted to walk into them. Students of painting may well take over one or two points from them to make their own paintings more attractive to the eye. But these painters have no brush-manner whatsoever; although they possess skill, they are simply artisans [*chiang*] and cannot consequently be classified as painters.

58 Pierre Giffart. *Empereur Chinois.* Engraving from Joachim Bouvet, *L'Estat présent de la Chine en Figures* (1697)

'No brush-manner whatsoever' – there is the key. To the

Chinese gentleman painter who aimed at a triple synthesis of painting, poetry and calligraphy, what had the laborious realism of Western oil painting to do with fine art?

Early Nineteenth-century Contacts in South China

While the foreigners and foreign art were slowly but surely losing their foothold at court, they were beginning to make a very different kind of impact on the South China coast. Macao, a larger and much more accessible Deshima, had been the centre of Portuguese influence since early in the sixteenth century. In the eighteenth century foreign ships were trading direct with Canton. The Cantonese craftsmen were immensely skilled in imitating and adapting European styles and techniques to textiles, screens, furniture, porcelain and a dozen other products made for the European market. This export art, however, which has been exhaustively studied, made almost no impact on what we may call 'fine art' in South China. The gentlemen amateurs continued to paint in the traditional style, being if anything less curious about Western painting than had been some of the seventeenth-century literati who had consorted with the Jesuits. On the other hand, a good deal of semi-foreign painting was produced in Canton from about 1750 onwards, some of it of great charm and delicacy, and much of it wrongly 48
attributed by dealers to Lang Shih-ning and his pupils.

The reason for the lack of any European influence in South China at a higher level was that the foreigners were for the most part merchants who had little interest in art, and formed few contacts with educated Chinese, or none at all. As for the missionaries, there were no Catholic painters to replace the Jesuits, and fine art withered in the evangelical fire of the Protestant pioneers. From this time forward such influence as the Christian missions had on Chinese painting was wholly bad.

In the century between 1750 and 1850 a number of Western painters travelled in China, or settled on the coast, and sometimes their activities were noted, if not always correctly. A Chinese historian of Ch'ing painting records that 'an envoy from England came bringing tribute during the years of Ch'ien-lung and Chia-ch'ing. As he travelled through the country he beheld the scenery of lakes and mountains. Thereupon he made some drawings which he took away with him.

His figures and houses clearly demonstrate the principles of chiaroscuro and perspective. The method is like *chieh-hua* ['boundary painting', that is, architectural painting done with a ruler] in Chinese painting, and even more refined.' This writer is probably fusing, or confusing, two or more of four artists: the English water-colourists Alexander and Hickey, who accompanied Lord Macartney's mission to Peking in 1792, and Abbott and Fielding, who were with the abortive Amherst mission in 1816.

Macartney's secretary John Barrow has much to say about Chinese painting in his popular account of the mission, *Travels in China*. He relates how in the Yüan-ming-yüan he saw two very large landscapes in a Sino-European style, and some albums of the ever-popular trades and occupations, all bearing the Chinese signature of Castiglione. When he pointed out to his Chinese guide, who admired them exceedingly, that they were painted by a foreigner, the eunuch was very annoyed and refused to show him any more. Barrow thought that the Cantonese painters were better than those in Peking, for they painted flowers with painstaking accuracy for their foreign clients, and they 'will even count the number of scales on a fish, and mark them out in their representation', while they copied exactly, even to the blemishes, the coloured prints sent out from Europe. Like most foreign observers Barrow thought Chinese painting the better, the less Chinese it was.

Other European painters visited China from time to time. John Webber was the official artist on Captain Cook's third voyage, which touched at Macao early in 1777. Thomas Daniell and his nephew William were in India – and, more briefly, in South China – between 1784 and 1794. James Wathen, a retired glover from Shrewsbury, painted charming watercolours in Macao in 1812. A more considerable artist was Auguste Borget (1808–77), an intimate friend of Balzac; he was in Macao for a few months in 1830. If any of these men had Chinese pupils there is no record of them.

By far the best of the China coast artists was George Chinnery. Born in London in 1774, he had studied with Turner and Girtin under Sir Joshua Reynolds at the Royal Academy School, and in 1795 moved to Dublin, where he set up as a fashionable portrait painter and married Harriet Vigne, who was to plague him for the rest of his life. In 1802 they returned to England, and Chinnery immediately set off, alone, to India, where he remained for seventeen years. At length his wife joined

him. He ran up heavy debts, and to escape both from them and from his wife he took ship to Macao, where he landed on 30 September 1830. There he remained for the rest of his life – paying, when he feared his wife might be coming on a convoy from India, a few visits to Canton, and, after the Opium War, to Hongkong.

Chinnery was an able portrait painter, but it is in his small landscape oils and above all in his drawings that his talent shows to best advantage. He was immensely prolific, going out at dawn to draw and paint those watercolours and architectural studies that show him to be a worthy follower of Canaletto. He was a teetotaler, a heavy eater, an entertaining conversationalist, and almost certainly had a Chinese mistress. He gave painting and drawing lessons, chiefly to foreign ladies in Macao. 49
Was the Cantonese painter Lamqua, the 'Chinese Chinnery', one of his pupils? Chinnery denied it, but Toogood Downing, writing in about 1835, tells us that he was, and that he received from Chinnery 'instruction sufficient to enable him to paint in a tolerable manner after the European fashion'. Lamqua must have made good progress, for ten years later he exhibited at Burlington House a portrait of Captain W. H. Hall, R.N., probably the first work by a Chinese artist to appear in a European salon.

Whether or not Chinnery actually gave Lamqua lessons, there is no doubt that the Chinese was a close student of his work. A pair of riverside scenes in the Alexander Griswold 50
collection (Maryland), signed by Lamqua, are almost exact copies of a pair of Chinnery paintings formerly in the Chater collection, the only difference being that Lamqua has replaced some of Chinnery's figures with top-hatted Europeans, no doubt in the hope that one of the Barbarians would buy them as a souvenir of his years in the East.

Downing gives a fascinating description of Lamqua's *bottega* in China Street. On the lower floor were craftsmen making figure and ship paintings on rice paper, or copying European engravings, of which Lamqua had a large collection. Some of his assistants, on the other hand, 'confine themselves merely to that style of drawing which exclusively belongs to the Chinese'. Round the corner, at 34 Old Street, was Youqua, whose stamp appears on the back of some flower and plant drawings in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. On the top floor of Lamqua's establishment was the master himself, constantly occupied with painting portraits in oils, yet unfailingly courteous to the

stream of visitors who crowded into his small studio, the walls of which were lined with finished and unfinished portraits of Europeans and Parsees, merchants and sea-captains, 'while here and there may be distinguished the unassuming head of a Chinaman'.

Perhaps the most interesting passage in Downing's chapter on painting in Canton concerns the spontaneous ink paintings of the literati, which he says are very rare. He writes:

> There are some sketchy kinds of landscapes in high repute among the natives at Canton, who consider them quite masterpieces. They are very scarce, and consist of rough outlines of trees, rocks, waterfalls, etc., painted with a brush dipped in a single pot of colour. Although to our eye these performances have no merit whatever, except perhaps their freedom, the Chinese reverence them somewhat in the same way as we do the rough sketches in pencil or chalk done by Raphael, Da Vinci, and others of the old masters, and tell you with a chuckle of pleasure that they are 'wery, wery, olo'.

Downing, as we would expect, remarks that these very, very old landscapes are very defective by reason of their total lack of perspective, shading and chiaroscuro; but he does notice them, and even comments on their freedom, and on the high regard in which they were held by the Chinese themselves. This must certainly be the first time in the confrontation of Eastern and Western art that any European writer even mentioned the only kind of painting that the Chinese intelligentsia took seriously.