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Abstract

This dissertation explores the life and art of Wang Yuanqi (1642-1715), one of the most influential literati artists of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). As a representative of the so-called "Orthodox Painting School," Wang considered himself the heir to the genuine thousand-year-old tradition of Chinese painting. Throughout his lifetime, he made every effort to establish and consolidate the authority of his school of painting. Since his early years, he had been trained as a traditional Chinese literatus. Under the direct supervision of his grandfather, he practiced landscape paintings in the style of ancient masters, especially that of the Yuan literati painter, Huang Gongwang (1269-1354). However, he was never satisfied with the facsimiles of the old masterpieces. Beyond his models, he created new theories of composition and brushwork; he introduced a new style of light color landscape with unique techniques. Moreover, benefiting from the lenient cultural policies of the Kangxi emperor (r. 1661-1722), he successfully led a movement of canon-formation in artistic circles.

The research of this thesis is based on three types of sources: 1) Wang Yuanqi's published writings, 2) his paintings, and 3) publications and manuscripts by Wang's contemporaries. Different from previous scholarship which mainly focuses on the classicism of Wang Yuanqi's work, this dissertation provides a comprehensive study of Wang's life and his circle and investigates the reason and procedure of the rise of the Orthodox Painting School in the early eighteenth century.

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WANG YUANQI AND THE ORTHODOXY OF SELF-REFLECTION
IN EARLY QING LANDSCAPE PAINTING

Shen Wang

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WANG YUANQI AND THE ORTHODOXY OF SELF-REFLECTION
IN EARLY QING LANDSCAPE PAINTING

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Shen Wang

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents, Wang Zue and Meng Bo, and grandmother, Xia Yunming, who provided me with great moral and material support during the long years of my education.

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ABSTRACT

WANG YUANQI AND THE ORTHODOXY OF SELF-REFLECTION IN EARLY QING LANDSCAPE PAINTING

Shen Wang

Nancy S. Steinhardt

This dissertation explores the life and art of Wang Yuanqi (1642-1715), one of the most influential literati artists of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). As a representative of the so-called “Orthodox Painting School,” Wang considered himself the heir to the genuine thousand-year-old tradition of Chinese painting. Throughout his lifetime, he made every effort to establish and consolidate the authority of his school of painting. Since his early years, he had been trained as a traditional Chinese literatus. Under the direct supervision of his grandfather, he practiced landscape paintings in the style of ancient masters, especially that of the Yuan literati painter, Huang Gongwang (1269-1354). However, he was never satisfied with the facsimiles of the old masterpieces. Beyond his models, he created new theories of composition and brushwork; he introduced a new style of light color landscape with unique techniques. Moreover, benefiting from the lenient cultural policies of the Kangxi emperor (r. 1661-1722), he successfully led a movement of canon-formation in artistic circles.

The research of this thesis is based on three types of sources: 1) Wang Yuanqi's published writings, 2) his paintings, and 3) publications and manuscripts by Wang's contemporaries. Different from previous scholarship which mainly focuses on the classicism of Wang Yuanqi's work, this dissertation provides a comprehensive study of Wang's life and his circle and investigates the reason and procedure of the rise of the Orthodox Painting School in the early eighteenth century.

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INTRODUCTION

Among four men of the early Qing dynasty (1644-1911) surnamed Wang who enjoyed great fame for painting (Wang Shimin 王時敏 [1592-1680], Wang Jian 王鑑 [1598-1677], Wang Hui 王翬 [1632-1717], and Wang Yuanqi 王原祁 [1642-1715]), Wang Yuanqi had the most lasting influence on later artists and movements. His success is reflected in the glowing comments made by critics of his time as well as those who followed him. Zhang Geng 張庚 (1685-1760), for example, noted in *Guochao huazheng lu* 國朝畫徵錄 (*Detailed Biographies of Painters of the Qing Dynasty*): “[Yuanqi’s] brushwork is extremely refined and vigorous.... [He is] unquestionably the most outstanding painter since Chiweng 癡翁 (Huang Gongwang 黃公望 [1269-1354]).”¹

As a representative of traditional Chinese orthodox painting, Wang’s oeuvre referenced a millennium of painting history. As James Cahill has pointed out, the so-called “Orthodox School” in the early Qing dynasty “is a movement that was already understood and designated as orthodox in its own time, and has been called that ever since. It is made up of those painters who accepted more or less *in toto*, insofar as they understood them, the doctrines and stylistic innovations of Dong Qichang, and who

¹ Zhang Geng, ed., *Guochao huazheng lu (Detailed Biographies of Painters of the Qing Dynasty)*, in *Zhongguo shuhua quanshu* 中國書畫全書 (*A Comprehensive Book of Chinese Calligraphy and Painting*) (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 1996), vol. 10, 440.

carried them on in a particular conservative direction, the one set chiefly by his direct followers Wang Shimin and Wang Jian.”² All of Dong’s followers accepted and advocated Dong’s theory of the “Northern and Southern Schools.”

Although Dong could hardly claim that he was the originator of the phrase “northern and southern,” he proposed a system for art, whereby landscape paintings were divided into two main groups, respectively represented by the blue-and-green (northern) and wash-and-ink styles (southern). The former is practiced by professional painters who typically use mineral-based pigments to create rich effects, while the latter style is preferred by literati artists who rely chiefly on black ink and wash techniques to express their conception of nature, emotions, and individuality. The phrase “Northern and Southern Schools” used by the above-mentioned Dong Qichang 董其昌 (1555-1636) to distinguish between professional and literati painters was borrowed from Chan Buddhism.³ The lineage of the Southern School “beginning with Wang Wei and coming down to Dong-Ju, the Two Mis, the Four Yuan Masters (especially Huang Gongwang), and finally [Dong Qichang] himself, has been respectfully regarded by most later critics

² James Cahill, “The Orthodox Movement in Early Ch’ing Painting,” in *Artists and Traditions*, ed. Christian F. Murck (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976), 169.

³ See Michael Sullivan, *The Arts of China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 227-231; also see Wai-Kam Ho’s discussion of Dong’s terminological borrowing from Chan Buddhism, “Tung Ch’i-ch’ang’s New Orthodoxy and the Southern School Theory,” in *Artists and Traditions*, 116; Wen Fong, “Tung Ch’i-ch’ang and the Orthodox Theory of Painting,” *National Palace Museum Quarterly* 2, no. 3 (1968): 1.

as the orthodox.”⁴ Since the earlier Qing, “the term ‘Orthodox’ has been applied to the literati painting school represented by the Four Wangs.”⁵

However, the so-called school of “orthodox painting” did not cover the full scope of literati art during the late Ming and early Qing. Opposed to the Four Wangs was a group of eccentric painters represented by the Four Great Monks (Hongren 弘仁 [1610-1664], Kuncan 髡殘 [1612-1673], Bada Shanren 八大山人 [1626-1705], and Shitao 石濤 [1642-1718]) also active in late seventeenth-century art circles.⁶ While they, like the Orthodox painters, experienced the upheaval of the Ming-Qing transition, their reaction to it was distinctly more negative. They had a more pessimistic attitude toward the Ming-Qing dynastic change and resisted Manchu rule. Their works, reflecting their rebellious stance, usually feature unusual themes and unrestrained brushwork, which led to their work being labeled “Individualist” or “Unorthodox.” The Unorthodox painters particularly opposed copying ancient models and masters. As Shitao once stated, “I am always myself, and must naturally be present in whatever I do. The beards and eyebrows of the ancients will not grow on my face, and the lungs and

⁴ Wai-kam Ho, “Tung Ch’i-ch’ang’s New Orthodoxy and the Southern School Theory,” 129.

⁵ James Cahill, “The Orthodox Movement in Early Ch’ing Painting,” 169.

⁶ Nie Chongzheng 聶崇正, “The Qing Dynasty (1644-1911),” in *Three Thousand Years of Chinese Painting*, ed. Yang Xin et al. (New Haven: Yale University, 1997), 252-259.

bowels of the ancients cannot be put into my body.”⁷

Shitao’s high status in early Qing art circles should not be underestimated.⁸ Art historians seem unable to resist comparing him to Wang Yuanqi.⁹ They often delight in talking about *Orchid and Bamboo* (fig. 2-16), a painting preserved in the National Palace Museum in Taipei and assumed to be a collaborative work by Shitao and Yuanqi. However, as Shi Shouqian 石守謙 points out in his article “Shitao, Wang Yuanqi hezuo *Lanzhu tu* de wenti” 石濤、王原祁合作“蘭竹圖”的問題 (“The Problem of Shitao and Wang Yuanqi’s Cooperation in ‘Orchid and Bamboo’”), their “cooperation” might have been more pressured than willing.¹⁰ There is no evidence that Shitao and Wang Yuanqi knew each other, and their collaboration was a request from an authority not to be lightly denied. Personalities and collaborations aside, orthodox and unorthodox thinking about painting developed in parallel and in competition, but overall, there is no doubting the predominance of the Orthodox School.

⁷ Shitao, quoted in *Zhongguo lidai huajia zhuanlue* 中國歷代畫家傳略 (*Biographies of Chinese Painters of Various Dynasties*), ed. Yan Shaoxian and Ran Xiangzheng (Beijing: Zhongguo zhanwang chubanshe, 1986), 184. Translated and quoted by Nie Chongzheng in “The Qing Dynasty,” 258.

⁸ For a recent discussion of Shitao’s life and work, see Jonathan Hay, *Shitao: Painting and Modernity in Early Qing China* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁹ For comparative studies of Wang Yuanqi and Shitao, see James Cahill, *The Compelling Image: Nature and Style in Seventeenth-century Chinese Painting* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1982); Cao Yulin, *Wang Yuanqi yu Shitao: Qing chu shanshui huatan de zheng qi liangji* 王原祁與石濤：清初山水畫壇的正奇兩極 (*Wang Yuanqi and Shitao: The Two Poles of Early Qing Landscape Painting*) (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 2004).

¹⁰ See Shi Shouqian, “Shitao, Wang Yuanqi hezuo ‘lanzhu tu’ de wenti,” in *Fengge yu shibian: Zhongguo huihuashi lunwen ji* 風格與世變：中國繪畫史論文集 (*Styles and Transformations: a Collection of Essays on the History of Chinese Painting*), ed., Shi Shouqian (Taipei: Yuncheng wenhua shiye youxian gongsi, 1996), 335-355.

The Four Wangs enjoyed high prestige in early Qing art circles. Yet, differences of opinion over appropriate historical painting models caused a split in the Orthodox School. This led to the formation of the Loudong and Yushan Schools, headed respectively by Wang Yuanqi and Wang Hui. Although Wang Hui was educated by Wang Shimin and Wang Jian, both loyal followers of Dong Qichang, he eventually chose masters of the Northern Song as his models. As Chi-sung Chang writes, his “passionate emulation of the Northern Song ideal in his landscape panoramas, tightly linked with his theory of a ‘Great Synthesis,’ was primarily intended to challenge the dominant Orthodox theories of Dong Qichang, who advocated the supreme value of scholar-amateurism and Yuan literati styles in painting.”¹¹ Thus, the most direct stylistic and philosophical heirs of Dong were Wang Yuanqi and his followers in the Loudong School. The success of Wang Yuanqi and Orthodox painting was not purely an artistic phenomenon but a product also of the new economic, political, and cultural conditions that prevailed in the early Qing.

For over three centuries, most criticism of Wang Yuanqi, both positive and negative, has focused on the classicism of his works. A comprehensive study of his life and the history of his circle have not been undertaken, nor has there been an adequate examination of the numerous texts he wrote or compiled. One of the main purposes of this thesis is to take a close look at Wang Yuanqi’s writings and paintings and to place his

¹¹ Chin-sung Chang, “Mountains and Rivers, Pure and Splendid: Wang Hui (1632-1717) and the Making of Landscape Panorama in Early Qing China” (PhD diss., Yale University, 2004), 14.

orthodox painting style in the context of early Qing intellectual life. Ultimately, this work is intended to reevaluate Wang Yuanqi as a literatus rather than purely as a painter. Against the backdrop of the drastic changes of the early Qing dynasty, this thesis explores such issues as these: How did Wang Yuanqi become the direct heir of orthodox painting? What contribution did he make to artistic criticism? With protean talent and artistic ambition, how did he improve the technical execution of the literati landscape and advance it to a new stage? How was literati art canonized in the Kangxi period?

This thesis roughly divides Wang Yuanqi's art into three main periods. First, the period before 1670 when he remained chiefly in his hometown, Taicang where, under direct supervision of his grandfather Wang Shimin, he received strict training as a literati painter from his early years. Subsequently, the period from the early 1670s to the late 1690s constituted the long formative stage of Wang Yuanqi's personal art. His paintings from this stage are still heavily modeled on works by old masters, but at the same time, it is clear that he slowly formulated a new approach to composition and brushwork in landscape painting. From 1699 to 1715, in the wake of his enhanced status at court, Yuanqi's art gradually reached its maturity, and new elements and techniques become evident in his work. This third period also saw the gradual establishment and consolidation of his authority over most artistic creation and criticism in the world of art.

The first chapter of this dissertation provides information on Wang Yuanqi's hometown Taicang 太倉, his early life, and his education as a scholar and amateur

painter. By the late Ming period, Taicang and nearby Changshu 常熟 had become the economic and cultural centers of the Suzhou 蘇州 area. A number of influential thinkers and scholars emerged here, such as the leading writer of the Ming, Wang Shizhen 王世貞 (1526-1590), the founder of the Restoration Society, Zhang Pu 張溥 (1602-1641), and the famous poet and dramatist, Wu Weiye 吳偉業 (1609-1672). Many of these formative individuals were friends of the Wang family, a distinguished scholarly clan in Taicang that had enjoyed generations of high prestige. Wang Shimin, Yuanqi's grandfather and the oldest master of the "Four Wangs," owned several gardens and villas in Taicang, including the South Garden, East Garden, and the West Field Villa, which provided customary gathering places for Suzhou literati. It was in this highly cultivated atmosphere that Wang Yuanqi grew up and mastered the elements of the visual and literary arts under his grandfather's instruction. From his earliest years, Yuanqi's life was closely linked to literati circles. As my thesis explains, almost every recorded account concerning Wang Yuanqi relates to the unique circumstances of his upbringing and to his close friends in this circle.

Chapter Two focuses on the formative years of Wang Yuanqi's career and art from the 1670s to the 1690s. In 1661, Xuanye 玄燁 (1654-1722, r. 1661-1722) ascended the throne to become the Kangxi 康熙 emperor. After overturning the regency and claiming imperial power in 1669, he ruled China firmly and wisely. His achievements were especially praised for a "fifteen-year seminal period from 1669 to 1684 when he

succeeded in consolidating Manchu rule over China.”¹² The young emperor once listed his three primary concerns in ruling the country: the Revolt of the Three Feudatories (1673-1681), controlling floods, and providing sufficient water transportation to ship southern grain to the north.¹³ In addition to state affairs, however, the Kangxi emperor also gave great attention to cultural policies. As a Manchu ruler, he was keenly aware that Confucian scholars played a decisive role in Chinese society and government bureaucracy. He devised a series of measures to attract and control this elite, including his public worship of Confucius during his Southern Inspection Tour and selecting talent for government service through the *Boxuehongci* 博學鴻詞 Special Examination.

Against this political and cultural background, Wang Yuanqi began his official career in 1670s. Both locally and in the capital, he earned a great reputation as a literati painter and used his painting skills to help establish his broad social network. In this chapter, I examine Wang Yuanqi’s social and artistic activities using information on recipients of his paintings. His friends included Manchu nobles, Chinese high-ranking officials, and local scholars and artists. Wang Yuanqi’s ability to manage a wide variety of social connections gained him national success in the art world, especially in the principal literati circles of his time.

¹² Lawrence D. Kessler, “Chinese Scholars and the Early Manchu State,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, vol. 31, (1971): 180.

¹³ See *Qinding baqi tongzhi* 欽定八旗通志 (*Imperially-Revised General History of the Eight Banners*), in vol. 667 of *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 (*Complete Library of the Four Treasuries*) (history) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1987), *juan* 190, 42.

Chapter Two also discusses Wang Yuanqi's imitation of old masters, especially his study of the Yuan artist Huang Gongwang, and his thoughts on composition and brushwork in orthodox painting. His theoretical achievements are mainly reflected in the theory of *longmai* 龍脈 or "dragon vein," an abstract, conceptualized model for the construction of Orthodox landscapes.

Chapter Three concerns itself with new elements that characterized Wang Yuanqi's landscapes during his mature stage. As a traditional scholar and poet, Yuanqi's painting was nourished by his abundant knowledge of literature. In the practice of art-making, artists commonly integrated the arts of poetry, calligraphy, and painting, a combination known as *sanjue* 三絕, or the "three perfections." By the eleventh century, the limitations of realistic representation in landscape painting had been articulated by Northern Song (960-1127) landscape painters. In their view, the beauty of nature was often emotionally linked to recollections of past times and places. This approach may be summarized as follows: "By brushing in a poem on his painting and thus using both word and image, the artist created a verbal discourse and a broader context in which to express himself."¹⁴ Using key words and images to trigger intense feeling is considered a defining feature of the tradition of literati art. As Jonathan Chaves has pointed out in "Meaning beyond the Painting': The Chinese Painter as Poet," the integration of poetry

¹⁴ Wen C. Fong and Alfreda Murck, "The Three Perfections: Poetry, Calligraphy, and Painting," introduction to Alfreda Murck and Wen C. Fong, eds., *Words and Images: Chinese Poetry, Calligraphy, and Painting* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1991), xv.

and painting was initiated by the Tang (618-907) poet Du Fu 杜甫 (712-770).¹⁵ Sympathetic with Du Fu's feelings on the national disaster of his time, the An-Shi Rebellion (755-763), early Qing artists enthusiastically pursued in painting the topic of *Du Fu shiyitu* 杜甫詩意圖, or "illustrative painting of Du Fu's poem." In this chapter, I analyze Wang Yuanqi's *Illustrative Painting of a Du Fu Poem* (1702; collection of Wan-go Weng) as well as a series of other of his works associated with ancient poetry, exploring his successful management of word and image in painting.

With regard to new techniques, Chapter Three also introduces a new painting style invented by Yuanqi – the Wang-style light color landscape. That is, besides the wash-and-ink landscape favored by traditional literati artists, Wang Yuanqi also expressed considerable interest in color landscape. Inspired by the light brown landscape painting initiated by Huang Gongwang, he made painstaking efforts in the use of color, achieving great success. In this section, I analyze a series of Wang Yuanqi's light brown landscape paintings. Associating his works with theories of painting techniques recorded in his writings, I also delve into his attempts at new techniques of brushwork and in the use of ink and color.

Chapter Four also deals with issues associated with the mature stage of Wang Yuanqi's art. By the early eighteenth century, Wang Yuanqi was widely recognized by

¹⁵ Jonathan Chaves, "Meaning beyond the Painting: The Chinese Painter as Poet," in *Words and Images*, 435.

his contemporaries as the pivotal figure in orthodox painting, often being compared with the originator of literati painting – Wang Wei 王維 (701-761). The recognition of his contemporaries greatly encouraged him in his pursuit of art. After he became the Kangxi emperor's artistic advisor, his personal authority and the status of orthodox painting were sanctioned by the emperor, further improving the standing of the Orthodox School of painting. Chapter Four also outlines Yuanqi's efforts to canonize the Orthodox School of painting. Here, my discussion focuses on the ambitious cultural politics of the Manchu emperor, especially the compilation of a series of massive painting and writing projects. Wang Yuanqi participated in two major imperially-sponsored projects – *Peiwenzhai shuhua pu* 佩文齋書畫譜 (*Encyclopedia of Calligraphy and Painting of Peiwen Studio*) and *Wanshou shengdian* 萬壽盛典 (*Magnificent Record of the Emperor's Birthday*). Taking the utmost advantage of these opportunities, Wang Yuanqi advanced orthodox painting to an unprecedented status to ensure the canonization of the Orthodox School of painting.

CHAPTER ONE

JIANGNAN: CRADLE OF ORTHODOX PAINTING

On the occasion of the Double Nines Festival of the forty-sixth year of Kangxi (1707), the famous Yangzhou painter, Yu Zhiding 禹之鼎 (1647-1716) brushed a portrait of a respected friend (fig. 1-1). The figure in this painting looks to be fifty-to-sixty years old. His broad, benign face is covered with long, full whiskers. His hair style shows that he is not a member of a religious order, yet, he wears a robe, sits cross-legged on a rush mat, and stares into the distance, all traditional topoi for portraying a monk. The portrait is of, for, and dedicated to Wang Yuanqi. Above the portrait, the Zhejiang calligrapher Zha Sheng 查昇 (1650-1707) inscribed a Buddhist hymn commending Wang's enlightened mind and his eager pursuit of Buddhist teachings.

Yu Zhiding made an earlier portrait of Wang Yuanqi, a handscroll entitled "Wang Yuanqi Cultivating Chrysanthemums" (fig. 1-2). In this painting, Wang is seated on a couch in a relaxed pose, tasting a cup of wine and enjoying the potted chrysanthemums before him. At the left end of the scroll, two boy attendants heat wine and whisper to one another, while another servant brings a jar of wine to the master. This portrait immediately brings to mind the Eastern Jin (316-420) poet, Tao Qian 陶潛 (365-427), an enthusiast of wine and chrysanthemums, who, after serving for a short period as an

official, retreated to live a hermit's life in the country.”¹ As Nie Chongzheng 聶崇正 has pointed out, “Yu Zhiding conveys Wang's status and taste as both scholar and painter by arranging books and potted chrysanthemums around him, symbols of learning and elegance. By including a wine pot along with the chrysanthemums, Yu makes a visual allusion to the fourth-century poet-recluse Tao Yuanming [Tao Qian].”²

Whether lay Buddhist or cynical hermit, in Yu Zhiding's paintings, Wang Yuanqi is depicted as a figure beyond the noisy world. Both portraits are far from portraying Wang's everyday life, but that is because they were intended to convey to Wang's contemporaries an image that presents him as a profound and other-worldly man in pursuit of spiritual realms.

Wang Yuanqi, *zi* Maojing 茂京, was born in Taicang, Jiangsu 江蘇 Province. Adjacent to Suzhou, Taicang is located in the heart of the Jiangnan 江南 region, China's cultural center in the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing dynasties. Here, Jiangnan particularly refers to the region in the lower Yangtze delta from Lake Tai east to the coast. The vicinity of Lake Tai is famous not only for scenery and economic prosperity but also for intellectual achievement and artistic sophistication. As Fu Shen 傅申 has described it:

The geographic area centered around Lake Tai, at the juncture of the modern

¹ See Herbert A. Giles, *A Chinese Biographical Dictionary* (London: Bernard Quaritch, and Shanghai and Yokohama: Kelly and Walsh, 1898), 717-718.

² Nie Chongzheng, “The Qing Dynasty,” in *Three Thousand Years of Chinese Painting*, ed. Yang Xin et al., 271.

provincial boundaries of Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and Anhui, was a key region from which the mainstream of important painters, calligraphers, and poets of China's Great Tradition arose. On the map it is shaped like a human eye.... The 'eye area' designation reflects the traditional association of famous people with specific places and illustrates the interaction of human energies and potentials with the social, cultural, and material foundations of the culture.³

More germane to the present study, Jiangnan was also the center for the collectors of painting and calligraphy during the Ming and Qing periods who helped to establish the centuries-long dominance over intellectual life of "men from the south."⁴

Wang Yuanqi grew up in a distinguished scholarly family. His grandfather, Wang Shimin, was not only a famous painter but also one of the leading literati of the Jiangnan area. In Taicang, the Wang Family owned substantial property. For generations, this family enjoyed high reputation and great prestige in society; some of the family obtained high positions at court. Over the years, the Wangs maintained good relationships with numerous celebrities, including the great painter and connoisseur, Dong Qichang, the influential writer and art collector, Chen Jiru 陳繼儒 (1558-1639), the "Foremost Poet of the Early Qing," Wu Weiye, the famous thinker and educator, Lu Shiyi 陸世儀 (1611-1672), and so forth. Wang Yuanqi's achievement cannot be separated from the intellectual climate of his hometown and the influence of its accomplished elite.

³ Marilyn Wong Fu and Shen Fu, *Studies in Connoisseurship: Chinese Paintings from the Arthur M. Sackler Collection in New York and Princeton* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1973), 6. Romanizations have been changed from Wade-Giles to pinyin.

⁴ Benjamin A. Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology: Intellectual and Social Aspects of Change in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge [Massachusetts] and London: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1990), 8.

The Wang Family of Taicang

Wang Shimin and Wang Yuanqi's family was originally from Taiyuan, Shanxi Province. Probably in the early Ming, an ancestor, Wang Qiuyi 王求一, moved south and settled in Taicang.⁵ Taicang, literally “great granary,” was part of the State of Chu during the Spring and Autumn period (770-476 B.C.E.). It is said that at that time Prince Chunshen 春申 of Chu built a barn to store surplus grain here from which Taicang took its name.⁶ More certainly, Taicang has been known for its flourishing agricultural development and commercial prosperity since ancient times. In the *Jiaqing chongxiu da Qing yitongzhi* 嘉慶重修大清一統志 (*The Jiaqing Revised National Chorography of the Great Qing Dynasty*), the author notes:

[The people of Taicang] were honest and obedient. They advocated education and the Confucian ethic. The scholars never performed physical labor; the common people devoted themselves to farming and business. They had a high regard for moral integrity and, closely attached to their hometown, avoided distant travel.⁷

⁵ See Wang Heng 王衡 and Wang Shimin, ed., “Wang Wensu gong nianpu” 王文肅公年譜 [“Chronicle of the Revered Mr. Wang Wensu (Wang Xijue)”], in vol. 7 of *Mingdai Mingren nianpu* 明代名人年譜 (*Chronicles of Celebrities of the Ming Dynasty*), ed. Wang Guan (Beijing: Beijing tushu chubanshe, 2006), *juan* 1.

⁶ Wang Chang 王昶 et al., ed., *Zhili Taicang zhou zhi* 直隸太倉州志 (*The Annals of Taicang Prefecture*) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1995-1999), *juan* 3, 48a.

⁷ Muzhang'e 穆彰阿 et al., ed. *Jiaqing chongxiu da Qing yitong zhi* 嘉慶重修大清一統志 (*The Jiaqing Revised National Chorography of the Great Qing Dynasty*), in vols. 613-624 of *Xuxiu siku quanshu* 續修四庫全書 (*Continuation of the Complete Library of the Four Treasuries*) (history) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1995), *juan* 103, 2b.

敦本畏刑，崇文尚恥。士不負荷，民服農賈。俗尚氣節，好清議，安土不遠遊。

After settling in Taicang, several generations of the Wangs made their living by farming. By the mid-Ming, members of this family had attained high levels of education and frequently participated in the civil service examinations.⁸ As Shen Deqian 沈德潛 comments in the *Qing shi liezhuan* 清史列傳 (*Biographies in the Standard History of the Qing Dynasty*), “The talents in this family are numerous, as many as in the Wang and Xie families [of the Six Dynasties (222-589)].”⁹

Wang Xijue 王錫爵 (1534-1610), the fifth-generation great ancestor of Wang Yuanqi, was the most successful family member to take the civil service examinations. Xijue, born in 1534, ranked first in the Metropolitan Examination¹⁰ in 1562, and second in the subsequent Palace Examination of that year. He was then appointed to a series of positions, including Junior Compiler in the Hanlin Academy, Director of Studies in the National University, Chancellor of the National University, Right Companion in the Right Secretariat of the Heir Apparent, Academician Expositor-in-Waiting, Right

⁸ See Wang Jianying 王劍英, “Wang Shimin he ta de jiazu” 王時敏和他的家族 (“Wang Shimin and His Family”), in *Wang Shimin yu Loudong huapai* 王時敏與婁東畫派 (*Wang Shimin and the Loudong School of Painting*) (Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin meishu chubanshe, 1994), 4-5.

⁹ *Qing shi liezhuan* 清史列傳 (*Biographies in the Standard History of the Qing Dynasty*) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), *juan* 70, 45.

¹⁰ The Metropolitan Examination is part of the sequence of civil service recruitment examinations. Given at the capital, it qualifies those who pass it to receive the degree of Metropolitan Graduate. Normally, candidates for this exam have already passed the Provincial Examination and won the *juven* degree (Provincial Graduate). See Charles O. Hucker, ed., *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), 263.

Attendant Gentleman in the Ministry of Rites, and so forth. Serving in court for over thirty years, he was praised for his moral rectitude.

In the sixth year of Wanli (1578), the father of Prime Minister Zhang Juzheng 張居正 (1525-1582) died. According to a Confucian practice since ancient times, Zhang Juzheng should have resigned his position and stayed at home for a mourning period of three years. But Zhang disregarded this norm and refused to relinquish his power. His violation of convention was considered seriously “unfilial” behavior and enraged Confucians. Such righteous officials as Wu Zhongxing 吳中行 and Zhang Yongxian 趙用賢 remonstrated with the emperor, but he refused their protest. More unreasonably, all protesters were punished by flogging at the palace gate. Some were beaten to death. Filled with indignation at Zhang’s peremptory manner, Wang Xijue led his colleagues to intercede with the emperor for the condemned officials. Wang’s petition incurred Zhang’s wrath, and, forced from court, Wang remained idle for several years.

In the winter of 1582, soon after Zhang Juzheng’s death, a great number of his enemies rose to repudiate his policies and branded him an unpardonable dictator of the country. Wang Xijue opposed the complete negation of the late Prime Minister’s achievements and attempted to persuade authorities to give Zhang’s record a fair and objective evaluation.¹¹ His attitude earned him support and respect among his

¹¹ Wang Xijue, *Wang Wensu gong wenji* 王文肅公文集 (*Anthology of the Revered Mr. Wang Wensu*), in vols. 7-8 of *Siku jinhui congkan* 四庫禁毀叢刊 (*Siku Banned Books*) (collection) (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1997), *juan* 55.

colleagues. In 1584, Wang Xijue was appointed Minister of the Ministry of Rites and the Grand Academician of the Hall of Literary Profundity; subsequently, he was promoted to Prime Minister. Retiring in 1593, he returned home to Taicang. After his death in 1610, the Wanli 萬曆 emperor (r. 1572-1620) conferred on him the posthumous title “Wensu” 文肅 (Virtuous and Solemn) and ordered a shrine to him be built in his hometown.¹²

Wang Xijue’s only son was Wang Heng 王衡 (1561-1609), known in the Jiangnan area for his literary talent.¹³ The famous literatus and collector, Chen Jiru, once commented on Wang Heng’s literary works: “[His] poetry is vigorous and bright, following Han [Yu] 韓愈 (768-824) and Du [Fu] (712-770); his prose is deep and penetrating, similar in style to that of Xun Qing 荀卿 (313-238 B.C.E.) and Liu Zhonglei [Liu Xiang 劉向 (ca. 77-6 B.C.E.)].”¹⁴ Wang Heng took the civil service examination in 1601 and, like his father, ranked second. However, he forwent an official career because of poor health. He died before his father, leaving one son, Wang Shimin.

Wang Shimin inherited the title of Assistant to the Chief Minister of the Seal Office in the early years of the Chongzhen 崇禎 era (1627-1644).¹⁵ After the fall of the Ming

¹² See Zhang Tingyu 張廷玉 et al., ed., *Ming shi* 明史 (*Standard History of the Ming Dynasty*) (Taipei: Chengwen chubanshe, 1971), *juan* 218, 4-8.

¹³ *Ibid.*, *juan* 218, 8-9.

¹⁴ On Chen and Wang’s friendship, see *Wang Shimin yu Loudong huapai*, 7.

¹⁵ Wang Chang, *Zhili Taicang zhou zhi*, *juan* 27, 446a.

dynasty, he withdrew from society and enjoyed life as a recluse at home,¹⁶ where he studied the Confucian classics and explored the techniques of landscape painting.¹⁷ The Wang family owned an extraordinary painting collection that included many masterpieces by Song and Yuan artists. An enthusiastic collector of landscape painting, Wang Xijue had sponsored many excellent painters, including the most important artist and connoisseur of the late Ming, Dong Qichang. To requite Wang Xijue's kindness, Dong Qichang spent considerable time tutoring his grandson, Wang Shimin. Under Dong Qichang's instruction, Wang Shimin began to imitate Song and Yuan landscape paintings from his early years, with special attention to the style of Huang Gongwang. His paintings feature careful, orderly compositions and loose yet elegant brushwork. Shimin was the founding father of the Loudong School, which came to be labeled the "Orthodox School" and which dominated Qing landscape painting for nearly three centuries.

Wang Shimin had nine sons. All took the civil service examinations and obtained *jinshi* degrees. His eighth son, Wang Shan 王掞 (1644-1728), like his great grandfather, Wang Xijue, reached the highest position open to Chinese officials, Grand Secretary of the Hall of Literary Profundity, and became mentor of the crown prince.

¹⁶ Huang Zhijun 黄之雱 et al., ed., *Jiangnan tongzhi* 江南通志 (*General Annals of the Jiangnan Region*) (Taipei: Huawen shuju, 1967), *juan* 166, 47.

¹⁷ Zhang Geng, *Guochao huazheng lu*, *juan* 1, 1b.

Shimin's second son and Wang Yuanqi's father, Wang Kui 王揆 (1627-1690), passed the civil service examination in 1655 but declined the official title of *tuiguan* 推官, or Judge of Local Authorities. In 1678, when the Kangxi emperor held the *Boxuehongci* Special Examination, the Governor of Jiangsu Province strongly recommended Wang Kui, but he politely rejected the invitation.¹⁸ Wang Kui devoted himself to literature; his poetry and prose are collected in the *Zhichen ji* 芝塵集 (*Anthology of Zhichen*).¹⁹

The Jiangnan Area during the Ming-Qing Transition

Wang Xijue returned to Taicang in 1594, fifty years before the fall of the Ming Dynasty. During the intervening half century, the Wang family witnessed drastic political and cultural change in the country. In the latter half of the Wanli era (1573-1620), the Ming Empire suffered mismanagement caused by serious tensions between the emperor and his ministers. Party conflict and the monopolization of power by the eunuchs further aggravated the crisis and eventually led to the empire's demise. To a large extent, Wang Xijue's sudden retirement resulted from his disappointment at the apparently irreversible decline of his country.

¹⁸ Wen Zhaotong 溫肇桐, ed., *Qing chu liu da huajia* 清初六大畫家 (*Six Master Painters of the Early Qing*) (Hong Kong: Xianggang xingfu chubanshe, 1960), 30.

¹⁹ See *Wang Shimin yu Loudong huapai*, 17.

In contrast to the oppressive atmosphere at court in Beijing 北京, the Jiangnan area remained prosperous and culturally active.²⁰ Because of a rapid development of industry and commerce, the merchants of Jiangnan “accumulated enormous wealth and made huge profits.”²¹ On the one hand, Jiangnan’s solid economic base was a precondition for the flourishing of its art; on the other hand, political instability increased dissatisfaction with the authorities. Frequently, a mood of discontent was expressed through painting and calligraphic works. As Bai Qianshen comments in *Fu Shan’s World*, “Despite political unrest, the late Ming presents an astonishing picture of cultural fertility and artistic creativity, set in an increasingly urban context.”²²

Taicang was located in the richest part of Jiangnan, a nexus of important land and water routes and the cradle of the cultural elite of the late Ming and early Qing dynasties. Members of the Jiangnan elite led the country in almost every discipline. In the study of the Confucian classics and history, for example, Lu Shiyi was esteemed the “Foremost Confucian Scholar of the Jiangnan area.” He was proficient in the various schools of

²⁰ “Jiangnan” is a loosely-applied regional name. As Xu Lin has indicated, “Geographically, it consists of the wide area south of the Huai and lower Yangzi rivers. [In the Ming and Qing periods,] it included ten prefectures and one state, namely, Yangzhou, Yingtian, Suzhou, Songjiang, Changzhou, Zhenjiang, Jiangning, Hangzhou, Jiaxing, Huzhou, and Taicang.” See Xu Lin 徐林, *Ming dai zhong wan qi Jiangnan shiren shehui jiaowang yanjiu* 明代中晚期江南士人社會交往研究 (*Study of Communications among Jiangnan Scholar-Officials in the Mid-and-Late-Ming Dynasty*) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2006), 5.

²¹ Zhang Han 張瀚, *Songchuang mengyu* 松窗夢語 (*Sleep Talking at Pine Windows*) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997), *juan* 4, 65.

²² Qianshen Bai, *Fu Shan’s World: The Transformation of Chinese Calligraphy in the Seventeenth Century* [Cambridge (Massachusetts) and London: Harvard University Press, 2003], 7.

exegetic studies and was especially learned in *lixue* 理學, or the School of Principle established by Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033-1107) and Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200) of the Song dynasty (960-1279). Lu Shiyi emphasized the practical applications of Confucian doctrines. He encouraged people to broaden the scope of their knowledge to include astronomy, geography, and strategy rather than limit their learning to the Confucian classics. “He opposed the empty talk of mind and ethics. His theory is the most pragmatic among all modern Confucian schools.”²³ Lu Shiyi was a key member of the *Fushe* 復社 (Restoration Society) and author of the *Fushe jilue* 復社紀略 (*Brief Record of the Restoration Society*). After the fall of the Ming, he retreated to the Futing 桴亭 Academy, where he taught and wrote. One of the “Four Righteous Men of Loudong [Taicang],” he left a considerable body of literary and historical work, over a million words.

In the world of poetry, Wu Weiye stood out, coming to be known as the “Foremost Poet of the Qing Dynasty.” Wu Weiye, *hao* Meicun 梅村, once served in the post of Instructional Official of the Eastern Palace in the Chongzhen era. Although he did not plan to continue his official career in the new Manchu dynasty, the Shunzhi 順治 emperor (r.1643-1661) insisted on inviting him to the capital. He reluctantly accepted the title of Expositor-in-Waiting of the Palace Library and Chancellor of the National

²³ Zhao Erxun 趙爾巽, ed., *Qing shi gao* 清史稿 (*Manuscript of the History of the Qing Dynasty*) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1977), *juan* 480.

University in 1653, but soon resigned. This short experience of serving the Manchu court brought him great inner struggle – in his late years, he was deeply distressed by self-accusations of “disloyalty.”²⁴ In the last fifteen years of his life, Wu Weiye devoted himself to creative work in poetry, drama, and the novel, publishing such works as *Meicun ji* 梅村集 (*Anthology of Meicun*), *Meicun jiacang gao* 梅村家藏稿 (*Manuscripts Preserved at Meicun’s House*), and *Chunqiu dili zhi* 春秋地理志 (*A Geographic Record of the Spring and Autumn Period*). He also had an interest in painting and made friends with many famous artists. He once composed an “Ode on the Nine Friends of Painting,” commending nine influential artists of the Jiangnan area.²⁵ Dying in 1671, he was buried in a monk’s frock. A stele inscribed “The Poet Wu Weiye” was erected before his tomb.²⁶

Taicang, in particular, was famous for its long tradition of art. As early as the mid-Ming, the distinguished professional painter Qiu Ying 仇英 (ca.1498-1552) was esteemed as one of the “Four Master Painters of the Ming.” “Due to his ineptitude in

²⁴ As he was dying, Wu Weiye composed four poems to express remorse for his disloyalty. In one, he sighs with regret: “For over twenty years, I have pocketed insults to stay alive. Now, how can I rid myself of sin?” See Wu Weiye, *Meicun jiacang gao* (*Manuscripts Preserved in Meicun’s Family*), in vol. 80 of *Sibu congkan* 四部叢刊 (*Collected Books Organized into Four Categories*) (collection) (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1979), *juan* 20, 102b.

²⁵ The “Nine Friends of Painting” are Dong Qichang (1555-1636), Wang Shimin, Wang Jian (1598-1677), Li Liufang 李流芳 (1575-1629), Yang Wencong 楊文驄 (1597-1645), Zhang Xuezheng 張學曾, Cheng Jiasui 程嘉燧 (1565-1643), Bian Wenyu 卞文瑜 (1576-1655), and Shao Mi 邵彌 (ca. 1592-1642).

²⁶ Zhao Erxun, ed., *Qing shi gao*, *juan* 484.

writing, Qiu Shifu's 實父 [Qiu Ying] status was slightly lower than the other three revered men [Shen Zhou 沈周 (1427-1509), Wen Zhengming 文徵明 (1470-1559), and Tang Yin 唐寅 (1470-1523)]. However, he was blessed with extraordinary talent for painting and was versed in its 'Six Principles.'"²⁷ His paintings were meticulous and elegant, full of delicate and graceful detail. As Osvald Sirén has pointed out in the fourth volume of his *Chinese Painting*, "He perfected this art [of painting] and brought it to a degree of refinement that no other painter of the Ming period had attained."²⁸ And prior to the rise of the Four Wangs, many famous artists like Bian Wenyu 卞文瑜 (ca. 1576-1655), Shao Mi 邵彌 (ca. 1592-1642), and Li Liufang 李流芳 (1575-1629) had been active in the Taicang-Suzhou area.

The dynastic change from Ming to Qing, from native dynasty to foreign, had a great impact upon the intellectual world of Jiangnan. Reflecting on the fall of the Ming, many literati questioned the validity of the Neo-Confucian philosophy that had dominated thought in the Ming. Extending a Confucian school of thought founded by Song (960-1279) philosophers, Ming Neo-Confucians had "stressed the theoretical and moral issues that the Classics presented"²⁹ and favored the pure discussion of mind and

²⁷ Fang Xun 方薰, *Shanjing ju hualun* 山靜居畫論 (*Comments on Painting in the Shanjing Studio*), in vol. 1068 of *Xuxiu siku quanshu* (masters), *juan* 2, 837.

²⁸ Osvald Sirén, *Chinese Painting: Leading Masters and Principles* (New York: Ronald Press, 1956-1958), vol. 4, 215.

²⁹ Benjamin A. Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology*, 41.

human nature over devising practical solutions to everyday problems. By the early Qing, however, many Confucian scholars, represented by Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲 (1610-1695), Gu Yanwu 顧炎武 (1613-1682), and Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 (1619-1692), thought that such theoretical analysis detached from practical thought had been responsible for the fall of the empire. They believed that Confucian ideals could be approached only through more empirical studies known as *shixue* 實學 (practical learning) or *puxue* 樸學 (plain learning). As Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873-1929) points out in his *Zhongguo jin sanbai nian xueshu shi* 中國近三百年學術史 (*The History of Chinese Scholarship over the Last Three Centuries*), “This revolutionary movement had a violent impact on the traditional ideology that had been dominant in China for two thousand years. While presented as ‘returning to the ancient,’ its spirit was truly modern.”³⁰

In consonance with this movement, a number of innovative thinkers and theories emerged. For example, Sun Qifeng 孫奇逢 (1584-1675), a representative of the Northern School, emphasized “personal experience,” while Li Yong 李顥 (1627-1705), founder of the Guan School, stood for appropriate practice stemming from deep soul-searching. Yan Yuan 顏元 (1635-1704) and Li Gong 李塉 (1659-1733) advocated pragmatism. Under the influence of the practical learning movement, a new

³⁰ Liang Qichao, “Shijian shiyong zhongyu” 實踐實用主義 (“Practice and Pragmatism”), in *Zhongguo jin sanbai nian xueshu shi* (*The History of Chinese Scholarship during the Last Three Centuries*), in vol. 8 of *Liang Qichao quanji* 梁啟超全集 (*Corpus of Liang Qichao*) (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1999), 4482.

approach to scholarship, *kaojuxue* 考據學 (evidential research),³¹ represented by the work of Yan Ruoqu 閻若璩 (1636-1704) and Mao Qiling 毛奇齡 (1623-1713), flourished at this time. Its guiding credo was consistent – to substitute objective investigation for abstruse thinking, and to replace pure talk with concrete practice.³² This approach was thoroughly expounded in the writings and lectures of its scholars and more broadly disseminated through gatherings and salons held in Jiangnan literati circles.

Elegant Gatherings and Literati Societies

As stated in the *Wu xian zhi* 吳縣志 (Annals of Wu County [Suzhou]):

The people of Wu County are fond of amusement.... As for places of entertainment, Wu possesses more gardens than any other county. In terms of facilities, Wu people make gaily-painted pleasure-boats, have the best musical bands, and make delicacies and bold wines. In addition, their beautiful female entertainers are good at both singing and dancing. The wealthy hold frequent gatherings and feasts. Often, people enjoy themselves so much they forget to go home.³³

吳人好遊……遊地則山水園亭多於他郡；遊具則旨酒佳餚，畫船簫鼓，咄

³¹ As Elman argues, early Qing scholars “stressed exacting research, rigorous analysis, and the collection of impartial evidence drawn from ancient artifacts and historical documents and texts.” See Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology*, 6.

³² For further discussion on the rise of the “practical learning” in the early Qing period, see Wang Junyi 王俊義 and Huang Aiping 黃愛平, preface to *Qing dai xueshu yu wenhua* 清代學術與文化 (*Scholarship and Culture of the Qing Dynasty*) (Shenyang: Liaoning jiaoyu chubanshe, 1993), 27-33.

³³ Niu Ruolin 牛若麟 et al., ed., *Chongzhen Wuxian zhi* 崇禎吳縣誌 (*The Annals of Wu County during the Chongzhen Era*), in vols. 15-19 of *Tianyige cang Ming dai fangzhi xuankan xubian* 天一閣藏明代方志選刊續編 (*Continuation of Selected Ming Dynasty Gazetteers Preserved in Tianyi Pavilion*) (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1990), *juan* 24.

嗟而辦；遊伴則選伎聲歌，盡態極妍。富者朱門，相引而入，花晨月夕，競為盛會，見者移情。

Wang Shimin was regarded as a hospitable host of elegant gatherings among the literati. An efficient manager of his estate, Wang owned several gardens at Taicang, including South Garden, East Garden, West Field, and the like. According to the *Zhenyang xianzhi* 鎮洋縣志 (*Annals of Zhenyang County*), “South Garden was located in the south end of Taicang City, north of the Chaoyin Nunnery, where Wang Xijue used to plant plum trees. Wang Shimin inherited the garden from his grandfather and enlarged it, building Xiuxue Hall, Tanying Pavilion, and Xiangtao Pavilion, among many others.”³⁴

East Garden, also called “Lejiao Garden,” was another popular location in Taicang for elegant gatherings. Many of Wang Shimin’s friends, such as Wu Weiye and Chen Hu 陳瑚, (1613-1675) often visited him there. Some literati, like the Zhejiang poet Tang Shisheng 唐時升 (1551-1636) and the Shandong poet Song Wan 宋琬 (1614-1673), sometimes traveled long distances to attend these meetings.³⁵ West Field, sometimes termed “Guicun” 歸村 (“Returning Village”) in Wang Shimin’s writings,

³⁴ Quoted in Wen Zhaotong, ed., *Qing chu liu da huajia*, 14.

³⁵ See Tang Shisheng, “Taiyuan gong Dongyuan er shou” 太原公東園二首 (“Two Poems on Mr. Taiyuan’s East Garden”) and “Zai guo Dongyuan” 再過東園 (“Visiting East Garden Again”), in *San yi ji* 三易集 (*Collection of the Three Changes*), in vol. 178 of *Siku jinhui shu congkan* (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1997), *juan* 3, 44b-45a.

was built in 1646.³⁶ Zheng Wei quoted Wang Yuanqi's record in the *Fengchang gong nianpu* 奉常公年譜 (*Chronicle of the Revered Chief Minister of the Court of Imperial Sacrifices [Wang Shimin]*):

After the dynastic change, my grandfather did not like to live in town. He had several villas specially made [in the suburbs]. In the fall [of 1646], West Field was built on the bank of the River Gui. Worth over four thousand ingots of silver, the complex consists of Nongqing Hall, Yujia Hall, and Fandu Place. Wu Weiye wrote his 'Note on the Improvements at Gui' to felicitate [my grandfather] on the accomplishment of the construction.³⁷

滄桑之後，祖父不欲專居城市，即於此地創一別業。秋，築西田於歸涇，構農慶堂、語稼軒、飯犢軒、逢渠處、巢安室，累費至四、五千金。吳偉業作《歸村躬耕記》記之。

Over the next thirty years, Wang Shimin spent much of his time at West Field, meeting with friends and visitors and painting numerous landscapes.³⁸

The literati society, more formal and more organized than the elegant gathering, emerged in Jiangnan in the late Ming period and quickly became popular around the country. As Du Dengchun 杜登春 explains, "In the late years of the Wanli era, scholars often gathered to study the Confucian classics in preparation for the civil service

³⁶ Wang Bian 王抃, *Wang Chaosong nianpu* 王巢松年譜 (*Chronicle of Wang Chaosong*), in vol. 37 of *Congshu jicheng xubian* 叢書集成續編 (*Continuation of the Integration of Books in Series*) (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1994), 18.

³⁷ See Zheng Wei, ed., "Wang Yuanqi nianbiao" 王原祁年表 ("Chronology of Wang Yuanqi"), *Duoyun* 朵雲 (1992), no. 4: 89.

³⁸ Wang Bian, "The third year of the Shunzhi era," in *Wang Chaosong nianpu*, 18.

examinations. They usually named such study groups the ‘So-and-So Society.’”³⁹ These societies were usually established by like-minded people from the same town, after which some “developed into associations of people of the same state, and eventually into nation-wide organizations.”⁴⁰

By the end of the Ming dynasty, participation in such societies had become a vogue in literati circles. Other than as study groups of Confucian scholars, the names and purposes of these societies became increasingly varied. Members of several classes, “even women and inferior scholars, all tended to cling to their particular society.”⁴¹ The most common type was the poetry society. At the Ming-Qing transition, scholars were extremely keen on literature. Poetry competitions were organized every year. Famous poets were invited to be arbitrators, and participants came from all directions. The winner was awarded a substantial prize. Among numerous poetry societies, “The Eight Societies of West Lake”⁴² earned the highest reputation in the Jiangnan area. Other types of societies emerged in an endless stream. For instance, Wang Wenyao convened

³⁹ Gu Yanwu, *Ri zhi lu*, in vol. 14 of *Guoxue jiben congshu sibaizhong* 國學基本叢書四百種 (*Four Hundred Series for Fundamental Sinological Studies*), ed. Wang Wuyun et al. (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1968), *juan* 22, 106.

⁴⁰ Du Dengchun, *Sheshi shimo* 社事始末 (*Complete History of [Literati] Societies*) (Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1965-1970), *juan* 60.

⁴¹ Xie Guozhen 謝國楨, *Ming Qing zhi ji dangshe yundong kao* 明清之際黨社運動考 (*An Examination of [Literati] Societies of the Ming-Qing Transition*) (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 2004), 7.

⁴² “The Eight [Poetry] Societies of West Lake” refers to eight famous poetry societies whose names were based on eight scenic spots on the banks of West Lake. These societies were usually presided over by prestigious scholar-officials; members were carefully selected from among local scholars and writers. See Xu Lin, *Jiangnan shiren shehui jiaowang yanjiu*, 40-41.

the Painting Society;⁴³ Zhang Dai established the Zither Society.⁴⁴ There were also odd ones, such as the Cock-Fighting Society, the Joke Society, and others.⁴⁵

Societies were oriented not only toward academics, art, and entertainment. Importantly, they sometimes developed into political organizations of patriots. Taicang was a center for literary societies, among which the most influential and prestigious was the *Fushe*, or the Restoration Society. Although the original objective of the literary society was to make friends while practicing the eight-part essay that was part of the civil service examination, from the very beginning, it was closely related to political affairs.

The leader of the Restoration Society, Zhang Pu, was a child prodigy from Taicang. He was reported to be so diligent in learning that he transcribed everything he had read and then burned the transcription after memorizing it. Moreover, he usually repeated his copying and burning seven times and so named his library “Seven-Transcription Studio.” In an effort that preceded the founding the Restoration Society, he and Zhang Cai 張采 (1596-1648), another native of Taicang, formed (1620) the *Ying she* 應社 (Response Society) at Changshu, Jiangsu Province to exchange views on writing with other scholars

⁴³ Zhou Hui 周暉, *Er xu Jinling suoshi* 二續金陵瑣事 (*The Second Continuation of the Trivialities of Jinling*) (Nanjing: Nanjing chubanshe, 2007), *juan* 2, 1041.

⁴⁴ In “Si she” 絲社 (“The Zither Society”), Zhang Dai states: “In Yue, no more than a handful of people played the zither, and they had not played for years. Under those circumstances, how can their technique be good? [To change this situation,] I founded ‘The Zither Society’ and convened meetings at least three times a month.” See Zhang Dai 張岱, *Tao an mengyi* 陶庵夢憶 (*Memories of Dreams at the Tao Hut of Tao*) (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1982), *juan* 3.

⁴⁵ See Xu Lin, *Jiangnan shiren shehui jiaowang yanjiu*, 42.

in the vicinity.⁴⁶ In 1628, Zhang Pu attended the Imperial College in Beijing and soon became known in the elite circles of the capital for his aptitude for writing.⁴⁷ After returning to Taicang, he invited famous scholars of the Jiangnan area to form the Restoration Society. “Under Zhang Pu’s skilled guidance, it absorbed many small local units until it became a nation-wide social movement and a political force of great significance.”⁴⁸ Within only a few years, according to Lu Shiyi, “its membership increased as it grew in influence and prestige. It brought pressure to bear on both the court and local officials, took a hand in appointments and removals from office, and recommended favorite candidates for the examination system.”⁴⁹

Like many of his contemporaries, Wang Shimin had an ardent interest in politics and was active in society movements in his youth. During the rise of the Restoration Society, Wang Shimin was Chief Minister of the Seal Office in Beijing. In an article “Wang Shimin and the Restoration Society,” Yang Xiaoyan 楊小彥 analyzes the influence of the threat to Wang Shimin’s official career caused by the “Lu-Zhang Case,” a lawsuit that

⁴⁶ See Zhu Yizun 朱彝尊, note on “Yang Yi,” in *Jingzhi ju shihua* 靜志居詩話 (*Notes on Poetry at the Jingzhi Studio*) (Beijing: Renmen wenxue chubanshe, 1998), *juan* 21, 652.

⁴⁷ See Lu Shiyi, *Fu she jilue* 復社紀略 (*A Brief History of the Restoration Society*) (Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 1995), *juan* 1, 488-489.

⁴⁸ Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology*, 52.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 52.

brought on a political struggle between the Restoration Society and the court.⁵⁰ Lu Wensheng 陸文聲 and Zhang Cai had been good friends since childhood but did not remain so. Zhang Cai once brought suit against a local bully because of his domineering behavior. For some ulterior reason, Lu Wensheng divulged the details of the case to the defendant, causing Zhang to lose the case. Zhang was enraged by Lu's conduct. He did not accept Lu's apology and even ordered his own servants to beat Lu severely. To seek revenge, Lu Wensheng went to Beijing to indict Zhang for "colluding with superior officials and assuming control of public affairs."⁵¹ In Beijing, Lu accidentally met Wang Shimin. Although Wang most likely did not know Lu's purpose in bringing the suit, neither of them held the Restoration Society in favor. Through Wang Shimin's influence, the case was submitted to Wen Tiren 溫體仁 (1573-1639), the Prime Minister and a major enemy of the Society. According to the *Fushe jilue*, Wen Tiren had no interest in Zhang Cai but used the "Lu-Zhang Case" to attack Zhang Pu and the Restoration Society.⁵² As Wang Shimin had hoped, the Restoration Society was

⁵⁰ For a detailed description and discussion of the "Lu-Zhang Case," see Yang Xiaoyan and Huang Zhuan 黃專, "Wang Shimin yu Fu She" 王時敏與復社 ("Wang Shimin and the Restoration Society"), in *Qing chu si Wang huapai yanjiu lunwen ji* 清初四王畫派研究論文集 (*Essays on Studies of the "Four Wangs" of the Early Qing Dynasty*) (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 1993), 463-472.

⁵¹ Lu Shiyi, *Fu she jilue*, *juan* 4, 556-557. There seem to have been another reason for resentment between Lu and the Restoration Society. In the "Biography of Zhang Pu," the author notes that: "Lu Wensheng, native of Taicang, bought the title *jiansheng*. He applied for membership in the [Restoration] Society but was refused." His rejection by the Society deeply insulted Lu, so he framed a case of bringing chaos to the country against the Society in revenge. See "Biography of Zhang Pu," in *Ming shi*, ed. Zhang Tingyu, *juan* 288, 1899-1900.

⁵² Lu Shiyi, *Fu she jilue*, *juan* 4, 556-560.

foiled in this case owing to Wen Tiren's intervention. Soon after, however, Wen Tiren was removed as Prime Minister because of conflicts with the powerful eunuch Cao Huachun 曹化淳 (1589-1662). By sheer luck, Wang Shimin was traveling at that time on official business in the south and thus escaped being implicated when Wen Tiren was punished. After this event, Wang never returned to Beijing; eventually, he retired in disappointment.

The "Lu-Zhang Case" greatly affected Wang Shimin's official career, but the tension between him and the Restoration Society apparently did not hurt his relationships with some members of the Society. In 1641, Zhang Pu's sudden death brought the Restoration Society to an end. With the passage of time, the "Lu-Zhang Case" was buried in oblivion. Moreover, the upheaval caused by the demise of the Ming evoked a common scholarly nostalgia for the lost dynasty, and conflicts gradually eased among the Jiangnan literati. It was under these circumstances that Wang Shimin lived as a recluse in Taicang during the last thirty years of his life. But he kept in close contact with a number of famous literati, including such former members of the Restoration Society including Wu Weiye, Lu Shiyi, and Wang Ruiguo 王瑞國.

The Friendship between Wu Weiye and the Wang Family

Wu Weiye, although a key member of the Restoration Society, was also a confidant

of Wang Shimin. Since his early years, Wu had known Wang and apparently he deeply admired him for his landscape painting. In the “Ode for the Nine Friends of Painting,” Wu Weiye praises Wang Shimin: “On autumn days, Taichang [Wang Shimin] often made splendid landscape paintings and beautiful calligraphy in the spacious room at the Lejiao Garden, representing nature using the most delicate brushwork and freeing people from anxiety and the fetters of the earth.”⁵³ Wu Weiye was a frequent visitor to Shimin’s gardens. He left a number of poems composed for the elegant gatherings held at West Field and South Garden.

In the foreword to his “Song of the *Pipa* Players,” Wu Weiye recollects a meeting at Wang Shimin’s house with deep feeling. In 1646, as the plum trees blossomed, the famous *pipa* player Bai Zaimei and his son Bai Yuru were traveling through Taicang. Wang Shimin invited them to his house and accommodated them for months. To express their appreciation of Wang’s hospitality, they composed a song they then played at a gathering at Wang’s house. The song recounted the insecure life of the conquered after the fall of the Ming Empire. The previous Palace Attendant-in-Ordinary, Yao Zaizhou, was among the guests. After hearing the music, he sighed: “[This song recalls] the dramas performed in the Yuxi Palace of Emperor Mindi [the Chongzhen emperor of the Ming].... Since the extinction of the country, this kind of music is heard no more.”

⁵³ Wu Weiye, “Ode on the Nine Friends of Painting,” in *Meicun jiacang gao*, juan 11.

Everyone present shed tears while listening to the music. Wu Weiye was so moved by this sad song he wrote “Song of the *Pipa* Players” after returning home.⁵⁴

The friendship between the Wu and Wang families continued to younger generations. Wang Shimin’s sons Wang Ting 王挺, Wang Kui, Wang Bian 王抃, and Wang Shu 王攄 all studied with Wu Weiye. Wu was an expert on the Confucian classic, *Chunqiu* 春秋 (*The Spring and Autumn [Annals]*). His monographs on the Confucian classics include *Chuiqiu dilizhi* 春秋地理志 (*Record of the Geography of the Spring and Autumn Period*) and *Chunqiu shizuzhi* 春秋氏族志 (*Record of the Clans of the Spring and Autumn Period*). Under Wu Weiye’s instruction, all the Wang brothers became experts on the *Chunqiu* and the “Three Contemporaries.”⁵⁵ Wu Weiye not only carefully guided the Wang brothers in their studies, but also helped them build reputations in literati circles. He compiled the *Taicang shizi shixuan* 太倉十子詩選 (*Poetry by Ten Young Masters of Taicang*), which anthologized the poetry of local young talents.⁵⁶ Works by four of the Wang brothers including Wang Yuanqi’s father were included and accompanied by Wu Weiye’s appreciative comments.

⁵⁴ Wen Zhaotong, *Qing chu liu da huajia*, 33.

⁵⁵ See Li Zhongming 李忠明, “Wu Weiye yu Wang Shimin fuzi jiaoyou kao” 吳偉業與王時敏父子交遊考 (“Study of the Communications between Wu Weiye and Wang Shimin and his Sons”), *Nanjing shifan daxue wenxueyuan xuebao* 南京師範大學文學院學報 (*Academic Journal of the School of Arts of Nanjing Normal University*) 1 (2006.3): 132-136.

⁵⁶ The “Ten Young Masters of Taicang” are Zhou Zhao 周肇, Huang Yujian 黃與堅 (1620-1701), Wang Kui, Xu Xu 許旭, Wang Zhuan 王撰 (1623-1709), Wang Hao 王昊, Wang Yaosheng 王曜升, Wang Bian, Gu Mei 顧湄, and Wang Shu.

In the ninth month of 1669, Wang Yuanqi passed the provincial examination.⁵⁷ His father, Wang Kui, invited Wu Weiye to write a preface to Wang Yuanqi's first publication.⁵⁸ In his "Foreword to Wang Maojing's [Yuanqi] Manuscript," Wu emphasizes Wang Yuanqi's family background in the Confucian classics, highly praises his proficiency in the *Chunqiu*, and encourages him to strive toward greater progress in learning.⁵⁹ Wu Weiye died just as Wang Yuanqi began his official career. Probably, Wang Yuanqi did not have much opportunity to communicate with this master poet in person, but growing up in a distinguished scholarly family, he must have known many influential figures like Wu Weiye and received the benefit of their learning and knowledge. His advantaged background provided him with rich artistic and cultural resources for his future career as an artist.

Wang Yuanqi's Early Life

Wang Yuanqi was born in the eighth lunar month of the fifteenth year of the Chongzhen era (1642). Eldest son of Wang Kui and Lady Shen, he received a rigorous Confucian education from his early years. In one of his poems, Wang Bian, Yuanqi's

⁵⁷ Wang Bian, *Wang Chaosong nianpu*, 35.

⁵⁸ Wu Weiye, *Meicun jia cang gao*, juan 34, 152.

⁵⁹ In the "Preface to Wang Maojing's [Yuanqi] Manuscript," Wu Weiye states: "This year, two [students] won the [provincial] examination on the subject of *Chunqiu*, one of whom was my good friend's son, Wang Maojing [Yuanqi]." See Wu Weiye, *Meicun jia cang gao*, juan 34, 152.

fifth uncle, describes Yuanqi's early life in Taicang:

[Wang Yuanqi's] remarkable talent was clear from childhood.
 He [often] sat on his bed, reading in dim light.
 His intelligence matches that of Cao Zijian and Xun Ciming.⁶⁰
 His vigorous brushwork could vanquish a powerful army;
 His fascinating speeches often drew everyone to him.
 Wielding the brush, he made paintings after Dong [Dong Yuan] and Ju [Juran];
 Splashing ink, he painted in the styles of Jing [Hao] and Guan [Tong].
 Good at the "Three Perfections," he amazed the world with his brilliant feats.⁶¹

童年稱夙慧，早歲盛時名。抱膝依穿榻，攤書對短檠。曹家推子建，荀氏數慈明。筆陣千人掃，談言滿座傾。揮毫追董巨，潑墨奪關荊。問世傳三絕，驚人在一鳴。

As the first grandson of Wang Shimin, Wang Yuanqi grew up under the attentive care of his grandfather. Wang Yuanqi's acute observation and exceptional ability to imitate had been early noticed by Wang Shimin. When he was ten, Wang Yuanqi made a small landscape painting and posted it on the wall. Surprised by the quality of this work, Wang Shimin asked: "When did I do this?" When he was told the painting was from Wang Yuanqi's hand, Shimin was gratified and sighed: "This boy's achievement in

⁶⁰ Cao Zijian 曹子建 (192-232), also known as Cao Zhi 曹植, was one of the most influential poets of the late Eastern Han (25-220) and Three Kingdoms (220-280) periods. Son of the powerful warlord Cao Cao, Zhi was famous for his unparalleled talent in literature.

Xun Ciming 荀慈明, whose given name was Shuang, was the eleventh-generation descendant of the famous thinker Xunzi 荀子 (ca. 312-230 B.C.E.) of the Warring States period (475-221 B.C.E.). Like Cao Zhi, he was respected as a great writer and scholar of the Three Kingdoms period.

⁶¹ Wang Bian, "Ji he Maojing zhi zhao yuanzhong" 集賀茂京侄擢垣中 ("Congratulations on My Nephew Wang Maojing's Promotion"), in *Chaosong ji* 巢松集 (*Anthology of Chaosong*), in vol. 22 of *Siku weishou shu jikan* 四庫未收書輯刊 (*Siku Omitted Books*) (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1997), part 8, *juan* 4, 432.

painting will definitely surpass mine!”⁶² From then on, Wang Shimin put great effort into instructing Wang Yuanqi in painting, “explaining the essentials of the ‘Six Principles of Painting’ and the differences between the ancient and modern arts.”⁶³ Wang Shimin was so proud of Wang Yuanqi’s talent that he once said to his friend Wang Jian: “Among the Four Masters of the Late Yuan, Zhiu 子久 [Huang Gongwang] was clearly first. Only Dong Zongbo [Dong Qichang] has reached his spirit; I myself am able to get only the form of his work. Who but my grandson can really achieve both his spirit and form?”⁶⁴ To help Wang Yuanqi improve his painting skills, Wang Shimin often painted models for his grandson. Yuanqi once told a friend, “My grandfather selected masterpieces by Song and Yuan artists, organized them by subject, emulated their spirit, and made twenty small copies.... In the summer of the *dingsi* year (1677), he gave them to me. He really had great expectations of me!”⁶⁵

Wang Yuanqi was friendly with all Wang Shimin’s students and disciples, among whom he found one of his most important friends and rivals, Wang Hui. Wang Hui was

⁶² Zhang Geng, *Guochao hua zheng lu*, *juan* 1, 1a.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, *juan* 1, 1a.

The “Six Principles of Painting” refers to six important principles in Chinese painting originally proposed by Xie He 謝赫 (479-502) in his *Guhua pinlu* 古畫品錄 (*Record of the Classification of the Old Paintings*) – “reverberation of the life-breath,” “bone method,” “reflection of the objects,” “deference to types,” “layout of the design,” and “transmission and perpetuation.”

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, *juan* 2, 1a.

⁶⁵ Wang Yuanqi, *Wang Sinong tihua lu* 王司農題畫錄 (*Inscriptions and Colophons on Paintings by Wang Sinong [Yuanqi]*), in vol. 41 of *Jiaxu congbian* 甲戌叢編 (*Collection of a Series of Books Compiled in the Year Jiaxu*), ed. Zhao Yichen et al. (Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1972), *juan* 1, 7.

born in Changshu, a town adjacent to Taicang.⁶⁶ For several generations, Wang Hui's family had been involved in painting. In the spring of 1651, when Wang Jian visited a friend in Yushan, he accidentally met Wang Hui and was reported to have been overwhelmed by his precociousness in painting. In the same year, Wang Shimin's eldest son, Wang Ting, got to know Wang Hui at Mao Jin's 毛晋 (1599-1659) famous private library, Jigu ge 汲古閣, and was also deeply impressed by this young artist.⁶⁷ Wang Hui was soon invited to Taicang and moved into Wang Shimin's house for some years. Hui thus became a student of the two master painters of his time, Wang Shimin and Wang Jian.⁶⁸ Hui was ten years older than Yuanqi. At Zhuoxiu Hall, they often viewed Song and Yuan paintings with Shimin and imitated ancient works under his instruction. On a painting made for Hui's seventieth birthday, Yuanqi once recollected his hours of study alongside Hui:

Shigu 石谷 [Wang Hui] has a thorough knowledge of the "Six Principles of Painting" and has developed a new style of his own. He had reached high attainment when I was twenty. Fengchang 奉常 [Wang Shimin] invited him to stay in the Zhuoxiu Hall for several years. We studied together day and night, discussing everything we learned. After the *xinwei* year [1691], we often met one another at my mansion in Beijing. Every time when we met, we must talk for a

⁶⁶ The family background is detailed in Liu Yiping, ed., "Wang Hui nianpu" 王翬年譜 ("Chronicle of Wang Hui"), *Duoyun* (1993.2): 115-117.

⁶⁷ See Chin-sung Chang, "Mao Jin and the Jigu Ge Library," in "Mountains and Rivers, Pure and Splendid," 31-35.

⁶⁸ For details of Wang Hui's studies with Wang Shimin and Wang Jian, see Chang, 49-57.

whole day, exchanging views [on painting].⁶⁹

石谷先生……於“六法”中精研貫穿，獨辟蠶叢，余弱冠時已臻上乘矣。先奉常延至拙修堂數載。余時共晨夕，竊聞諸論。辛未後在京邸相往來。每晤必較論竟日。

In the following decades, the two choose different paths: Yuanqi became engaged in the career of the traditional scholar official, while Hui became a professional painter. Still, their common pursuit of art made them at once intimates and rivals. Like two peaks of literati painting, Yuanqi and Hui, respectively, led two major painting schools of their time, the “Loudong” and “Yushan,” and, in the centuries that followed, were esteemed as the last two great exemplars of orthodox painting.

⁶⁹ See Pang Yuanji 龐元濟, ed., *Xu zhai minghua lu* 虛齋名畫錄 (*Catalogue of Famous Paintings in the Xu Study*), in vol. 1090 of *Xuxiu siku quanshu*, juan 9, 39-40.

CHAPTER TWO

LOW-RANKING OFFICIAL, HIGHLY-RESPECTED ARTIST: WANG YUANQI'S LIFE FROM 1670 TO 1699

One year after Wang Yuanqi passed the provincial examination in the ninth year of Kangxi (1670), he and his uncle Wang Shan went to Beijing to sit for the metropolitan and palace examinations. The results were released shortly after: both had earned the *jinshi* degree with excellent scores.¹ When the good news was brought to Taicang, however, Wang Yuanqi's grandfather, Wang Shimin, was less excited than expected about the exam; he was more interested in perpetuating the Wang family dynasty of painting.² Immediately, he wrote a letter to Yuanqi: "You have fortunately become a *jinshi*. [This done,] you should concentrate on improving your skills in painting so as to assume my mantle."³ The summer after the exam, during which Wang Yuanqi returned to Taicang, Wang Shimin prepared a special gift for him – a thirty-leaf album of reduced copies of landscape paintings by Song-Yuan masters.⁴ Wang Shimin devoted much effort to this album, which recalls the model book that Dong Qichang had made for Shimin when he

¹ Wang Bian, *Wang Chaosong nianpu*, 36.

² *Ibid.*, 36.

³ Zhang Geng, *Guochao hua zheng lu*, juan 3, 1a.

⁴ Xu Bangda 徐邦達, *Lidai liuchuan shuhua zuopin nianbiao* 歷代流傳書畫作品年表 (*Chronology of Calligraphies and Paintings of All Past Dynasties*) (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, 1963), 375.

was young. The instruction and encouragement of his grandfather Shimin greatly influenced Yuanqi. Even in his early years, his life has been closely associated with painting. In his later years, even after he had become a high-ranking official at court, painting remained the principal interest of his life.

Despite his success in the civil service examination, Yuanqi apparently did not receive an important government position during the first decade after he became a *jinshi* scholar. It was not until the early 1680s when he became *neige zhongshu sheren* 內閣中書舍人 (Secretary Drafter of the Grand Secretariat) that he began his official career. In the next few years, he was appointed to a series of local positions until the summer of 1686, when he was summoned to the capital, Beijing. However, from 1686 to 1699, his career was not as successful as one might have anticipated. He assumed the office of *jishizhong* 給事中 (Supervising Secretary) in three different departments, yet he had few opportunities for promotion. The turning point of his career came in 1699. That fall, he became the Kangxi emperor's *wenxue shicong* 文學侍從, or Literary Retainer. Along with this considerable rise in status, his life and art underwent great change. For narrative convenience, in this thesis, Wang Yuanqi's life before 1699 is considered its early stage, and the years after he entered the court are regarded as his late stage or mature period.

The early stage of Wang Yuanqi's career was also a preparatory period for his art. During this time, he continued his studies of the ancient master painters of the Song and

Yuan dynasties, whose work, he was convinced, was the fountainhead and foundation of orthodox painting. At the same time, he actively engaged in other literati activities that were greatly facilitated by his talent in painting, which played an important role in his social life and in his communications with others. In this chapter, in the broad context of the Kangxi period, I examine the early years of Wang Yuanqi's life and art in some detail. Especially, I look for answers to these questions: Why did orthodox painting prevail at Kangxi's court? What were the artistic sources of Wang Yuanqi's orthodoxy? Who were Wang Yuanqi's audience and supporters?

The Kangxi Emperor's Cultural Policies

Wang Yuanqi, after passing the imperial examination in 1670, became an administrative intern in the Ministry of Personnel.⁵ According to a policy of the Hongwu 洪武 period (1368-1398) of the Ming dynasty, before receiving official titles, new recipients of the *jinshi* degree (except the top three) must undergo a training period during which they learned and honed their administrative skills in various departments of the government.⁶ Wang Yuanqi's period of training was intermittent, lasting for over ten years, roughly from 1670 to 1682. During this period, he seemed not to have needed to

⁵ Wang Chang, "Wang Yuanqi xiaozhuan" 王原祁小傳 ("A Brief Biography of Wang Yuanqi), in *Chunrong tang ji* 春融堂集 (*Anthology of Chunrong Hall*), in vol. 1438 of *Xuxiu siku quanshu* (collection) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1995), *juan* 65, 298.

⁶ Zhang Tingyu et al., "Xuanju (2)" 選舉 ("Civil Service Examinations"), in *Ming shi*, *juan* 70.

immerse himself in hard work and so had time to enjoy a relatively leisurely life. For the Qing Empire, however, this was a difficult time rife with the turbulence and warfare of ethnic conflicts. The revolts of the Three Feudatories (1673-1681) in the southwest and of the Taiwan local government greatly marred the unity of the country.⁷ Aware of these serious ethnic disputes, the Kangxi emperor did his utmost to earn the support of the scholar-official class, who staffed most of the high positions in government and ran its everyday operations.

From the early years of his reign, the Kangxi emperor, as the head of an alien dynasty controlled by the Manchus, endeavored to assuage the grief and indignation of the scholar-bureaucrat class over the loss of the previous native dynasty, the Ming. At the beginning of the Revolt of the Three Feudatories, the Prince of Pingxi Wu Sangui 吳三桂 (1612-1678) stirred up discontent and unrest under the patriotic camouflage of “holding up the cultural relics of the Great Ming, and restoring the heaven and earth of China.”⁸ His slogan garnered much sympathy and resonance from native Chinese scholars, especially the “leftovers” who had survived from the Ming dynasty. The Kangxi emperor was keenly aware of the danger of Wu’s intentions, remarking, “The

⁷ For discussion of the Three Feudatories, see Kai-fu Tsao, “The Rebellion of the Three Feudatories Against the Manchu Throne in China, 1673-1681: Its Setting and Significance” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1965).

⁸ Liu Jian 劉建, *Tingwen lu* 廷聞錄, *juan* 4, quotation from Yuan Ping, “Wu Sangui qibing fan Qing shimo shuping” 吳三桂起兵反清始末述評 (“Comments on the Complete Story of Wu Sangui’s Rebellion against the Qing”), *Yunnan xueshu tansuo* 雲南學術探索 (*Academic Exploration of Yunnan*) (1998), no. 5: 70.

emperor administers the country under some basic principles.... The good governance of the state rests on the people's morals and spirits. Only if the people are content, can the root of the country be healed.”⁹ To win the support of the Chinese people, especially the scholar-officials, the Kangxi emperor adopted a series of conciliatory policies.

The Kangxi emperor held his First Inspection Tour of the South in 1684.¹⁰ He made a point of stopping at Qufu 曲阜, Confucius' hometown, to hold a spectacular memorial ceremony dedicated to Confucius. During the ceremony, the emperor proclaimed: “This town is the native place of the Sage and morality. I myself came to offer sacrifice to the Prior Teacher so as to advocate culture and education and invigorate the Confucian spirit.”¹¹ After the ceremony, the emperor attended sermons by Confucius' descendants and inscribed the steles of “Wanshi shibiao” 萬世師表 (“Model Teacher for Myriads of Generations”) and “Zhisheng xianshi Kongzi miao beiwen” 至聖先師孔子廟碑文 (“Inscription on the Temple of the Holy Prior Teacher Confucius”). Before leaving town, the emperor awarded his ceremonial canopy to the Kong family and exempted the Qufu area from taxes for one year.

To recruit more Chinese scholars to serve in the Manchu court, the Kangxi emperor

⁹ “Shengzu Ren huangdi shengxun” 聖祖仁皇帝聖訓 (“Imperial Edicts of Emperor Shengzu the Benevolent”), in vol. 411 of *Siku quanshu* (history) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1987), *juan* 7, 8.

¹⁰ For information on the imperial inspection tour, see Maxwell K. Hearn, “The ‘K’ang-hsi Southern Inspection Tour’: A Narrative Program by Wang Hui” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1990), 10-54.

¹¹ Kong Yuqi 孔毓圻 et al., eds., *Xing Lu shengdian* 幸魯盛典 (*The Grand Ceremony on the Imperial Trip to Lu*), in vol. 652 of *Siku quanshu* (history), *juan* 4, 45.

held the *Boxuehongci* Special Examination in 1679.¹² This Examination differed from the standard imperial examinations in many respects. First, instead of being a periodic event, the *Boxuehongci* Examination was promulgated by special imperial edict as an extraordinary event. Throughout the Qing, the *Boxuehongci* Special Examination was held only twice. Second, all examinees were recommended by local officials. Eligibility to participate was considered a great honor for a scholar. Third, the questions of the examination were formulated by the emperor and were not circumscribed by the Confucian Classics. In his imperial edict, the Kangxi emperor clearly expressed the aim and procedure of the examination:

From ancient times until now, a prosperous dynasty rises when erudite scholars stimulate scholarly movements, expound the Classics and histories, improve the study of literature, and provide expert advice on texts. I, too, make time to study literary composition and look for learned consultants. Since the establishment of our dynasty, [we have] highly honored Confucianism, respected Confucian teachings, and paid much attention to education. Would it not be strange if we could not find great talents with profound knowledge around the country? Whoever has literary talent and political integrity, whether in or out of officialdom, is eligible for the Examination. Officials with rank 3B and above in the capital and the local governors-general, provincial governors, officials of provincial administration commissions, and surveillance commissioners are all responsible for recommending the examinees. I myself will create questions for the Examination.... [You] should understand my craving for talent and ensure that you encourage truly learned people [to apply].¹³

¹² For discussions of the 1679 *Boxuehongci* Special Examination, see Hellmut Wilhelm, "The Po-hsüeh hung-ju Examination of 1679," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 71 (1951): 60-76; Lawrence D. Kessler, *K'ang-hsi and Consolidation of Ch'ing Rule, 1661-1684* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976), 137-146.

¹³ Zhao Erxun et al., ed., "Xuanju" (4), in *Qing shi gao, juan* 109. Li Ji 李集, ed., *He zheng lu* 鶴徵錄 (*Records of a Journeying Crane*) (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1997), 25.

自古一代之興，必有博學鴻儒，振起文運，闡發經史，潤色詞章，以備顧問著作之選。朕萬几時暇，遊心文翰，思得博洽之士，用資典學。我朝定鼎以來，重儒重道，培養人才。四海之廣，豈無奇才碩彥，學問淵通，文藻瑰麗，可以追蹤前哲者？凡有學行兼優，文詞卓越之人，無論已仕未仕，著在京三品以上及科道官員，在外督撫布按，各舉所知。朕將親試錄用。……務令虛公延訪，期得真才，以副朕求賢右文之意。

The 1679 *Boxuehongci* Examination, an important event in the educational history of the Qing Dynasty, has been analyzed by scholars for over a hundred years. Its influence on politics, culture, and art, far exceeded, and often in unexpected ways, expectations.

In the name of “selecting talents” and “respecting Confucianism,” this examination greatly ameliorated the negative public image of the Manchu rulers during the harsh time of the Revolt of the Three Feudatories and alleviated the animus of the Ming’s leftover citizens. As Meng Sen 孟森 points out in his *Ming Qing shi jiangyi* 明清史講義 (*Teaching Materials for the History of the Ming and Qing Dynasties*), “Held just before the end of the civil war, the Special Examination was obviously a means of gathering wise men left behind [by the late Ming dynasty] ... and eliminating the antagonism [of the Chinese people] within the country.”¹⁴ After receiving the imperial edict of the Examination, inside and outside the court, officials strove to be first in obtaining talented applicants.

¹⁴ Meng Sen, *Ming Qing shi jiangyi* (*Lectures on the History of Ming and Qing Dynasties*) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), vol. 2, 424.

The Kangxi emperor showed extreme magnanimity and munificence toward a wide variety of attitudes among the Chinese scholars. Such scholars as Gu Yanwu and Huang Zongxi insisted on loyalty to the Ming Dynasty and uncompromisingly refused to take the Examination. Some scholars, like Fu Shan 傅山 (1607-1684) and Wang Hongzuan 王弘撰 (1622-1702), perfunctorily agreed to attend but retreated at the last minute under the pretext of health problems. The emperor did not blame such scholars for their lack of enthusiasm. Scholars who actively responded to the Examination received most courteous treatment from the court. The questions on the Examination were easier than in ordinary examinations, and the passing rate was therefore higher. Fifty scholars out of a hundred and forty-three passed the Examination and received official titles immediately. Throughout the Examination period, the Kangxi emperor successfully presented himself as the paradigm of the generous, open-minded monarch admired by Confucians.

The significance of the 1679 *Boxuehongci* Examination lies in part in its influence on the academic community. The Ming leftover-scholars had clear memories of the cultural crisis of the late Ming and a strong sense of mission in terms of a national revival. After the Examination, the fifty Erudite Scholars were summoned to the National Institute of the History of the Ming to compile the previous dynasty's history. "For people who expected to explore the reasons behind the demise of the Ming Empire through the study of its history, and for scholars who considered the 'National History' as

the life-line of the country, this was the kind of invaluable opportunity that occurs only once in a thousand years.”¹⁵ Some leftover-scholars, like Huang Zongxi and Gu Yanwu, though persevering in their loyalty to the Ming, compromised when it came to the compilation of the Ming history. They allowed their students to attend the project, and their thoughts and methodology also imperceptibly influenced the work as it was compiled. For example, the West Zhe School established by Gu Yanwu emphasized historical facticity and disapproved of blind faith in their predecessors’ beliefs and thinking. In compiling the first version of *Ming shi* 明史 (*Standard History of the Ming Dynasty*), Gu’s students, Pan Lei 潘耒 (1646-1708), Mao Qiling 毛奇齡 (1623-1716), and Shi Runzhang 施閏章 (1618-1683) attached great importance to textual research. They maintained skeptical attitudes toward the official records of the Ming, sparing no pains to examine every detail of *Shilu* 實錄 (*Veritable Records*) and *Qijuzhu* 起居注 (*Records of the Daily Lives of the Emperors*). Under their guidance, the *Boxuehongci* version is the most reliable edition of *Ming shi* to date.

The Erudite Scholars were also careful about the stylistic rules and layout of the history. To reflect factors newly-emerged during the Ming dynasty, they created new categories and modified inadequate ones. For example, in the “Record of the Rivers and Canals,” they juxtaposed the entries of “Coast Defense” and “Water Transportation”; the

¹⁵ Yin Tongyun 尹彤雲, “Kangxi shiqi nian ‘boxuehongci’ ke luelun” 康熙十七年 “博學鴻詞” 科略論 (“A Brief Analysis of the Boxuehongci Examination of the Seventeenth Year of Kangxi”), *Ningxia shehui kexue* 寧夏社會科學 (*The Social Sciences in Ningxia*) (1995), no. 3: 78.

accounts of the “Imperial Guard” and “East and West Depots” were added to the “Chapter on the Criminal;”¹⁶ and the “Biographies of Rulers of the Minorities in the Southwest” appeared for the first time in a national history.¹⁷ These innovative ideas greatly influenced later historiographers like Zhao Erxun 趙爾巽 (1844-1927) when they compiled *Qingshi gao* 清史稿 (*Manuscript of the History of the Qing Dynasty*).

Also, the 1679 *Boxuehongci* Examination unintentionally provided ample opportunity for literary gatherings. The chosen scholars were summoned to the capital in late 1678, but the Examination was not held until the third lunar month of 1679. As a result, many of the scholars idled about the capital for several months. They spent their time visiting friends or meeting to discuss their favorite collectibles. For example, the famous poet Zhu Yizun 朱彝尊 (1629-1709) brought to Beijing a Song edition of *Yuefu buti* 樂府補題 (*Appendices in the Style of the Old Han Music Bureau*) and showed it to his friends at gatherings. This volume, a collection of poems composed by fourteen authors who survived the Southern Song (1127-1279), was compiled in the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368) but did not become well-known until the late seventeenth century. Thanks to Zhu Yizun’s introduction, it quickly attracted scholarly attention. One of the most

¹⁶ The “Imperial Guard” (lit. “Embroidered-Uniform Guard”) and the “Eastern and Western Depots” were secret police organizations. The latter, notorious for harassing officialdom, was supervised by eunuchs. See Charles O. Hucker, ed., *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, 71.

¹⁷ See Zhu Yizun, “Shu tuguan di bu hou” 書土官底簿後 (“Colophon after the ‘Documents of the Rulers of Minorities of the Southwest’”), in *Pushu ting ji* 曝書亭集 (*Anthology of the Pushu Pavilion*) (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1968), *juan* 44, 729.

famous Qing poets, Chen Weisong 陳維崧 (1625-1682), wrote a prologue for the book. From then on, a movement of writing poems in response to *yuefu* poems prevailed for decades. According to the *Qing ci shi* 清詞史 (*History of the Ci Poem of the Qing Dynasty*) by Yan Dichang 嚴迪昌, “in the ten years or so since the eighteenth year of Kangxi (1679), more than a hundred writers created numerous responsive poems in the style of the *Yuefu buti*.”¹⁸ The historical nostalgia of the Song leftover-writers must have resonated strongly among early Qing scholars, who also had experienced the loss of their dynasty to foreigners. The poetry of *Yuefu buti* intrigued Qing writers with the ambiguous meanings of its symbolic metaphors, igniting a sentimental yearning for the past. From then on, the study of poems responsive to *Yuefu buti* poems and related poetic issues persisted for three centuries.¹⁹

During the *Boxuehongxi* Examination period, a great number of artistic salons were held in Beijing. In *Fu Shan's World*, Bai Qianshen includes an extensive discussion of the Examination's influence on visual art circles.²⁰ Many of the examination candidates were distinguished calligraphers, like Fu Shan; some were discriminating collectors and

¹⁸ Yan Dichang, *Qing ci shi (History of the Ci Poem of the Qing Dynasty)* (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1990), 229.

¹⁹ See Wang Xinxia 王信霞, “‘Yuefu buti’ yanjiu sanbainian” “樂府補題”研究三百年 (“Study of Appendices in the Style of the Old Han Music Bureau over its Past Three Centuries”), *Minjiang xueyuan xuebao* 閩江學院學報 (*Academic Journal of the Minjiang Institute*) (February, 2008), vol. 29, no. 1: 74-81.

²⁰ Qianshen Bai, *Fu Shan's World*, 212-220.

connoisseurs, like Gao Shiqi 高士奇 (1645-1704) and Liang Qingbiao 梁清標 (1620-1691). In their gatherings, participants often viewed works of art and exchanged ideas on connoisseurship and aesthetics. For instance, in his *Daijingtang ji* 帶經堂集 (*Anthology of Daijing Hall*), Wang Shizhen 王士禛 (1634-1711) mentions his meeting with Shi Runzhang in Beijing. Together with other friends, they viewed the *Narcissus* painted by the Yuan artist Tang Di 唐棣 (1296-1364) and composed a series of poems and prose pieces during their meeting.²¹

Wang Yuanqi's father, Wang Kui, was recommended by Governor Mu Tianyan 慕天顏 (ca.1623-1696) to attend the *Boxuehongci* Examination, but he declined the invitation under the pretext of the weakness of his aging father, Wang Shimin. During the examination period, Wang Yuanqi might also have stopped in Beijing. On his *Landscape in the Style of Huang Gongwang* (fig. 2-1) of 1679, his inscription reads: "On a clear day in the fall of the *jiwei* year (1679), [I] painted in the style of Dachì [Huang Gongwang] at Guqì zhai." Guqì zhai was one of the studios Yuanqi had built in Beijing. If he was in the capital during the fall of 1679, why would he not have arrived in time for the great event in the spring of the same year?

Whether he was in Beijing at that time, he must have noticed the surprisingly active intellectual climate of the early Kangxi period. Kangxi's lenient policies effectively

²¹ See Wang Shizhen, "Viewing the *Narcissus* by Tang Zihua," in *Chibei outan* 池北偶談 (*Idle Talk at North Pond*) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982), vol. 2, 296.

alleviated conflicts between Manchu rule and Chinese scholars, opening a door for the recovery and development of Chinese culture. Increasingly, scholars cast off their animosity toward the Qing government and applied themselves to the civil service examinations of the new dynasty. Benefiting from the cultural prosperity and the rise of scholarly status in the early Kangxi period, orthodox painting was ensured a solid social and political foundation.

Wang Yuanqi's Early Official Career

From 1670 through the early 1680s, as discussed previously, Wang Yuanqi did not actively participate in government service. His positions as intern in various departments assured him enough free time to travel between north and south while indulging in artistic activities and in communications with friends. Although few of Wang Yuanqi's paintings from this period have survived, his extant works show that, as his fame in painting steadily increased in the 1670s and 1680s, his painting became more popular. People were greatly honored to own his works, and painting typically played an important role in his social activities.

Wang Yuanqi spent the year 1674 at leisure in his hometown Taicang, sometimes making short trips to Suzhou and the surrounding regions. In the fall of that year, strolling around Tiger Hill on a moonlit night, he accidentally met a good friend, Gu Aiji

顧藹吉 (active, late seventeenth century). Gu was a renowned calligrapher specializing in clerical script and seal carving. At this pleasant meeting, they exchanged gifts – Gu gave Wang Yuanqi two valuable seal stones from his collection, and Wang reciprocated with a landscape composition on a folding fan. This meeting impressed Wang Yuanqi so deeply that, thirty years later, when they were reunited in the capital, he wrote for Gu a long inscription on a painting meant to recapture their memorable time on Tiger Hill.²²

Not until the early 1680s did Wang Yuanqi start his official career. In 1680, ten years after passing the palace examination, he was nominated for the *neige zhongshu sheren*, or Secretary Drafter of the Grand Secretariat. The next year, as one of the *tong kaoguan* 同考官 (Assistant Examiner), he was appointed invigilator for the provincial examination of Shuntian Prefecture (present-day Beijing).²³ The examiners in charge were Gui Yunsu 歸允肅 (1642-1689) and Shen Heng 沈珩 (1619-1695),²⁴ both of whom warmly praised Wang's excellent performance during this examination.²⁵ Perhaps because of their recommendation, he soon was picked to become District Magistrate of Ren County in present-day Hebei Province.

²² See Wang Yuanqi, *Lutai tihuagao* 麓臺題畫稿 (*Lutai's Inscriptions on Painting*), in *Qingren lunhua* 清人論畫 (*Qing Criticisms of Painting*), ed. Pan Yungao 潘運告 (Changsha: Hunan meishu chubanshe, 2004), 97.

²³ Wang Chang, "Wang Yuanqi xiaozhuan," *juan* 65, 298.

²⁴ See Qian Shifu 錢實甫, ed., *Qing dai zhiguan nianbiao* 清代職官年表 (*Chronology of Qing Dynasty Officials*) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), 2895.

²⁵ Wang Chang, "Wang Yuanqi xiaozhuan," *juan* 65, 298.

As Wang Yuanqi's official career was shaping up, a series of calamities befell his family. In the third month of 1680, Wang Shimin's favorite son and Wang Yuanqi's sixth uncle, Wang Fu 王扶, died of a chronic disease of the spleen.²⁶ The deep anguish of losing his beloved son is reported to have severely damaged Wang Shimin's health. Just three months later, he died of grief. In the final moments of his life, his students and intimate friends, Wang Hui and Yun Shouping 惲壽平 (1633-1690), waited on him. Wang Shimin held Yun's hand as he departed life.²⁷ Wang Hui and Yun Shouping had received instruction and edification from Wang Shimin since youth.²⁸ To recall his mentor, Yun composed a series of eighteen poems, "Dirges for the Chief Minister of the Seal Office, Mr. Wang Yanke [Shimin]."²⁹ To honor this great scholar and leading painter, the Grand Secretary of the Baohe Palace, Li Wei 李蔚, wrote epitaphs for Wang Shimin and his wife Lady Li. Not long after completing the funeral arrangements, Wang Yuanqi left for his post in Ren County.

The District Magistrate of Ren County

²⁶ Wang Bian, *Wang Chaosong nianpu*, 47.

²⁷ Zheng Wei, ed., "Wang Yuanqi nianbiao," 91.

²⁸ For more information on Yun Shouping and Wang Hui's communications with Wang Shimin, see Ginger Tong, "Yun Shou-p'ing (1633-1690) and His Landscape Art" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 1983); Chin-sung Chang, "Mountains and Rivers, Pure and Splendid: Wang Hui (1632-1717) and the Making of Landscape Panorama in Early Qing China," 26-30, 49-57.

²⁹ See Yun Shouping, *Ouxiang guan ji* 甌香館集 (*Anthology of Ouxiang Studio*) (Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1965-1970), vol. 3, *juan* 6, 12-14.

There are several opinions concerning the length of Wang Yuanqi's term as District Magistrate of Ren County. According to his epitaph written by Tang Sunhua 唐孫華, "together with his uncle, who later became Prime Minister, this honorable man [Wang Yuanqi] passed the imperial examination in the *gengxu* year (1670), and then assumed the office of District Magistrate of Ren County in Shunde 順德 Prefecture."³⁰ Tang did not indicate the exact duration of Wang Yuanqi's term in Ren, but it sounds here as if he received the post soon after receiving his *jinshi* degree. Therefore, in the "Chronological Table of Wang Yuanqi," Zheng Wei suggests that he arrived in Ren County in the ninth year of Kangxi (1670).³¹

However, in "Biography of Wang Yuanqi," Wang Chang states: "In the twentieth year [of Kangxi] (1681), he held the post of the Invigilator in the provincial examination in Shuntian Prefecture. Owing to his perfect performance, he was promoted to District Magistrate of Ren County."³² This opinion differs from the former by eleven years. In her master's thesis, "Huatu liuyu ren kan" 畫圖留與人看 ("Bequeathing Painting Models to Future Viewers"), Huang Weiling 黃瑋玲 accepts Wang Chang's date. Quoting from *Renxian zhi* 任縣志 (*Local Annals of Ren County*), she clarifies: "Wang

³⁰ Tang Sunhua, "Wang Yuanqi muzhi" 王原祁墓誌 ("The Epitaph of Wang Yuanqi"), in *Guochao qixian leizheng chubian* 國朝耆獻類徵初編 (*First Edition of the Collected Manuscripts of Venerated Elders of the Qing Dynasty Sorted by Category*), ed. Li Huan et al. (Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1966), *juan* 56, 3460.

³¹ Zheng Wei, ed., "Wang Yuanqi nianbiao," 90.

³² Wang Chang, "Wang Yuanqi xiaozhuan," *juan* 65, 298.

Yuanqi took up the post of District Magistrate in the twentieth year of Kangxi (1681).³³ Nevertheless, in “Xubu Renxian zhi xu” 續補任縣志序 (“Continued Prologue of the *Local Annals of Ren County*”), which Wang Yuanqi composed in the first decade of the sixth lunar month of the year *bingyin* (1686), Wang recalls his life in Ren and mentions that he “had cared for the official seal for four years.”³⁴ In the same paragraph, he further notes: “In the third decade of the fifth lunar month [of 1686], I received an order from the court and left [Ren].”³⁵ As the reason for his leaving, *Lidai mingren nianpu* 歷代名人年譜 (*Chronicles of Celebrities of Past Dynasties*) reveals: “In the tenth month [of 1686], he passed the promotion examination at Baohe Palace and was appointed to the post of *keyuan* 科員 (Officer of Scrutiny).”³⁶ In other words, according to Wang Yuanqi’s records, he spent four years in Ren from 1682 to 1686, and then left for a promotion in the fall of 1686.

During his term in Ren County, Wang Yuanqi earned a high reputation for his diligence in administrative service. He opened free schools in this county town, rebuilt

³³ Huang Weiling, “‘Huatu liu yu ren kan’: you Wang Yuanqi de shitu yu huaye kan Qing chu gongting shanshui huafeng de dianli” 畫圖留與人看：由王原祁的仕途與畫業看清初宮廷山水畫風的奠立 (“Bequeathing Painting Models to Future Viewers”: A Study of Wang Yuanqi’s Career and Painting Styles, and Analysis of the Establishment of Court Landscape Painting in the early Qing”) (Master’s thesis, Guoli Taiwan daxue, 2005), 12.

³⁴ Wang Yuanqi, “Xubu Ren xian zhi xu” (“Preface to the Continuation of the Annals of Ren County”), in *Gugong zhenben congkan* 故宮珍本叢刊 (*A Series of Rare Books in the Imperial Palace*) (Haikou: Hainan chubanshe, 2001), 218.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 218.

³⁶ Wu Rongguang 吳榮光, ed., *Lidai mingren nianpu* (*Chronologies of Celebrities in All Ages*) (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1968), vol. 5, 72.

the Dasong Bridge to facilitate public transportation, and presided over the traditional Wine Ceremony to advocate Confucianism and education.³⁷ Most importantly, he made a major effort to construct flood controls.

Ren County is located in the south of present-day Hebei Province. Since the establishment of local government here in the Western Han (206 B.C.E. – 8 C.E.), the name and territory of the county has changed many times. During the Qing dynasty, Ren belonged to Shunde Prefecture.³⁸ “Situated at the lower reaches of nine rivers,” Ren County was long known for its abundant water resources. About two miles northwest of town, a lake named “Daluze,” or “Great Continent Pond,” connected every river in the territory.³⁹ But it had been a source of floods since ancient times. During the four years Wang Yuanqi was in Ren, floods occurred twice, causing inestimable economic loss and casualties. To control the lake and rivers, some experts suggested dredging the channels to allow the water of the various rivers to flow into the Fu River. However, the Fu River flowed through two populous towns, Longping 隆平 and Jinning 晋宁, and flooding there might cause worse disasters.⁴⁰ Limited by local topography, Wang Yuanqi and his subordinates could not help but adopt a temporary expediency – to

³⁷ Wang Yuanqi, “Xubu Ren xian zhi xu,” 218.

³⁸ *Ren xian zhi*, in *Gugong zhenben congkan*, juan 1, 231.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, juan 1, 235.

⁴⁰ Wang Yuanqi, “Xubu Ren xian zhi xu,” 217.

build a three-mile embankment along the Li River to protect the fields and villages of the county. Unfortunately, the embankment was quickly damaged by heavy rains, and the fields of the territory were submerged.⁴¹ To protect flood victims from heavy economic burdens after the disaster, Wang Yuanqi submitted a memorial to the court to request a tax exemption for the people of Ren. Meanwhile, he ordered that the embankment and other facilities damaged by water be rebuilt, that thieves and robbers be arrested to reassure the populace, and that the official granary be opened to those suffering from famine.⁴²

To illustrate problems in Ren with respect to floods, Wang Yuanqi carefully investigated the topography and historical records of Ren and created his *Daluze tushuo* 大陸澤圖說 (*Illustrations and Notes on Great Continent Pond*). Wang's effort profoundly impressed his superior, Yu Chenglong 于成龍 (1638-1700), then Governor of Zhili 直隸. Under his influence, Wang's request was quickly approved. The people of Ren were deeply grateful for their help. They raised money to establish a shrine to Yu and Wang, extolling their virtues and significant contributions in "Inscription on the Shrine Dedicated to the Venerable Gentlemen Yu and Wang."⁴³

⁴¹ Ibid., 217.

⁴² Tang Zhiyu 唐執玉 et al., ed., *Jifu tongzhi* 畿輔通志 (*Annals of the Capital and Surrounding Districts*), in vol. 505 of *Siku quanshu*, juan 69, 679.

⁴³ Li Yu, "Yu Wang er gong ci ji" 于王二公祠記 ("Note on the Shrine Dedicated to the Venerable Gentlemen Yu and Wang"), in *Ren xian zhi*, juan 2.

Water Control and Factionalism at the Court⁴⁴

The problem of water control not only was a vital problem faced by the local government of Ren but also seriously threatened the national economy and the livelihood of populations in the Yellow River Basin in north China.⁴⁵ During the late Ming and early Qing, frequent wars and shortages of resources halted a water control project for the Yellow River. Inundations occurred at high frequencies, particularly in Henan 河南 and northern Jiangsu provinces. Furthermore, in the late Ming, the Yellow River changed its course, occupying the waterway of the Huai River and merging with the Grand Canal east of Lake Hongze. The mighty torrents from two great rivers easily exceeded the capacity of the canal, and silt carried by the water quickly deposited on the riverbed,⁴⁶ which dramatically increased the risk of flooding.

By the early Kangxi era, conditions had deteriorated further. As recounted in *Qing Shengzu shilu* 聖祖仁皇帝實錄 (*Veritable Records of Emperor Shengzu Ren [Kangxi]*)

⁴⁴ For discussion of the factionalism, see Harold Lyman Miller, "Factional Conflict and the Integration of Ch'ing Politics, 1661-1690" (PhD diss., The George Washington University, 1974); Lawrence D. Kessler, "Chinese Scholars and the Early Manchu State," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, vol. 31 (1971).

⁴⁵ For discussion of water control of the Yellow River, see Ch'ang-tu Hu, "The Yellow River Conservancy in the Ch'ing Dynasty," *Far Eastern Quarterly* 14.4 (August, 1955): 505-513.

⁴⁶ See Chen Wenshu 陳文述, "Yu youren lun buyi yin Huang ji yun shu" 與友人論不宜引黃濟運書 ("Discussion with a Friend Concerning the Project of Conducting the Yellow River over the Grand Canal"), in *Yidao tang wenchao* 頤道堂文鈔 (*Transcription of the Articles of Yidao Hall*), in vol. 1506 of *Xuxiu siku quanshu* (collections), *juan* 9, 21-23.

of the *Qing*), once a flood came, “all states and counties along the Yellow River were involved. All the villages and fields were swallowed up. Although people from all directions raised funds and united efforts to relieve the victims, the board and lodging of laborers working on the water-control project were still insufficient.... Half the toil and pain of the people of the Central Plain results from [the water].”⁴⁷

Since the early years of his reign, the Kangxi emperor had attached extreme importance to controlling the Yellow River. As mentioned in the Introduction, he once said: “Since I acceded to the throne, there are three things about which I have been deeply concerned – the Three Feudatories, the control of water, and water transportation of grain from the south. Keeping them in mind day and night, I wrote them on the central pillar of my palace. I can never forget them even for a moment.”⁴⁸ By early 1680s, after the eradication of the Three Feudatories, water control became the top priority of the emperor.

However, unexpectedly, the technical matter of water engineering gave rise to drastic factionalism at court. In 1677, the Kangxi emperor appointed Jin Fu 靳輔 (1633-1692) to be Director-general of the Grand Canal, in charge of the affairs of water control of the country. Jin Fu presented his famous discourse, “Jingli hegong ba shu”

⁴⁷ *Shengzu Ren huangdi shilu (Veritable Records of Emperor Shengzu Ren [Kangxi] of the Qing)* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), *juan* 39.

⁴⁸ See *Qinding baqi tongzhi*, *juan* 190, 42.

經理河工八疏 (“Eight Memorials on the Administration of Water Engineering”) to the emperor and gained his full support. In his memorials, he pointed out: “As to water-control, we should make a circumspect and farsighted plan. Only if the watercourse and transportation arteries are administered as a whole, can [future] mistakes be avoided.”⁴⁹ Under this guiding principle, construction led by Jin Fu began smoothly. In the First Imperial Inspection Tour in 1684, the Kangxi emperor specially visited the construction site and composed a poem, “Inspecting from the Embankment,” to reward Jin Fu’s achievements. He encouraged his efficient minister: “You have been working hard on the project of the [Yellow] River for many years and produced a marked effect. You should make persistent efforts to complete the construction as soon as possible so that people along the river can live in peace and tranquility. You certainly will not disappoint me!”⁵⁰ After meeting with the emperor, Jin Fu exerted every effort on the water-control project. Nevertheless, with the participation in water control of another high-ranking official, a political turmoil began.

In 1685, Yu Chenglong, the previous superior of Wang Yuanqi, was promoted to Surveillance Commissioner of Anhui Province, a position in charge of the water affairs of the Lower Yellow River. From the beginning, an irreconcilable conflict had existed between the guidelines proposed by Yu and Jin. Yu Chenglong suggested dredging the

⁴⁹ Zhao Erxun et al., ed., “Records of Rivers and Canals” (1), in *Qing shi gao*, juan 126.

⁵⁰ *Shengzu Ren huangdi shilu*, juan 117, 230.

riverbed of the Lower Yellow River, whereas Jin insisted on building dams at Gaoyou 高郵 and Jiangdu 江都, forcing the Yellow River to change its course northward and flow into the sea at Xinghua 興化. Their disputes became more virulent, eventually leading to a deadlock, and they had to wait for a final decision from the central government.

Jin Fu's approach earned the support of his good friend, Premier Mingzhu 明珠 (1635-1708; in Manchu: Mingju), who acted as arbitrator of the debate. One of the most trusted ministers of the emperor, Mingju played an important role in suppressing the revolt of the Three Feudatories and recovering Taiwan Island. In 1677, ascending to the position of Grand Secretary of Wuying Palace, he reached the summit of his power. For as long as thirteen years, he manipulated the Inner Cabinet.⁵¹ Half the positions at court were under his control. The expansion of Mingju's power eventually incited the antipathy of the Kangxi emperor. The current debate on water engineering provided an excuse for the emperor to dismiss Mingju from the Inner Cabinet. It is fair to say that it was Mingju's support of Jin Fu that pushed the emperor to the side of Yu Chenglong in their debate.

The "Debate on the Lower Yellow River" lasted for many years and finally concluded with Yu Chenglong's victory. In an imperial edict, the Kangxi emperor declared his position: "While the two projects both sound feasible, Yu Chenglong's

⁵¹ See Robert B. Oxnam, *Ruling from Horseback: Manchu Politics in the Oboi Regency, 1661-1669* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 68-69.

proposal is more beneficial to the common people and should be adopted.”⁵² Despite this pronouncement, Mingju continued to support Jin Fu in building embankments. Mingju’s lack of cooperation and obstinacy incurred the wrath of the emperor. One of the Censors, Guo Xiu 郭琇 (1638-1715), keenly perceived the emperor’s intention of depriving Mingju of his power. In the first month of 1688, Guo Xiu impeached Jin Fu for the crime of dereliction of duty. He sharply condemned Jin’s incompetence with respect to the water-control project: “[Jin Fu] has entrenched himself in the in the position of *hedu* 河督 (Director-general of the Grand Canal) for many years but done nothing useful.”⁵³ With the tacit consent of the Kangxi emperor, Guo Xiu’s impeachment expanded to Mingju and his fellow officials. Guo accused Mingju of “arrogating imperial power to himself and forming a clique to pursue selfish interests.”⁵⁴ After a fierce struggle at court, Mingju and three other *neige xueshi* 內閣學士 (Academicians of the Grand Secretariat)⁵⁵ were dismissed from the Cabinet. Jin Fu was removed as Director-general of the Grand Canal. His supporters in the “Debate of the Lower Yellow River” received punishment. After this setback, the Mingju faction

⁵² *Kangxi qijuzhu* 康熙起居注 (*Records of the Daily Life of the Kangxi Emperor*) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984), vol. 2, 1427.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 1399.

⁵⁴ Zhao Erxun et al., ed., *Qing shi gao*, juan 269.

⁵⁵ In the Qing dynasty, the Grand Secretariat was usually composed of ten Academicians, six Manchus, and four Chinese, each with nominal status as Vice Minister [*shilang*] in one of the Six Ministries; rank 2B. See Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, 347.

collapsed beyond recovery.

After this political turmoil, the winner of the debate, Yu Chenglong, earned a high degree of confidence from the emperor. At the critical moment in this debate, Wang Yuanqi gained Yu's attention. In the summer of 1686, Yu recommended Wang to the promotion examination held at the Baohe Palace in Beijing. This was obviously one of the most important opportunities in Wang Yuanqi's career. In the eighth month of 1686, after passing this promotion examination, Wang was selected to be a *keyuan* (Officer of Scrutiny) serving in the Six Ministries. In 1687, he was promoted to *jishizhong* (Supervising Secretary) of the Ministry of Crime and stayed in this post for three years until the ninth month of 1690, when he hastened to Taicang for his mother's funeral. Wang remained home for a mourning period of two years. When he returned Beijing in the ninth month of 1692, he was transferred to the Ministry of Rites to continue his service as Supervising Secretary.

Despite his low rank as Supervising Secretary, he was responsible for monitoring all documents presented to or returned by the emperor "criticizing and proposing imperial policies, and sometimes assisting in keeping the Imperial Diary."⁵⁶ However, Wang seemed more or less indifferent to his tasks. Probably dispirited by the furious political struggles at court, he became increasingly inattentive to government affairs; his passion

⁵⁶ See Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, 133.

for work shown in his earlier years in Ren County gradually subsided after he became an “official of the capital.” Much of his time was devoted to landscape painting and communicating with scholar-officials and literati aristocrats. His paintings before 1699 clearly reveal his enthusiasm for imitating paintings by Song-Yuan masters, especially the works of Huang Gongwang.

Repossessing Huang Gongwang: Wang Yuanqi’s Painting before 1699

Wang Yuanqi’s interest in Huang Gongwang’s landscape painting was undoubtedly inherited from Wang Shimin and Dong Qichang. Dong was an enthusiastic promoter of the masterpieces of Song and Yuan artists, making great efforts to search out and collect Huang Gongwang’s works in particular. In his *Huachan shi suibi* 畫禪室隨筆 (*Essays Written in the Studio of Painting and Chan [Zen] Meditation*), he proudly notes: “I have seen over time no fewer than thirty paintings by Huang Gongwang.”⁵⁷ He once owned Huang’s *Great Fuchun Mountain, Heavenly Pond, Floating Mist over Soft Green*, and *Studio on the Riverbank*. In helping young Wang Shimin, his favorite pupil, establish his own collection, Dong passed on a number of Song and Yuan masterpieces to him. Some of Huang Gongwang’s works might also have been included. On *Landscape in the Style of Ziju*, Wang Shimin wrote: “Ziju [Huang Gongwang] followed Dong Yuan

⁵⁷ Dong Qichang, *Huachan shi suibi* (*Essays Written in the Studio of Painting and Chan [Zen] Meditation*), in vol. 867 of *Siku quanshu*, juan 2, 11.

董源 (d. ca. 962) and Juran 巨然 with his own creative ideas. His work is extremely elegant and smooth, and he deserves to be called the foremost of the Four Yuan Masters. I have seen over time more than twenty [of his paintings]; none echoes what others have represented.”⁵⁸

Unfortunately, Wang Shimin did not keep these treasures in his collection and pass them to the next generation. The new Qing government’s tax policies caused a fiscal crisis in the Wang family. In the 1660s, during Yuanqi’s early twenties, Wang Shimin was forced to sell the most valuable works in the family collection. It is hard to tell how many of them were still available for young Wang Yuanqi to view and learn from. However, according to his records, he expended much time and effort imitating genuine works by Gongwang, including *Steep Ravine and Flowering Forests*,⁵⁹ *Floating Mist over Soft Green*, *Summer Mountains*,⁶⁰ *Stone Cliff at Heavenly Pond*,⁶¹ and *Dwelling in*

⁵⁸ Wang Shimin, “Inscription on my Imitation of Huang Zijiu’s *Landscape Painting*,” in *Wang Fengchang shuhua tiba* 王奉常書畫題跋 (*Wang Fengchang’s Inscriptions and Colophons on Calligraphy and Painting*), in vol. 1065 of *Xuxiu siku quanshu* (masters), *juan* 2, 100.

⁵⁹ *Steep Ravine and Flowering Forest* was in Wang Shimin’s private collection. For more discussion of this painting, see Yun Shouping, “Colophons on Paintings,” in *Ouxiang guan ji*, vol. 5, *juan* 11, 10.

⁶⁰ On the album *Imitating Dachi’s Paintings for Li Xianchen*, Wang Yuanqi notes: “I have seen two of Zijiu’s large-scale paintings – one is *Floating Mist over Soft Green*, the other is *Summer Mountains*. The brushwork and composition of these two works fully represent the profound meaning of his painting.” See Wang Yuanqi, *Lutai tihuagao*, 84.

⁶¹ Wang Yuanqi inscribed a painting made for his friend Qian Changhuang thus: “I once traveled in Qinzong, passing Luoyang by carriage and crossing the Yi and Luo rivers. My way there was full of high, deep mountains and sinuous streams. After seeing this beautiful scenery, Dachi’s *Floating Mist over Soft Green* and *Stone Cliff at the Pond of Heaven* seems all the more remarkable.” This paragraph suggests that Wang must have seen Huang Gongwang’s *Stone Cliff at the Heavenly Pond of* before he traveled through Qinzong. See Wang Yuanqi, *Lutai tihuagao*, 91.

the Fuchun Mountains.⁶² In his later years, he wrote to a friend with emotion: “Since my early twenties, I had been educated by my late grandfather. During the past fifty years and more, what I learned is Dachi [Huang Gongwang]; what I taught is Dachi. Setting my sights on him, [I acquired] Huating’s [Dong Qichang] secret skill of painting, which was like receiving the gold needle of the Heavenly Weaving Girl.”⁶³

Wang Yuanqi’s interest in Huang Gongwang was deep and persistent. In the fifty-five entries of his *Lutai tihuagao* 麓臺題畫稿 (*Lutai’s Drafts of Inscriptions and Colophons on Paintings*), twenty-six involved Huang Gongwang. One may ask what temperament in Huang’s painting so obsessed Wang Yuanqi. What was the spirit and essence of Huang’s painting for Yuanqi? In an inscription on the handscroll of *Landscape Painting for Zheng Nianshang in the Style of Huang Dachi*, he clearly expresses his views on Huang Gongwang and the Song-Yuan masters:

The methods of painting were perfected during the Song period. Yuan artists searched for and grasped the implicit meaning of painting and discerned its spirit.

⁶² On *Imitating Dachi’s Long Scroll in Soft Colors*, Wang Yuanqi wrote: “The ancient masters never made long scrolls easily. When they did, they must have taken extraordinarily painstaking efforts and spent many years on them.... *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains* took Dachi’s seven years to complete. I can imagine how his spirit met his heart and breath when he wielded the brush.... Recently, I had the good fortune to view this painting at the Minister of Revenue’s house, and I understood the profound mystery in it.” For more information on Wang Yuanqi’s discussion of *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains*, see his *Lutai tihuagao*, 119-120.

⁶³ Wang Yuanqi, *Lutai tihuagao*, 126. The “gold needle of the Heavenly Weaving Girl” is from an old folk story. As the story goes, Cainiang, a skillful embroiderer in the Tang dynasty, dreams she is best at her craft. She burns incense and prays fervently to the Heavenly Weaving Girl. Eventually, the Heavenly Weaving Girl is moved by her plea and gives her a gold needle. Cainiang then becomes the best embroiderer in the country. Hence, “gold needle” usually figuratively refers to a knack for something that was learned from a genius.

They made solid [brushwork] loose and expressed the spirit of simplicity in strange formats. The true essence [of painting] was then disclosed. Among the Four Yuan Masters whose individual essences lie in their overflowing leisurely moods and revelations of the mysteries of nature, Dachi was the most enlightened disciple [of the ancient masters].⁶⁴

畫法莫備於宋，至元人搜抉其義蘊，洗發其精神，實處轉松，奇中有淡，而真趣乃出。四家各有真髓，其中逸致橫生，天機透露，大癡尤精進頭陀也。

In his view, Huang Gongwang completely grasped the quintessence of the landscape painting of the Song and beyond – in his words, “the *samadhi* in Dong Yuan and Juran’s paintings had been transferred to the work of Ziji [Huang Gongwang].”⁶⁵ To explain the characteristics of Huang Gongwang’s painting, he further stated:

Dachi’s painting features mainly blandness and naiveté, sometimes presenting brightness and brilliance, like Songxue’s [Zhao Mengfu] work, achieving a full, round effect and attaining a lush, resplendent atmosphere. His composition is refined and free from vulgarity; his depiction is natural and unrestrained, with a kind of vivacious secret of nature partly hidden and partly visible in it.⁶⁶

大癡畫以平淡天真為主，有時而傳彩粲爛，高華流麗，儼如松雪，所以達其渾厚之意，華滋之氣也。段落高逸，模寫瀟灑，自有一種天機活潑隱現出沒于其間。

To reach “blandness and naiveté,” Wang Yuanqi carefully studied Huang’s painting in every aspect, especially attending to its compositional designs, use of brushwork, and application of colors.

⁶⁴ Wang Yuanqi, *Lutai tihuagao*, 91.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 107.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 127.

1. Composition

As an important component of painting, the issue of compositional design was early raised and discussed in art history, but it was not considered the most important factor until the Song-Yuan period. As early as the Northern and Southern Dynasties (420-589), Xie He 謝赫 (479-502) summarized the “Six Principles of Painting”:

The first: Reverberation of the life-breath; that is, the creation of movement.

The second: Bone-method; that is, the (proper) use of the brush.

The third: Reflection of (To conform with) the objects; that is, the depiction of forms.

The fourth: Deference to types; that is, the application of colours.

The fifth: The layout of the design; that is, the arrangement of positions.

The sixth: Transmission and perpetuation; that is, the copying of (old) models.⁶⁷

一氣韻，生動是也；

二骨法，用筆是也；

三應物，象形是也；

四隨類，賦彩是也；

五經營，位置是也；

六傳移，模寫是也。

In Xie’s theory, the arrangement of objects – “layout of the design” – was placed fifth in the series. By the Five Dynasties (907-960), Jing Hao 荆浩 (b. 850) proposed “Six Essentials” in his *Bifa ji* 筆法記 (*Notes on Brushwork*): “Spirit, rhythm, thought, scene, brush, and ink.”⁶⁸ “Scene,” here, does not refer to the depiction of natural features but

⁶⁷ Xie He, *Guhua pinlu*, translated by Osvald Sirén, in *Chinese Painting*, vol. 1, 5.

⁶⁸ Jing Hao, *Bifa ji* (*Notes on the Brushwork*), in *Zhongguo shuhua quanshu*, vol. 1, 6. For an English translation of the text, see *Ching Hao’s Pi-fa-chi: A Note on the Art of Brush*, ed. and trans. Kiyohiko Munakata (Ascona: Artibus Asiae Publishers, 1974).

the composition of a landscape. By Jing Hao's time, the significance of compositional design had transcended that of brushwork and coloring. Guo Xi's 郭熙 (ca.1023-ca.1085) "Three Distances" further exemplifies the development of spatial concepts in the Song. In his *Linquan gaozhi* 林泉高致 (*The Great Message of Forests and Streams*), Guo Xi notes:

With regard to mountains, three distances may be perceived, i.e., one looking from the foot [of a mountain] towards the top which is called height; one looking from the foreground towards the background, which is called depth; and one looking from a nearby mountain to one distant, which is called flat distance. The tone of the height dimension is clear and bright; the tone of the depth distance heavy and dark, while that of the horizontal distance may be either clear or dark. Height is boldly resolute; depth is made up of layer beyond layer; the effect of horizontal distance is obtained by inserting misty lines that gradually disappear.⁶⁹

山有三遠：自山下而仰山顛，謂之高遠；自山前而窺山後，謂之深遠；自近山而至遠山，謂之平遠。高遠之色清明，深遠之色重晦，平遠之色有明有晦。高遠之勢突兀，深遠之意重疊，平遠之意冲融而縹緲。

On the basis of Guo's "Three Distances," Huang Gongwang developed his own theory on spacing and perspective. The ninth entry in his "Xie shanshui jue" 寫山水訣 ("Secrets of Landscape Painting") reads:

In discussing the painting of mountains, one speaks of the three distances. When it continues uninterrupted from the bottom, it is called 'level distance'; when it is seen from the nearby through divisions and openings in alignment, it is called 'removed distance'; a distant view beyond [i.e., over the top of] the mountain is

⁶⁹ Guo Xi, "Shanshui xun" 山水訓 ("Teachings on the Landscape Painting"), in *Linquan gaozhi* (*The Great Message of Forests and Streams*), translated by Osvald Sirén. See Sirén, *Chinese Painting*, vol. 1, 226.

called ‘high distance.’⁷⁰

山論三遠。從下相連不斷，謂之平遠；從近隔開相對，謂之闊遠；從山外遠景，謂之高遠。

In practice, arranging objects to gain an integrated visual effect had obviously become the primary concern in Huang Gongwang’s landscape painting. *Great Fuchun Mountain* (fig. 2-2), now preserved in the Nanjing Museum, is divided into three areas by a diagonal band of boulders that extends from the right foreground corner diagonally toward the upper left. Above the band of boulders is an area of distant mountains and empty sky; below is a third area of water that spreads to the lower edge of the painting. Significant details in this work include, in the middle distance, a cascade pouring through a gap in the distant mountains to balance the visual weight of the diagonal rocks. A narrow road meanders among the mountains, leading the viewer’s eye into the remote distance. The still water at the foot of the mountain and the hazy central monolith in the background create blank areas that create an aura of simplicity and emptiness.

Huang Gongwang’s interest in composition is more evident in his famous handscroll, *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains* (1347) (fig. 2-3), which took him seven years to complete. Damaged by fire, its two remaining sections are now mounted as separate handscrolls. The longer segment, 639.9 cm, is compartmentalized into three sections.

⁷⁰ Huang Gongwang, “Xie shanshui jue” (“The Secrets of Landscape Painting”), translated by James Cahill. See Cahill, “Three of the ‘Four Great Masters’,” in *Hills beyond a River: Chinese Painting of the Yuan Dynasty, 1279-1368* (New York: Weatherhill, 1976), no. 9, 87.

Each section is centered on lofty mountains and rocks and is separated from its neighboring sections by calm waters. The scroll commences with a hillock covered with dense forest and the silhouette of a gentle mountain in the distance. After the staccato interruption of a river, mountains reappear and gradually expand until they constitute the structural climax of the painting. Concave and convex rock contours occupy two-thirds of the picture plane and form an intricate structure along the riverside. The composition ends with an isolated hill and misty remote mountains. As James Cahill has observed, “The composition of the whole scroll develops in a dynamic but systematic way, with areas of focus shifting from foreground to middle ground and back, the eye carried sometimes into distance, then pulled insistently forward again, the directional impulsion of the hills and dark tree masses providing what later theorists were to call ‘opening’ and ‘closing’ movements.”⁷¹

In constructing mountains, Huang Gongwang usually fragmented large mountain masses into groups of rocks and then orchestrated these simple, repeated components into a complex whole. In the seventh entry of his “Secrets of Landscape Painting,” he credits this method to Dong Yuan,⁷² whom he saw as the fountainhead of orthodox painting. *Clouds and Trees on Red Cliff* (fig. 2-4) vividly illustrates his mountain idiom: Jagged rubble is stacked at the foot of the mountain, while, mid-slope and above,

⁷¹ James Cahill, “Three of the ‘Four Great Masters’,” 113.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 86.

monoliths are sketched by long contour lines and filled with parallel texture strokes.

Wang Yuanqi fully mastered the methods used in his model. Furthermore, in Wang's compositions, irregular small rocks often fill in each mountain to form a more complicated unity. In *Imitating Dachi's Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains for Songyi* (fig. 2-5), dated 1688, the overall scene is filled with heaps of rubble and exuberant shrubs and trees. Small rocks are laid in along the riverbank in the foreground. This complicated assemblage of stones zigzags upward to extend the range. Subsidiary peaks composed of larger masses and a dense mist lying in the valley create appropriate blank areas in a scene that highlight the center peak and unify the composition.

In another example, *Landscape in the Style of Dachi Made for Shubai* (fig. 2-6), dated 1695, segments the mountain surface into many small parts. These jumbled stones are further detailed with stippled dots representing bushes and mountain folds. The dark ink of these dots contrasts strikingly with the white clouds that float in the ravine, creating a distinctive rhythm. *Mount Xiaogu* (fig. 2-7) of 1698 is another example of Wang's success in structuring mountain masses. Unlike the compositions discussed above, the squared outcroppings in this painting are more angular and rigid, and its broad surfaces are mostly executed in dry ink, which, together with its wide expanses of blank paper in water and sky, lend the scene a clean freshness in striking contrast to the landscape for Shubai just mentioned.

While the construction of mountains from numerous small rocks tends to undermine

the unity of a composition, Wang Yuanqi strove to maintain overall harmony in his paintings. In his works, “all elements of the picture are made to serve clear compositional functions.”⁷³ In addition to this approach, one of his more important contributions to compositional methods in landscape painting is reflected in the theory of *longmai*, the “dragon vein.” In his *Yuchuang manbi* 雨窗漫筆 (*Jottings Beside a Rain-Splashed Window*), he expounds this theory as follows:

The “dragon vein” represents the principal “breath-force” in a painting; its course may be oblique or symmetrical, rounded or fragmented, broken or continuous, hidden or apparent. This is the “basic principle.” As for “opening-and-closing,” when the elements range from above to below, their host-and-guest relationships are clearly arranged; sometimes the elements are knotted together, sometimes they are light and drifting away, with peaks turning around, paths winding back, clouds locking together, and watercourses parting their ways. All these come from the principle of “opening-and-closing.” As for “rising-and-falling,” when the elements move from near to far, their positions of facing each other or turning away will be clearly distinguished; sometimes the elements are high and peaked, sometimes they are flat and smooth, or they lean to either side, answering one another, with the top, the middle and the foot of the mountain properly balanced and matched. All these are “individual applications” [of the basic “dragon vein” principle].

If a student realizes that a painting must have a “dragon vein,” but does not know how to master the “opening-and-closing” and “rising-and-falling,” his painting will be knotty and tied up together and will not achieve in the end the desired “[breath-] force.” On the other hand, if he knows all about “opening-and-closing” and “rising-and-falling,” but fails to subordinate these to the principal “dragon vein,” he will be like someone who minds the children but forgets the mother. When the “dragon vein” is forced, it is a fault; when the “opening-and-closing” is crowded or choked, shallow or exposed, it is a fault; when the “rising-and-falling” is clumsy or incomplete, it is a fault.

Furthermore, there is “opening-and-closing” and “rising-and-falling” both in a large composition and in its parts. These principles can be used either to simplify or

⁷³ Ibid., 90.

elaborate [a composition], according to need. When the “dragon,” in its many oblique or frontal, unified or broken, obscured or apparent, interrupted or continuous positions, is lively and vivid, the painting will be true. When one masters this thoroughly, small bits will naturally grow into large masses. How can such a painting fail to be wonderful?⁷⁴

龍脈爲畫中氣勢源頭。有斜有正，有渾有碎，有斷有續，有隱有現，謂之體也。開合從高至下，賓主歷然。有時結聚，有時澹蕩，峰回路轉，雲合水分，俱從此出。起伏由近及遠，向背分明，有時高聳，有時平修，欹側照應，山頭、山腹、山足銖兩悉稱者，謂之用也。

若知有龍脈而不辨開合起伏，必至拘索失勢。知有開合起伏而不本龍脈，是謂顧子失母。故強扭龍脈則生病，開合逼塞淺露則生病，起伏呆重漏缺則生病。

且通幅有開合，分股中亦有開合。通幅有起伏，分股中亦有起伏。尤妙在過接映帶間，制其有餘，補其不足，使龍之斜正、渾碎、隱現、斷續，活潑潑地於其中，方爲真畫。如能從此參透，則小塊積成大塊，焉有不臻妙境者乎。

A term popularly used in geomancy, the term “dragon vein” originally referred to the continuous risings and fallings of a mountain.⁷⁵ Although it was still frequently used in its original meaning in the early Qing, “dragon-vein” in Wang Yuanqi’s essay has extended meanings. As George Rowley has noted in *Principles of Chinese Painting*, “dragon veins refer to rhythmical coherence in the whole composition and in the parts.”⁷⁶ Mai-mai Sze has suggested that dragon vein refers to the “connective strokes or sections of the composition – including spaces, eloquent in their ‘emptiness’ – used to relate two

⁷⁴ Wang Yuanqi, *Yuchuang manbi (Jottings Beside a Rain-Splashed Window)*, translated by Wen Fong, in *In Pursuit of Antiquity: Chinese Paintings of the Ming and Ch’ing Dynasties from the Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Earl Morse*, ed. Roderick Whitfield (Princeton: The Art Museum, Princeton University, 1969), 185-186.

⁷⁵ *Ci yuan 辭源 (Source of Diction)* (Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1981), vol. 4, 3609.

⁷⁶ George Rowley, *Principles of Chinese Painting*, with illustrations from the Du Bois Schanck Morris Collection (Princeton: Princeton University, 1947), 68.

parts of a picture [that] are called *lung mo*, suggesting immense power of integration.”⁷⁷ After a series of exacting comparisons and discriminating contrasts, Susan Bush points out that Wang Yuanqi’s dragon vein “could indicate the main lines of a composition.”⁷⁸ In the conclusion of her essay, “Lung-mo, K’ai-ho, and Ch’i-fu,” she proposes that Wang Yuanqi “describes the term by complementary adjectives such as ‘slanting or straight’ and ‘hidden or visible’ in a way that implies their *yin* and *yang* aspects.... The dragon vein of a painting might be said to relate the parts to the whole as do the veins and arteries of the body, which run through the limbs to and from the heart, the centre of thought and feeling.”⁷⁹ In a sense, Wang Yuanqi treated the mountains in his paintings as dragons – as organic unities rather than combinations of irrelevant fragments, as dynamic and animated rather than static and inert; and then used these organically-unified mountains to unify his paintings.

Furthermore, in the same paragraph, Wang Yuanqi uses a pair of descriptive phrases – *kaihe* 開合 (opening-and-closing) and *qifu* 起伏 (rising-and-falling). He first credits the invention of this pair of concepts to Wang Hui,⁸⁰ then borrows the traditional philosophical terms *ti* 體, or “basic principle,” and *yong* 用, or “individual applications,”

⁷⁷ Mai-mai Sze, *The Tao of Painting: a Study of the Ritual Disposition of Chinese Painting* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1956), 94.

⁷⁸ Susan Bush, “‘Lung-mo,’ ‘K’ai-ho,’ and ‘Ch’i-fu’: Some Implications of Wang Yuan-Ch’i’s Three Compositional Terms,” *Oriental Art*, VIII/3, (Autumn 1962): 124.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 127.

⁸⁰ See Wang Yuanqi, *Yuchuang manbi*, translated by Osvald Siren, in *Chinese Painting*, vol. 5, 209.

to elaborate the relationship of dragon vein with opening-and-closing and rising-and-falling. In his essay, open-and-closing and rising-and-falling are used to describe movements of the dragon vein. As Susan Bush paraphrases Sir  n’s translation of *kaihe*: “[The opening-and-closing] follows from the top to the bottom, principals and secondary in the proper succession, sometimes closely tied together, sometimes spread out. The turning of peaks, the winding of roads, the forming of clouds, the dividing of water currents, all come from this.”⁸¹ In other words, opening-and-closing refers to the spacing of a composition. Meanwhile, rising-and-falling emphasizes the harmony of the movement of a mountain range from near to far. “These moving shapes may rise high and lofty or be drawn out evenly. The leaning forms must correspond mutually; the top, the body, and the feet of the mountains must be perfectly weighed and balanced.”⁸²

The dragon vein theory not only crystallized Wang Yuanqi’s compositional structure but also contributed a guiding principle to literati landscape painting theory. It embodied Dong Qichang’s theory of “momentum” – the dragon vein acts as the carrier of kinetic energy in a compositional structure. At the same time, it made possible the formulation and abstraction of space. Structuring space using a consistent inherent logic originated in the Yuan period, a significant departure from the mimetic representation of Song painting. In “Secrets of Landscape Painting,” Huang Gongwang claims: “In doing

⁸¹ Bush, “‘Lung-mo,’ ‘K’ai-ho,’ and ‘Ch’i-fu,’” 125.

⁸² Sir  n, *Chinese Painting*, vol. 5, 204.

paintings it is only the one word *li* 理 (principle, natural order) that is the most urgent necessity.”⁸³ Wang followed Huang’s opinion on *li* in painting and developed and systematized it. According to his theory of the dragon vein, a composition must be rendered with a coherent logic, whether the painting is executed in a stylized manner or is realistic. The formulaic spacing diagrams in Wang’s landscape painting provided later literati artists with inspiring and approachable models from which to learn, a necessary element in the canonization of orthodox painting.

It is worth noting that, in his earlier works, Wang Yuanqi did not confine himself to Huang Gongwang’s landscape paradigm. While he frequently used Huang’s work as a stylistic model, he also adopted methods and mannerisms from other ancient masters. For instance, in the final section of *Landscape in the Style of Dachi*, dated 1690 (fig. 2-8), a range of dark, triangular mountains in the far distance is filled with stippled horizontal ink dots, a rendering characteristic of Gao Kegong’s 高克恭 (1248-1310) misty mountains. In the handscroll for *Ziya* of 1689 (fig. 2-9), the central mountain mass of convoluted contours occupies most of the scene, deviating from Huang’s typically simple, spare compositions. Also, the miscellaneous vegetation and cottages nestled in the crevices of the boulders give the painting a sense of earthy reality, which recalls the intricate yet orderly style of Wang Meng’s 王蒙 (1308-1385) work.

⁸³ James Cahill’s translation of Huang Gongwang’s “Xie shanshui jue,” in *Hills beyond a River*, no. 30, 88.

2. Texture strokes

Wang Yuanqi's inscription on *Imitating Dachi's Landscape for Yudong* reads:

As for the way of brush and ink, where the intention goes, the spirit enigmatically exists. The spirit exists in an inexpressible place and springs out where the idea goes. Dachi's success issued from his full control of [his intention]. People who do not understand him arbitrarily state what his intention was and where he exerted himself, but they tend to ignore the truly important thing: how to adjust the brush properly. Only when the skill [of brush control] is developed to a certain level can the breath of the painting be fluent and the composition become vivid.⁸⁴

筆墨一道，用意為尚，而之所至，一點精神在微茫些子間，隱躍欲出。大癡一生得力處全在於此。畫家不解其故，必曰某處是其用意，某處是其著力。而於濡毫吮墨，隨機應變，行乎所不得不行，止乎所不得不止，火候到而呼吸靈，全幅片段，自然活現。

According to Wang Yuanqi, brushwork should not be applied randomly, but rather be determined by preexistent ideas. The successful application of brushwork relies on sophisticated skills.

Huang Gongwang's brushwork had its origins in the ancient source of Dong Yuan, from whom he learned two characteristic texture patterns – “alum rock” and “hemp fiber.” In “Secrets of Landscape Painting,” he describes the former: “Dong Yuan's small mountain boulders are called ‘alum rocks’.... The texture strokes must be done with dilute ink by sweeping the brush in wavering strokes. Over these one adds more dilute

⁸⁴ Wang Yuanqi, *Lutai tihuagao*, 116.

ink to break [the flatness].”⁸⁵ In such works as *Waterside Pavilion Quiet and Deep* (fig. 2-10), Huang positions alum rocks on mountain tops and sporadically along the shorelines at the feet of cliffs and mountains, adding texture and realism to his mountain surfaces. In addition, Dong Yuan was fond of hemp fiber texture strokes, parallel lines made with the tip of the brush used to delineate vertical landforms. Huang deliberately elongated Dong’s relatively short hemp fiber strokes, arriving at a distinctive long hemp fiber stroke (fig. 2-11) executed by a fluent, cursive use of a dry brush, which makes them resemble dry lines in calligraphy.

In addition to the two texture strokes learned from Dong Yuan, Huang Gongwang was also accomplished in using ink dots in his landscape painting. In *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains* (fig. 2-3), Huang adeptly employed a variety of interacting ink dots to represent the lush vegetation on the hills. Most of the dots are distributed along folds among the rocks, light ink alternating with dark to present an impression of variegated vegetation.

In Wang Yuanqi’s early works, he faithfully followed Huang’s brush techniques. In *Imitation of Dachi’s Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains for Lunxu* (fig. 2-12), dated 1693, Wang skillfully combines ink dots with hemp fiber patterns. He used long lines to outline the gentle silhouette of the mountain and then applied a series of dots to fill the

⁸⁵ Cahill, *Hills beyond a River*, no. 8, 87.

rock surfaces. Contrasting with the horizontal “raindrops” representing broadleaf trees, spiky vertical dots are applied to mountain tops, representing coniferous forests. The artist deliberately avoided using equal pressure when brushing his dots, so that they are evenly arrayed but in slightly different shapes and sizes. Compared to Huang Gongwang’s dry, withered long hemp fiber texture strokes, Wang’s brushwork is more refined and detailed, which makes his work more finished and gentle in appearance.

In contrast to Huang’s concentration on the use of lines and texture patterns to build his paintings, Wang Yuanqi paid equal attention to the application of ink. In *Landscape in the Style of Huang Gongwang* (fig. 2-13), a fan painted for the “venerable elder Deng” in 1691, Wang brushed layers of ink wash over his texture strokes to create an atmosphere of moist luxuriance. As Cao Yulin 曹玉林 stated in *Wang Yuanqi and Shitao*, “Wang usually applied ink over sketches and texture patterns, from light to dark, from wet to dry. Brush and ink were mingled in complete harmony. An obscure and natural effect thus came into being.”⁸⁶

3. The Softly Colored Landscape as a Painting Style

In *Qinghe shuhua fang* 清河書畫舫 (*Painting Boat on the Qing River*), Zhang Chou 張丑 (1577-1643) discusses Huang Gongwang’s two styles of landscape painting:

⁸⁶ Cao Yulin, *Wang Yuanqi yu Shitao*, 41.

“One is done in light colors, with rocky monoliths, majestically impressive; the other is done in ink and water, with few texture strokes and simple yet abstruse brushwork.”⁸⁷

The former type refers to the softly colored landscape painting that originated with Dong Yuan but matured under Huang Gongwang’s hand. The latter’s *Stone Cliff at the Heavenly Pond* (fig. 2-14), dated 1341, is representative of this mode. The Heavenly Pond is a noted scenic location in Wu County, west of Suzhou, Jiangsu Province. In the painting, the monumental mountain mass ranges deep into the distance, with exuberant pine forests in the foreground and floating mist filling a large ravine left of the central mass. Lofty pines occupy the lower left corner of the scene; deeply rooted in rocky terrain, they shield several cottages. Beyond the land surrounding the cottages, the serpentine monolith of the central mountain mass soars abruptly out of the river, winding into the distance along its axis. To the right, surrounded by cliffs in every direction, a thin waterfall pours into a pond about halfway up the mountain. In spite of the intricate composition of this work, its outline and texture strokes are simple and without much variation. The mountain mass is washed with reddish-brown. Volume is emphasized by dark washes in blue and green that tend to reverse normal distributions of light and shade, with exposed heights and crests emphasized with dark color while valleys and hidden areas, left colorless, appear full of light. Without bright, translucent colors, this

⁸⁷ Zhang Chou, *Qinghe shuhua fang* (*Painting Boat on the Qing River*), in vol. 817 of *Siku quanshu* (masters), *juan* 11a, 10.

work presents an imposing scene, magnificent and resplendent, yet austere and elegant.

The softly colored landscape was one of Wang Yuanqi's most successful genres. In *Landscape in the Style of Huang Gongwang for Shubai* of 1695 (fig. 2-6), he did not choose bright colors nor complicated texture strokes and vigorous outlines. Yellowish brown and turquoise blue coordinate to give rise to a painting of gentle placidity. Instead of a lavish presentation, rich with deep color and exuding an imposing majesty, the artist uses a softly colored idiom to produce a calm, prosaic, lyrical composition in accord with Huang Gongwang's ultimate goal of blandness and naiveté.

What is new in Wang Yuanqi's version of the softly-colored landscape is that he occasionally accents his otherwise unadorned yellowish background with intense colors such as vermillion. In his *Illustration of Notes on Poetry at the Canglang Pavilion Dedicated to Qian Qianyi* (fig. 2-15), dated the sixth month of 1698, he places scarlet maple trees at the center of the painting that contrast with blackish-green willows in the foreground and white clouds that float in the distance, striking contrasts that heighten the visual effect of the autumn scenery. However, sporadic bright color is not much more than a "guest" in Wang Yuanqi's work; it never usurps the "host's" role played by his usual cool, light colors, nor does it destroy the gentle and tranquil atmosphere of his paintings. His innovation in softly colored landscape and success in the use of color and ink will be further discussed in later chapters. In any case, the imitations of Huang Gongwang's softly colored landscape genre in Wang's early years betray his strong

interest and exceptional talent in coloring. In his works, color was never used for brilliant display but served as an effective means to reflect the peaceful and placid psyche of the artist.

As a follower of Huang Gongwang, Wang Yuanqi, in the earlier years of his artistic life, made great efforts to imitate Huang's works. However, rather than be satisfied with the role of pure imitator, he developed Huang's art in every aspect: in terms of composition, he established the far-reaching dragon vein theory; technically, even as he appropriated various strokes from Huang's repertoire of brushwork, he attached equal importance to the use of ink; and in his application of color, he improved the softly colored landscape, which later became a major mode of orthodox painting.

Although Yuanqi's affection for Huang Gongwang's work was directly influenced by his grandfather, Wang Shimin, their attitudes towards Huang were different. As an early nineteenth-century follower of Wang Yuanqi, Sheng Dashi 盛大士 (1771-1836), pointed out,

Xilu 西廬 [Wang Shimin] and Lutai 麓臺 [Wang Yuanqi] both followed Zijiu [Huang Gongwang], but their understandings [of Huang's art] were not exactly the same. Xilu copied his model faithfully. Every stroke on his painting has its origin in ancient sources. Many of his effortless works can easily be matched to [Huang's] authentic paintings. [On the contrary,] Lutai, since youth, combined Huang's style with his own ideas. He used dry brush and heavy texture strokes to gain an unaffected atmosphere. He boasted that his brush was as vigorous as a thunder bolt.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Sheng Dashi, *Xishan woyou lu* 谿山臥遊錄 (*Record of a Dream of Traveling among Mountains and Streams*), in vol. 1082 of *Xuxiu siku quanshu*, (masters), *juan* 1, 7.

西廬麓臺皆瓣香子久，各有所得。西廬刻意追樵，一渲一染皆不枉設。應手之作，實欲肖真。麓臺壯歲參以己意，乾墨重筆皴擦以博渾淪氣象。嘗自誇筆端有金剛杵。

Yuanqi's ultimate goal was not to make facsimiles of Huang Gongwang's work, but to grasp the soul in Huang's painting – his “blandness and naiveté.”

Thus, our question becomes: Why did Wang Yuanqi assiduously pursue the principle of “blandness and naiveté”? Blandness, as an aesthetic term, had been frequently used by Song literati. As early as the Northern Song, the famous poet and theorist Mei Yaochen 梅堯臣 (1002-1060) used the term *pingdan* 平淡, or blandness, in his criticism on poetry: “To compose a poem, one should follow his own disposition, gradually arriving at a state of blandness.”⁸⁹ As well, in his literary criticism, Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101) commented: “In poetry, [I] do not seek delicate lines and unconventional words; it is naiveté that I follow and pursue.”⁹⁰

In terms of painting, Susan Bush has discussed “blandness” as a key term used by Mi Fu 米芾 (1051-1107). Mi was the first to combine “blandness” with “naiveté” in artistic criticism. In his *Hua shi* 畫史 (*History of Painting*), he notes: “Dong Yuan's work features blandness and naiveté, different from Tang painting and beyond the work of Bi Hong 畢宏 (active mid-eighth century). Any painting, even divine objects of

⁸⁹ Mei Yaochen, *Wanling ji* 宛陵集 (*Anthology of Wanling*), in vol. 1099 of *Siku quanshu*, (collections), *juan* 28, 10.

⁹⁰ Quoted by Dong Qichang, in *Huachan shi suibi*, *juan* 1, 2.

excellent quality, cannot compare with it.... [His work] was made without affectation and indeed reached the state of naiveté.”⁹¹ By the Yuan, Tang Hou 湯屋 (active early and mid-fourteenth century) adopted “naiveté” as the most important criterion in appreciating art works. In his *Gujin huajian* 古今畫鑒 (*Mirror of the Painting of All Ages*), Tang states: “In viewing a painting, one should first attend to its character of naiveté, then to the [artist’s] thought and purpose. Only when the traces of the brush and ink are forgotten, can one grasp [the spirit of] a painting.”⁹² The Ming artist and theorist Dong Qichang also considered “blandness and naiveté” as important measures in criticizing calligraphy and painting. He once commented in his *Essays Made in the Studio of Painting and Chan Meditation*, “The relationship between Huaisu and Zhang Xu resembles that between Dong Yuan and Juran. The brush skills of the former were transmitted to the latter, just as the Buddhist mantle and alms bowl were handed down [from one monk to another].... All of these took ‘blandness and naiveté’ as their ultimate goal.”⁹³

Clearly, “blandness and naiveté” are important aesthetic terms for literati taste that descend from the Song in a continuous line. To work in the scholarly style, as Huang Gongwang states in “Secrets of Landscape Painting,” “in painting each tree, each stone,

⁹¹ Mi Fu, *Hua shi* (*History of Painting*), in vol. 813 of *Siku quanshu* (masters), 7.

⁹² Tang Hou, *Gujin huajian* (*Mirror of the Painting of All Ages*), in vol. 2 of *Zhongguo shuhua quanshu*, 903.

⁹³ Dong Qichang, *Huachan shi suibi*, *juan 2*, 46.

you should give rein to the ink and strip away [the unessential]. You will then have a scholarly style.”⁹⁴ Wang Yuanqi considered painting an important medium for transmitting and reflecting literati aesthetics. He once wrote on a painting made for his friend, Jia Yi’an: “Painting is similar to literature in its nature. It must be done in the scholarly style. In Youcheng’s 右丞 [Wang Wei] poetry, painting exists; in his painting, poetry exists. Later artists all followed him.... [Through painting,] the disposition [of an artist] may be understood, and anxiety may be forgotten.”⁹⁵ In a ten-leaf album made for Li Nanhu 勵南湖, he inscribed: “Although painting is only a kind of craft, the breath in it corresponds to the scholarly style, and the way of painting conforms to the human mind and nature.”⁹⁶

To catch the spirit of the “scholarly style,” Wang Yuanqi had no alternative but to follow Huang Gongwang, whose work best exemplified the scholarly taste for blandness and naiveté. In Dong Qichang’s opinion, among the Four Yuan Masters, Wu Zhen’s 吳鎮 (1280-1354) work is characterized by heavy mountain masses and variation in the application of ink, while Wang Meng’s paintings feature full, intricate compositions and superfluous descriptive details. Their works neither cast off the obsession for restlessness nor attain a state of blandness and naiveté. Ni Zan 倪瓚 (1301-1374) was

⁹⁴ Cahill, *Hills beyond a River*, no. 21, 87.

⁹⁵ Wang Yuanqi, *Lutai tihuagao*, 97.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 101.

the only one who, according to Dong, “was never contaminated by the restlessness that has characterized the history of painting.”⁹⁷ In Dong’s eyes, even Huang Gongwang did not completely avoid the “characteristic of restlessness.”⁹⁸ Still, although Ni’s work best represents an unattainable state of aloof detachment, its apparent simplicity and freedom from any traditional sources make it difficult to copy – it may be possible to imitate its appearance but hardly imaginable to transmit its “inmost beauty and spiritual reverberation.”⁹⁹ The narrow range of his work’s subjects and severely simple compositions also give it little potential for additional development. His work is so extreme that it becomes a developmental end-point rather than a fertile ground from which new directions might grow. Compared to Ni Zan, Huang Gongwang’s variable yet bland compositions and abundant yet simple brushwork provided a richer, more complex model from which later artists could draw new ideas.

Personal Networks

Wang Yuanqi’s talent in painting reportedly dazzled numerous admirers and brought him great fame in Beijing. Although benefiting from the partisan struggle surrounding the “Debate on the Lower Yellow River,” as mentioned above, Wang Yuanqi seems to

⁹⁷ Dong Qichang, *Huachan shi suibi*, *juan 2*, 16.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, *juan 2*, 16.

⁹⁹ Sir n, *Chinese Painting*, vol. 4, 79.

have always distanced himself from every form of factionalism. He maintained good relationships with many scholars and officials active in the capital regardless of their political views. The recipients of his painting included Manchu dignitaries, Chinese officials, literary luminaries, and influential calligraphers, painters, and collectors. The evidence shows that the success of his official career and his high prestige in art circles cannot be separated from the wide personal network he wove in his early years. Some of the texts that illustrate his communications with colleagues and friends are excerpted in the following sections.

Boerdu 博爾都 (1649-1708)

Wang Yuanqi's talent as a landscapist had long been recognized by Manchu dignitaries and noblemen, among whom Boerdu was one of his most enthusiastic admirers. Boerdu, *zi* Dawen 大文, was a great-grandson of Emperor Taizu 太祖 (Nurhaci, r. 1616-1626) of the Qing dynasty and son of Duke Ke Xi. In the tenth month of 1660, the title of *fuguo jiangjun* 輔國將軍 (Bulwark-General of the State) was conferred on him by the Shunzhi emperor, but he lost this honorary title in 1669 for being embroiled in the crimes of his uncle, Banbuershan 班布爾善 (d. 1669), who, a devoted follower of Aobai 鰲拜 (Manchu: Oboi, ca. 1610-1669), was sentenced to death by the

Kangxi emperor.¹⁰⁰ Although Boerdu regained his title in 1680, he had never again actively participated in state affairs. Throughout his life, he indulged himself in literature and art. He and his cousin, Yueduan 岳端 (1671-?), were known as “The Two Excellent Poets of the Royal Family.” In his *Xiangzu biji* 香祖筆記 (*Random Notes by Supreme Fragrance*), Wang Shizhen, the leading poet of the early Qing, discusses them:

In the imperial clan, Honglan Zhuren 紅蘭主人 [Yueduan] is skilled in poetry and painting. He has a corpus entitled “Yuchisheng ji,” and he also patronized the publication *Han shou ji*, a poetry collection the work of Meng Jiao 孟郊 (751-814) and Jia Dao 賈島 (779-843) of the Tang dynasty (618-907). He was born wealthy and privileged as well as generous and broad-minded. How wonderful this is! The Bulwark-General of the State, Bo Wenting 問亭 [Boerdu], who calls himself “Donggao Zhuren” 東臯主人, is also renowned for his poetry. His works are collected in the *Baiyanqi shicao* 白燕棲詩草, an anthology of several volumes. They are truly excellent representatives of the studious princes of the royal clan.¹⁰¹

宗室紅蘭主人，工詩畫。有《玉池生集》，又刻郊、島二家詩曰《寒瘦集》。生於富貴而其胸懷蕭灑乃爾亦奇。又，鎮國將軍博問亭，自號東臯主人，亦以詩名。刻《白燕棲詩》若干卷。天潢多好學如此足見。

In 1689, Boerdu accompanied the Kangxi emperor in his Second Inspection Tour to the South. One of the purposes of this imperial trip was to recruit more Chinese scholars to the government and incite them to serve the Manchu monarch with enthusiasm and conviction. Having long been intimate with a great number of Chinese

¹⁰⁰ Zhao Erxun, ed., *Qing shi gao*, juan 249.

¹⁰¹ Wang Shizhen, *Xiangzu biji* (*Random Notes by Supreme Fragrance*), in vol. 870 of *Siku quanshu*, (masters), juan 11, 4-5.

scholars, Boerdu actively mediated between the Chinese literati and the Manchu court.

A number of Boerdu's poems in his *Baiyanqi shicao* demonstrate his good relationships with Jiangnan scholars and artists, who often gathered to drink and appreciate paintings with him. Sometimes, together with his friends, he wrote poetic colophons on the famous masterpieces named in such poems as “*Lofty Mount Lu* by Wang Shuming,” “*Landscape Painting* by Zhao Daniao 趙大年,” “*Clouds and Mountains* by Gao Fangshan”, and so forth.¹⁰² Boerdu, collector and patron of artists, was deeply interested in painting techniques and connoisseurship. Among numerous famous painters of his times, Boerdu especially admired Shitao and Wang Yuanqi. Commissioned by Boerdu, *Orchid and Bamboo* (fig. 2-16), dated 1691, was a cooperative handscroll by Shitao and Wang Yuanqi. Although in his essay “Shitao, Wang Yuanqi hezuo ‘lanzhu tu’ de wenti” 石濤、王原祁合作“蘭竹圖”的問題 (“The Problem of Shitao and Wang Yuanqi’s Cooperation in *Orchid and Bamboo*”) Shi Shouqian argues that their collaboration in *Orchid and Bamboo* was pressured rather than willing,¹⁰³ Boerdu’s commission of this work reflected his deep affection for the painting of famous literati artists from the south. A close friend of Wang Yuanqi’s, he often requested paintings from Wang and then wrote poems to praise his incomparable skill in

¹⁰² Boerdu, *Baiyanqi shicao* (*Draft of Poems from the Studio at Baiyanqi*), in *Wenting shiji* 問亭詩集 (*Anthology of Wenting*), in vol. 23 of *Siku weishou shu jikan*, part 8, juan 5, 5-6.

¹⁰³ See Shi Shouqian, “Shitao, Wang Yuanqi hezuo ‘lanzhu tu’ de wenti,” in *Fengge yu shibian*, 335-355.

brushwork. In “Requesting a Painting by Wang Lutai [Yuanqi],” Boerdu expresses his yearning for Yuanqi’s work: “[Your] brushwork has fabulous force (*shi* 勢). Is there any artist able to compete with you? If you are willing take account of my eager expectation, I would like you to paint a misty valley with clouds floating around hills.”¹⁰⁴ In another letter to Wang Yuanqi, he writes:

After the storm, warm mists float in clear skies;
 Clumps of wild trees and thicket grass grow in the distance.
 Please paint this scene on Shanteng paper;¹⁰⁵
 I will open a window, enjoy sleeping before it.¹⁰⁶

雨霽晴嵐帶暖煙，平蕪野樹淡相連。
 煩君畫入剡藤裏，終日開窗好對眠。

To Boerdu’s earnest request, Wang Yuanqi responded with compliments and geniality:

People in this world have become fickle and snobbish;
 The learned are belittled, conceited fops, admired.
 I admire your aloofness from worldly affairs,
 Your closing doors to shut out society.
 Circled by smoke from a Boshan censer
 And Goose Brook’s mist, your natural brush paints on its banks.

...

By a desolate cliff and bamboo grove,
 White clouds drift, breezes blow gently;
 How elude the fickle world by building a cottage here?

¹⁰⁴ Boerdu, *Baiyanqi shicao*, juan 5, 432.

¹⁰⁵ Shanteng paper was a high-quality paper produced in Shanxi, Zhejiang Province.

¹⁰⁶ Boerdu, *Baiyanqi shicao*, juan 7, 447.

...
 One day in a Taoist cloak, leaning on a stick,
 I will stroll with you and the elks.¹⁰⁷

世態輕儒冠，肉眼重紉綺。
 羨君寡交合，杜門無所慕。
 博山焚罷一揮毫，鵝溪千尺滿煙霧。

.....
 磯頭一望水悠悠，無數叢篁夾岸幽。
 有時蕭蕭懸素壁，白雲繚繞風颼颼。
 安得此中結茅宇，不須白眼嘆沉浮。

.....
 他時策杖披鶴氅，共爾閒隨麋鹿游。

Not only was Boerdu an admirer of Wang Yuanqi's but a confidant who could understand his work and exchange ideas about painting techniques with him. In the twelfth month of 1696, Wang wrote a long colophon in the album *Landscapes in the Styles of Ancient Masters* that expounded the aesthetics of landscape painting:

In the "Six Principles" of landscape painting, spirit consonance is of first importance. Since the Jin and Tang dynasties, Wang Youcheng [Wang Wei, 701-761] was the only one who grasped the quintessence of these principles. Dong [Yuan] and Juran developed them further and thus were esteemed as the "Sages of Painting" among the masters of the Song and Yuan. The Four Great Masters of the Yuan followed them and were considered the orthodox painters of the Southern School. Li [Cheng], Fan [Kuan], Jing [Hao], Gao [Kegong], the Two Mis, and the Three Zhaos all belonged to the same school.

A good composition is not founded on strangeness and uniqueness but on harmony and tranquility; good brushwork is not found in affected movements but expresses a natural and powerful spirit. The ancient masters painstakingly [studied the methods of painting] to find new paths, reaching the same goal by different means. This truth is hard not only to master but also to understand.... As to what I have learned, the methods of the ancient masters cannot be gained by imitation but

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., *juan* 5, 434.

can only be met in spirit and mind.¹⁰⁸

畫中山水六法，以氣韻生動為主。晉唐以來，惟王右丞獨闡其祕，而備於董巨。故宋元諸大家中推為畫聖，而四家繼之，淵源的派為南宗正傳。李范荆關高米三趙，皆一家眷屬也。

位置出入不在奇特，而在融洽穩當。點染筆墨不在工力，而在超脫渾厚。古人殫精竭思，各開生面。作用雖別，而神理則一。非惟不易學，亦不易知也。……古人之法，學不可期，而心或遇之。

The issues discussed in this colophon deal with the stylistic sources of literati painting, principles of composition, and brushwork techniques. Wang Yuanqi treated Boerdu as a knowledgeable expert and connoisseur of painting rather than a pretentious collector. Taking about three years to complete, the album he made for Boerdu includes works in the styles of such ancient masters as Dong Yuan, Juran, Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫 (1254-1322), Ni Zan, Wang Meng, Mi Youren 米友仁 (1072-1151), Huang Gongwang, Wu Zhen, and Li Cheng 李成 (919-967). The brushwork of these paintings is antique and elegant, representing the great artistry of this loyal follower of the Southern School.

Wang Shizhen (1634-1711)

Among Wang Yuanqi's friends, Wang Shizhen was regarded as the brightest literary luminary of his times. A native of Xincheng 新城 in Shandong 山東 Province, Wang was declared a child prodigy at an early age. After obtaining his *jinshi* degree in 1655, he was appointed to the post of Administrative Assistant of Yangzhou; many years later,

¹⁰⁸ Wang Yuanqi, "Ten Copies of Song-Yuan Landscape Paintings," in *Wang Sinong tihualu*, juan 2, 16.

he was promoted to Head of the Ministry of Crime. Leading the literary arena for half a century, Wang Shizhen “gained the Emperor’s respect for his remarkable talent in poetry.”¹⁰⁹ As Li Yuandu 李元度 has noted in “Wang Wenjian gong shilue” 王文簡公事略 (“A Brief Biography of Wang Wenjiangong [Shizhen]”):

The state paid great attention to achievements in culture and education, so a number of geniuses emerged in succession. Wang [Shizhen] had proved himself the leader of all and enjoyed fame as an outstanding poet for over fifty years. No matter how much they knew him, the scholar-officials regarded him as the Mount Tai and the Big Dipper [of the poetry world].¹¹⁰

國家文治軼千古，挖雅揚風，鉅公接踵而出。而一代正宗，必以新城王公稱首。公以詩鳴海內五十餘年，士大夫識與不識，皆尊之為泰山北斗。

Wang Shizhen was also highly energetic in collecting calligraphy and painting. He had good relationships with many collectors, including Sun Chengze 孫承澤 (1592-1676), Zhou Liangong 周亮工 (1612-1672), and Cao Rong 曹溶 (1612-1677). He was particularly willing to make friends with artists from the south. In his *Juyi lu* 居易錄 (*Records of Living at Ease*), Shizhen proudly wrote about his friendship with Wang Hui:

Known as the “Three Wangs” of Jiangzuo [the Jiangnan area], Wang Hui, Wang Taichang [Shiming] and Wang Lianzhou [Jian] were equally famous for their achievements in painting. In the *xinwei* year (1691), [Wang Hui] came to the

¹⁰⁹ Zhao Erxun et al., eds., *Qing shi gao*, juan 73.

¹¹⁰ Li Yuandu, “Wang Wenjian gong shilue” (“Brief Biography of the Venerable Elder Wang Wenjian [Shizhen],” in *Guochao xianzheng shilue* 國朝先正事略 (*Brief Biographies of Virtuous Officials of the Qing Dynasty*), ed. Li Yuandu, in vol. 538 of *Xuxiu siku quanshu*, (history), juan 6, 127.

capital. Proud of his skill in painting, Hui seldom created works for strangers. However, he was so eagerly desirous for my poetry that he requested my work through friends several times. He also suggested we exchange my poems for his works and painted a handscroll and an eight-leaf album for me. His sincerity really touched me!¹¹¹

（王翬）與太倉王太常時敏、王廉州鑑齊名江左，稱三王。辛未來京，頗自貴重，其畫不為人作，獨欲得余一詩為贈，屢囑諸公通意於予，又特作長幅及冊子八幅相遺，其意濃至可感！

To express his appreciation, Wang Shizhen composed and inscribed many poems on Hui's paintings. Among these poems are "For *Riding on a Cow's Back* by Wang Shigu,"¹¹² "A Farewell Meeting for Wang Shigu's *Return to Changshu*,"¹¹³ "Two Poems on *Painting for Zhutuo* by Wang Shigu,"¹¹⁴ all of which are collected in Wang Shizhen's *Daijingtang ji* 帶經堂集 (*Anthology of Daijing Hall*).

The friendship between the families of Wang Shizhen and Wang Yuanqi had spanned five or more generations.¹¹⁵ A close friend of Yuanqi's father Wang Kui, Wang Shizhen was eight years older than Wang Yuanqi and called the latter his "nephew." He notes in *Juyi lu*: "My nephew Maojing [Yuanqi], a *jinshi* of the *gengxu* year, is now appointed Supervising Secretary of the Ministry of Rites. He was a grandson of Yanke [Wang

¹¹¹ Wang Shizhen, *Juyi lu* 居易錄 (*Records of Living at Ease*), in vol. 869 of *Siku quanshu*, (masters), *juan* 18, 12.

¹¹² Wang Shizhen, *Daijing tang ji* (*Anthology of Daijing Hall*), in vol. 1414 of *Xuxiu siku quanshu*, (collection), *juan* 59, 533.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, *juan* 59, 533.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, *juan* 54, 469.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, *juan* 2, 21-22.

Shimin] and the eldest son of Duanshi [Wang Kui]. His painting is equal to that of his grandfather, Taichang [Shimin].”¹¹⁶ This paragraph was written in late 1694 or early 1695. At about that time, Wang Yuanqi made a ten-leaf album for Wang Shizhen, *Landscapes after Song and Yuan Masters*. Delighted with this gift, Wang Shizhen exclaimed: “[Wang Yuanqi] has truly captured the essence of the brushwork of the Yuan masters!”¹¹⁷

Wang Shizhen and Wang Yuanqi often exchanged views on literature and painting. Analogies between poetry and painting had been made and discussed by artists and critics since ancient times. As Su Shi commented on Wang Wei’s works: “Tasting Moujie’s [Wang Wei] poetry, there is painting in the poetry; observing Moujie’s painting, there is poetry in the painting.”¹¹⁸ Not much of Wang Yuanqi’s verse has survived, but Wang Shizhen’s *Juyi lu* contains a few examples, including “Painting of West Field” and “After Dachi’s *Fuchun Mountain*.”¹¹⁹

For both Wang Shizhen and Wang Yuanqi, painting and poetry have similar natures. In *Juyi lu*, Shizhen relates one of their conversations:

¹¹⁶ Wang Shizhen, *Juyi lu*, juan 26, 7.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, juan 26, 7.

¹¹⁸ Su Shi, “Shu Mojie Lantian yanyu tu” 書摩詰藍田煙雨圖 (“Colophon on *Misty Rain in Lantian* by Mojie [Wang Wei]”), in *Dongpo huaba* 東坡畫跋 (*Colophons on Paintings by Dongpo [Su Shi]*), in vol. 1 of *Zhongguo shuhua quanshu*, juan 5, 636.

¹¹⁹ Wang Shizhen, *Juyi lu*, juan 26, 8.

On a rainy day in autumn, Maojing [Wang Yuanqi] visited me with his paintings. We discussed the principles of painting, which are essentially the same as in poetry. In making painting and poetry, one firstly pursues profundity, then seeks limpidness, vigor, fluency. The status of Dong [Yuan] and Juran's styles in painting is like that of the Chan School of Buddhism. Huang Ziju [Gongwang], Ni Yuanzhen [Zan] and Dong Sibai [Qichang] were their only disciples in the Yuan and Ming. I asked [Yuanqi]: "Ni Zan and Dong Qichang pursued idleness and remoteness. What has the principle of vigor and fluency got to do with them?" [Wang Yuanqi] answered: "Vigor and fluency are reflected precisely in aloofness and distance, but only sensible persons can understand this." I also asked: "Qiu Ying did not paint in the literati manner. Why has he enjoyed fame equal to Tang [Yin] and Shen [Zhou] and is even more respected than [Wen] Zhengming?" Wang Yuanqi answered: "This situation much resembles that of the poetry of Wen [Tingyun] 溫庭筠 (ca. 812-866) and Li [Shangyin] 李商隱 (ca. 812-858). Their works feature extreme vigor and fluency in nature, which caused the critics to respect them highly and treat them as a genuine follower of Du Fu."¹²⁰

一日秋雨中，茂京攜畫見過。因極論畫理，其義皆與詩文相通。大約謂：始貴深入，既貴透出，又須沉著痛快。又謂畫家之有董、巨，猶禪家之有南宗。董、巨後嫡派，元惟黃子久、倪元鎮，明惟董思白耳。予問：“倪董以閒遠為工，與沉著痛快之說何居？”曰：“閒遠中沉著痛快，惟解人知之。”又曰：“仇英非士大夫畫，何以聲價在唐沈之間、徵明之右？”曰：“劉松年、仇英之畫，正如溫、李之詩。彼亦自有沉著痛快處。昔人謂義山善學杜子美亦此意也。”

These dialogues demonstrate the common thoughts of Wang Shizhen and Wang Yuanqi – such as, that painting and poetry are not isolated forms of art. Rooted in the same source, they share many common characteristics.

Song Luo 宋犖 (1634-1713)

Another influential poet of the early Qing, Song Luo, was also enthusiastic about

¹²⁰ Ibid., *juan* 26, 8.

Wang Yuanqi's painting. In his collection, a hanging scroll titled "Strong Wind and Timely Rain" was a gift from Wang Yuanqi. According to the twenty-four-volume catalogue *Shuhua jianying* 書畫鑒影 (*Mirror Images of Calligraphy and Painting*), this work depicted lofty peaks in the distance and a current of swift water in the foreground. Temples and cottages are interspersed among the mountains accompanied by pines and shrubs.¹²¹ The painting bears one of Wang Yuanqi's seals, "Saohua an" 掃花庵 ("Nunnery of Clearing Flowers"), and a dedicatory inscription to Song Luo:

The Grand Governor, Zhongmu [Song Luo], is accomplished in statecraft and excels in literary pursuits. In former days, Guangping 廣平 was praised for his "Ode to Plum Blossoms." Though separated by a thousand years, they share a common [aptitude for writing]! I once served as District Magistrate in Zhuyang [Ren], a subordinate district of Zhongmu's neighboring province. I have always admired him. It is entirely fortunate that he is currently serving as Governor of Jiangsu! In the fall of the *bingzi* year [1696], I met his son in the capital, and we discussed his thoughts on the humble skill [of painting]. I made time to paint this landscape, which awaits his criticism."¹²²

牧仲大中丞老公祖先生，經綸物望，風雅吾師。昔廣平鐵石為心，梅花作賦，真千載同符矣。余前作令渚陽，曾為鄰封屬吏，景仰有素。今逢秉鉞吳天，輝光再炙，尤為幸事。丙子秋，獲晤令嗣於都門，云先生曾齒及末藝。封事之暇，偶事磅礴，爰成此圖，請正大方。

In this inscription, Wang Yuanqi mentions Song Luo in the same breath with "Guangping," the style name of Song Jing 宋璟 (663-738), the famous Prime Minister

¹²¹ Li Zuoxian 李佐賢, *Shuhua jianying* (*Mirror Images of Calligraphy and Painting*), in vol. 1086 of *Xuxiu siku quanshu* (masters), *juan* 24, 6.

¹²² *Ibid.*, *juan* 24, 6.

of Emperor Xuanzong's reign (r. 712-756) in the Tang. Jing was renowned for his integrity and fairness, and he was also a writer famous in his time, earning universal praise for his ode on plum trees. Here, Wang Yuanqi suggests an analogy between Song Luo and Song Jing, which can be regarded as an appropriate compliment, since the two great men shared not only the same surname but also the same official rank and comparable prestige in literature.

Friends in the Mingju Clique

Although Wang Yuanqi's promotion in 1686 owed much to Yu Chenglong's support, there is no evidence of his adherence to any clique or group at court. Astutely avoiding involvement in factionalism not only insured him a stable position at court but also served as a precondition for an artist whose ambition was to propagate his art to every corner of elite society. For this reason, Wang Yuanqi never refused the friendship of any colleague, including members of the clique of Mingju, the Manchu high official dismissed as a result of the "Debate on the Lower Yellow River," as discussed above.

Zha Shenxing 查慎行 (1650-1727), also known as Xiazhong 夏重, was a native of Haining 海寧, Zhejiang 浙江 Province. As a young man, he was hired to tutor Mingju's second son, Kuixu 揆敘 (active late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries). In his *Yijietang ziding shiji* 益戒堂自訂詩集 (*The Self-Compiled Poetry Anthology of Yijie Hall*), Kuixu repeatedly mentions his study with Zha Shenxing and

wrote a number of poems to his mentor.¹²³

Unlike most contemporary poets, who fashionably mimicked Tang writers, Zha Shenxing was devoted to Song poetry. Small wonder that, in the foreword to Zha's *Jingyetang ji* 敬業堂詩集 (*Poetry Anthology of Jingye Hall*), Wang Shizhen compares him to the famous Southern Song poet, Lu You 陸游 (1125-1210): "In terms of creativity in 'modern-form poetry,' Xiazhong's work may not be as vigorous as that of Jiannan [Lu You]; but the delicate taste reflected in Xiazhong's poetry was not exceeded by Jiannan's."¹²⁴

Zha Shenxing began his government service in 1693 in the South Imperial Study of the Kangxi emperor. He and Wang Yuanqi met and became friends no later than 1694, the year that Yuanqi painted *Landscape in the Style of Dachi* for him. Probably enthralled by the exquisite artistry of Wang Yuanqi's work, the following year, 1695, Shenxing sent Wu Weiye's son, Wu Jing 吳暉, to request more paintings from Wang Yuanqi.¹²⁵ Wu Jing returned with an oral message from Wang Yuanqi: "My painting cannot go without Xiazhong's [Zha Shenxing] poetry. As long as the poetry comes, my

¹²³ See Kuixu, *Yijie tang ziding shiji* (*The Self-Compiled Poetry Anthology of Yijie Hall*), in vol. 20 of *Siku weishou shu jikan*, part 8.

¹²⁴ Wang Shizhen, "Jingye tang shiji yuan xu" 敬業堂詩集原序 ("Original Preface to *Poetry Anthology of Jingye Hall*"), in *Jingye tang shiji* (*Poetry Anthology of Jingye Hall*) Zha Shenxing, in vol. 83 of *Sibu congkan zhengbian* 四部叢刊正編 (*Main Compilation of Collected Books Organized into Four Categories*) (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1979), 1.

¹²⁵ See Zha Shenxing, *Jingye tang shiji*, juan 19, 35.

painting will be sent without delay.”¹²⁶ After receiving Wang Yuanqi’s word, Zha Shenxing instantly composed a long poem to express his admiration for Wang Yuanqi and his grandfather, Wang Shimin:

[The Wang Family of] Loudong owns a rich collection of books;
 Their library could rival that of Marquis Ye.¹²⁷
 Shimin often used his brush to create nature;
 His success matches that of Wen [Zhengming] and Dong [Qichang].
 His worthy grandson Yuanqi inherited his talent and graceful temperament
 And early ascended to high rank and communed with a flock of capable friends.
 ...
 He sometimes presents his paintings;
 His skill is extremely excellent.
 ...
 Although my poetry is truly terrible,
 how could I decline his request?
 The ancients always kept their promises;
 How could I measure [our works] with money?
 I hope only that he will not hide his precious paintings
 Nor close his door to me.¹²⁸

婁東富文獻，世守鄴侯架。太原老奉常，腕底翰造化。當年書畫跡，貴豈文董亞？至今賢子孫，餘韻足瀟灑。黃門早登第，群從俱方駕。

.....

時時出餘技，落筆妙天下。

.....

我詩頗拙速，敢托不敏謝。古人重踐言，相值寧論價。君其勿堅壁，至我長避舍。

¹²⁶ Wang’s work is recorded in notes to Zha’s “Requesting Wang Lutai’s [Yuanqi] Painting with a Poem,” in *Jiuren ji* 酒人集 (*Anthology of a Drinker*), in *Jingye tang shiji*, in vol. 83 of *Sibu congan zhengbian*, juan 19, 34-35.

¹²⁷ Marquis Ye, named Li Mi 李泌 (722-789), was a famous bibliophile of the Tang dynasty. Later scholars often used the phrase “Marquis Ye’s shelves” to praise a wonderful library.

¹²⁸ Zha Shenxing, “Requesting Wang Lutai’s [Yuanqi] Painting with a Poem,” in *Jingye tang shiji*, juan 19, 34-35.

On receiving Zha Shenxing's poem, Wang Yuanqi immediately painted *Landscape in the Style of Juran* followed by a poem written in the same rhyme sequence as Zha Shenxing's:

Shenxing's integrity and perseverance
 recall a pine on a cliff.
 He studied assiduously;
 his knowledge matches the ancients'.
 [His poetry] is pure, fresh, surpassingly novel,
 exceeding the works of Han [Yu] and Su [Shi].
 In a good mood, his beautiful verses burst forth
 like pearls and jade beads sprinkled on the ground.
 I have long been filled with heartfelt admiration [for his achievement].
 How to keep pace with my esteemed friend?
 My view of literature is so restricted,
 like single round spot on a whole leopard.
 I wish I could roam and visit my friends,
 but I have always been fettered by official affairs.
 Where can I find outspoken friends like him
 when shallow and injudicious ideas grow up in my mind?
 Each time I attempt the paltry skill of painting,
 I am shamed by these inept hands.
 Although I follow the masters of Song and Yuan,
 my weak, clumsy brushwork must be censured by insightful men.
 ...
 The essence of painting, hard to obtain;
 but I did my best to paint for him.
 Just as papaya is no equal to precious jade,
 how can I repay his kindness [with painting]?

龍山查先生，峭壁青松架。讀書百錘煉，等身與古化。清健更瑰奇，韓蘇之流亞。興來爛漫題，珠玉繽紛灑。余聞心折久，畏友敢并駕。霧豹窺半斑，騷壇戰而罷。欲為訪戴遊，一官苦無暇。坐令鄙吝生，他山何所藉？小技試磅礴，每恥居人下。粉本追宋元，筆墨四家借。腕弱愧癡肥，定為識者詫。

.....

真宰雖難搜，勉力為君畫。木瓜陪瓊瑤，何以云報謝？

Following Wang Yuanqi's painting and poem, Zha Shenxing added a second poem in the same rhyme sequence. This poetic game was repeated several times between them. Through painting and literature, they cordially expressed their mutual respect and admiration.¹²⁹

More records of intercourse between Wang Yuanqi and Zha Shenxing may be found in Zha's *Jingyetang shiji*.¹³⁰ In this anthology, Zha recorded Wang's meetings with his friends Zhu Yizun and Tang Youzeng 湯右曾 (1656-1722), both of whom had good relations with Mingju's sons.¹³¹ As mentioned above, the leading poet of Zhejiang Province, Zhu Yizun was active in Jiangnan literary circles. No extant source provides the exact date of his first meeting with Wang Yuanqi, but they might have known each other during or soon after the *Boxuehongci* Examination of 1679. At Gu Xiajun's 顧俠君 residence, Xiuye Hut, they once gathered with many friends. Imitating Dong Qichang's *Cottage of Lu Hong*, Wang did a landscape composition followed by poems

¹²⁹ See Zha Shenxing, *Jiuren ji*, in *Jingye tang shiji*, *juan* 19, 35-36.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, *juan* 29.

¹³¹ According to *Chronology of Zhu Yizun*, as early as 1673, Zhu had exchanged letters with Xingde 性德 (1655-1685; in Manchu: Singde), Mingju's first son and the most famous Manchu poet of the Qing dynasty. The following year, Zhu visited Singde in Beijing; they became intimate friends. Singde died at age thirty. Zhu wrote many poems and elegies to lament Singde. For more information about Singde, see David R. McCrow, *Chinese Lyricists of the Seventeenth Century* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), 117-143.

Tang Youzeng, *zi* Xiya 西崖, was a native of Hangzhou 杭州, Zhejiang Province. His fame in poetry was equal to Zhu Yizun. In his early years, Tang tutored Kuixu at Mingju's home and got to know Zha Shenxing and Zhu Yizun at that time.

and colophons by the participants in the meeting.¹³² In the meantime, Zhu Yizun wrote “Note on Xiuye Tang” to commemorate this elegant gathering.¹³³ Many years later, probably through the agency of Zhu Yizun, his nephew, Wu Zhenwu 吳振武, studied landscape painting with Wang.¹³⁴ It is likely that Wu might have been one of Wang’s ghost-painters in his later years.

Other Chinese Literati and Collectors

In 1695, Wang Yuanqi painted a series of softly colored landscape paintings for a friend named Wang Mu 王晦 (1646-1719), better known as Shubai. The owner of a famous Taihu stone, Zhuyun feng 翥雲峰, Shubai named his studio “Zhuyun lou,” or “Pavilion of the Zhuyun Stone.” Immersed in literature and his art collection, Wang Mu seemed not much interested in an official career, although he eventually sat for the civil service examination and earned the *jinshi* degree in 1712, only one year earlier than his son, Wang Jingming 王敬銘 (1668-1721), the Highest Ranking Scholar of the 1713 examination.

In the summer of 1695, Yuanqi finished a large-scaled painting, *Landscape in the Style of Huang Gongwang* (fig. 2-6), for Shubai. In the inscription on this painting,

¹³² Zha Shenxing, *Jingye tang shiji*, juan 36, 385-386.

¹³³ Zhu Yizun, *Pushu ting ji*, juan 66, 1058-1059.

¹³⁴ See Yu Jianhua 俞劍華, ed., *Zhongguo meishujia renming cidian* 中國美術家人名辭典 (*Dictionary of the Names of Chinese Artists*) (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, 1981), 295.

Yuanqi reviews their friendship with deep emotion, comparing their relationship to that of the ancient hermits Zhong Ziqi 鐘子期 and Yu Boya 俞伯牙, who for thousands of years had been considered models of the Confucian ethic of good friendship. He then expounded on the sources of his brushwork, emphasizing his step-by-step study of Dong Yuan, Juran, and the Four Yuan Masters. Furthermore, in the same paragraph, he indicates that “the principles of landscape painting resemble that of Chan meditation,” and claims he is the inheritor of the legacy of the Southern School.

Wang Yuanqi’s circle of friends was not limited to literati from the south. Mi Hanwen 米漢雯 (active, mid-seventeenth century), born in Beijing, was a direct descendent of the Song calligrapher and painter, Mi Fu. His grandfather, Mi Wanzhong 米萬鐘 (1570-1628), was, during the Ming, as famous in calligraphy as Dong Qichang. Mi Hanwen was skilled in running script in the “Mi style” and was also good at seal carving. He attended the *Boxuehongci* Examination of 1679 and was awarded the second-rank honorary title.¹³⁵ Like many of his peers, Mi Hanwen often socialized with scholars and artists from the south.¹³⁶ In the fall of 1687, Wang Yuanqi painted *Landscape of Dongting Lake* (fig. 2-17) for him. One of his early works, the theme of this painting was apparently inspired by the academic painting of the Song dynasty.

¹³⁵ Zhao Erxun et al., ed., “Xuanju” (4), in *Qing shi gao*, juan 109.

¹³⁶ For Mi Hanwen’s activities with scholars and artists, see poems collected in Zhu Yizun, “Mi Zilai’s Visit to Yan,” in *Jianghu zaijiu ji* (1), in *Pushu ting ji*, juan 24; “Bid Farewell to Mi Zilai on His Way to Jianchang,” in *Jianghu zaijiu ji* (2), in *Pushu ting ji*, juan 25.

Considering that Hanwen's background was associated with the great Song master, Mi Fu, Wang Yuanqi might intentionally have chosen this subject to express his respect toward Hanwen's ancestor.

Although Wang Yuanqi spent most of his time in the north from 1670 to 1699, he did not ignore his connections to his southern hometown Taicang in Jiangsu. When able to return home, he participated in various meetings and elegant gatherings there. In the summer of 1689, Yuanqi painted a handscroll in the style of Huang Gongwang for an elder named Wang Yuanchu 王元初. The painting was prefaced by a frontispiece written by Huang Yujian 黃與堅 (1620-1701), an outstanding poet and native to Taicang, who was one of the "Ten Young Masters of Taicang."¹³⁷ By age eight, he was familiar with Tang poetry; in his early years, he completed reading the classics of the Zhou and Qin dynasties. After passing the *Boxuehongci* Examination, he was appointed Clerk in the Hanlin Academy, participating in the compilation of the *Standard History of the Ming Dynasty* and *National Chorography of the Great Qing*.¹³⁸

Although this handscroll was a gift to Wang Yuanchu on his eightieth birthday, no evidence shows that Wang Yuanqi was acquainted with the recipient. At the end of the painting, Yuanqi only signed his name; nor he did not write words of congratulation to

¹³⁷ See Wu Weiye, "Taicang shizi shixu" 太倉十子詩序 ("Preface of the Poetry by the Ten Young Masters of Taicang [Loudong]"), in *Meicun jia cang gao*, juan 30, 1.

¹³⁸ Zhao Erxun et al., ed., *Qing shi gao*, juan 484.

the recipient. It is likely that this handscroll was requested by Yuanchu's friend before Yuanchu's birthday. In other words, considering the close relationship between Huang and the Wang family, he probably acted as an intermediary in obtaining this painting for Wang Yuanchu.

The period of 1670 to 1699 was important in Wang Yuanqi's life. During this time, he faithfully followed his grandfather's teachings, energetically devoting himself to landscape painting. For almost thirty years, he gradually developed his own landscape compositions and theory, which formed a fertile basis for orthodox painting in subsequent years. At the same time, owing to his personality and talent in painting, a number of scholars fond of painting became his friends. Although he had not been appointed to a high position at court, his personal network among various scholars and officials was well established; although he had not been noticed by the emperor, his reputation as a literati painter had been vastly enhanced in the capital. Now, before him lay a broad way to the summit of his official and artistic life. Along with his success, the golden age of orthodox painting was about to dawn.

CHAPTER THREE

WANG YUANQI'S ART AFTER 1700 (I): RESONANCE OF THE PAST

Wang Yuanqi's father, Wang Kui, died in late 1696. To pay his last respects for his father, Yuanqi immediately returned his hometown, Taicang, and observed the three-year mourning period for parents until 1699. During this period, though absent from official circles in the capital, his reputation as a prestigious painter continued to improve. It was in the same period that the Kangxi emperor's close friend and artistic advisor, Gao Shiqi, happened to leave the court for unknown reasons.¹ Consequently, when Yuanqi was ready to return, an enviable post was vacant and awaiting a suitable occupant. In the autumn of 1700, he commenced serving at court as the Kangxi emperor's artistic advisor.² In the next year, he assumed the position of *you chunfang you zhongyun* 右春坊右中允 (Right Palace Guardian in the Right Secretariat of the Heir Apparent),³ serving in the South Imperial Study.⁴ However, Yuanqi was ever unsatisfied with what

¹ Gao Shiqi left the capital around 1697. See Zhao Erxun et al., ed., "Xuanju" (4), in *Qing shi gao*, *juan* 271.

² In the inscription on *Landscape Dedicated to Wang Depei in the Style of Huang Gongwang*, Wang Yuanqi notes: "I have been friends with Mr. Wang for a long time – since autumn of the year *gengchen* (1700), when I was summoned to court to serve the emperor." See Wang Yuanqi, *Wang sinong tihualu*, *juan* 1, 4.

³ This position was ranked 6a during the Ming and Qing dynasties. See Charles O. Hucker, ed., *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, 71.

⁴ Wen Zhaotong, ed., *Qing chu liu da huajia*, 35.

he had achieved. In the following decade, he continued to seek traditional literati art for fresh approaches to making art and introduce them into orthodox painting. This chapter is concerned with Wang Yuanqi's breakthrough to painting techniques during the mature stage of his art. Through his efforts, the Orthodox School reached its heyday in the first decade of the eighteenth century.

1. Word and Image

1.1 Illustrative Paintings of Du Fu's Poems

Ancient literary works were often nutrition for Wang Yuanqi's paintings. Besides works based on Wang Wei, he had also brushed a considerable number of paintings that illustrated works by other poets. Thus, according to *Lutai tihuagao*, Yuanqi once made a painting for his friend Fuyin 服尹 based on two lines by the Tang poet Han Yu 韓愈 (768-824):

Distant mountains float in the sky like a beauty's eyebrows
Freshly painted in bright hues of turquoise green.⁵

天空浮修眉，濃綠畫新就。

Responding to Han Yu, Yuanqi inscribed his own poem on the painting:

Seeing flowers all over Chang'an,

⁵ Han Yu, "Nanshan shi" 南山詩 ("South Mountain"), in *Quan Tang shi* 全唐詩 (*Complete Tang Poems*), ed. Peng Dingqiu 彭定求 et al. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960), *juan* 336.

I am still much saddened by difficult journeying.
 Golden orioles call from the depths of bamboo groves,
 Yet Jiangnan's spring still overshadows this beautiful scene.⁶

眼飽長安花欲然，卻教愁絕路三千。
 竹深處處鶯啼綠，輪與江南四月天。

In the spring of 1702, Yuanqi created a second landscape on these lines by Han Yu (fig. 3-1). Both paintings were executed in a light version of the blue-and-green style,⁷ an archaic manner favored by Tang artists and revived in the Yuan by Zhao Mengfu. This second piece, also a hanging scroll, was completed in Yuanqi's mansion in Beijing. Its mist-filled river and verdant groves remind us of the warm, humid climate of Jiangnan. This scene, as depicted in his poem and two paintings, must have evoked Yuanqi's nostalgic longing for his hometown in Jiangnan.

In the winter of 1708, Wang Yuanqi's colleague and friend Li Tingyi 勵廷儀 (1669-1732) celebrated his fortieth birthday. A fraternal elder of Li, Yuanqi presented a painting to him as a birthday gift. On it, he transcribed these lines by the Song poet and calligrapher Su Shi:

I have been your friend for some time now;
 Green mountain, yellow hair naturally illuminate each other.⁸

我從公遊非一日，不覺青山映黃髮。

⁶ Wang Yuanqi, *Lutai tihuagao*, 104.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 104.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 101.

“Green mountain” and “yellow hair,” respectively, refer to the younger and elder. Despite a great difference in their ages, Yuanqi and Tingyi quickly found each other’s company congenial. Through this illustrative painting of Su Shi’s poem, Yuanqi expresses his delight and pride in their friendship.

Among Yuanqi’s numerous paintings based on ancient poems, one of the most fantastic is *Illustrative Painting of a Du Fu Poem*, executed in 1702 (fig. 3-2). Now preserved in Wan-go Weng’s collection, this huge composition is 10.5 feet tall. On the upper left corner of the painting, Yuanqi transcribes in clerical script two lines from Du Fu:

A thunderclap brings sudden storm to a thousand peaks;
The aroma of flowers resembles *baihe* perfume.

雷聲忽送千峰雨，花氣渾如百和香

According to Yuanqi’s inscription, this monumental landscape was commissioned by one of his friends who had received these lines by Du Fu copied out by the Kangxi emperor. To express his gratitude to and respect for the emperor, he requested that Wang Yuanqi make an illustrative painting based on Du’s lines, excerpted from Du’s regulated verse “Jishi” 即事 (“Improvisation”) written in the second year of Dali 大曆 (767).

In his later years, Du Fu led a vagrant life, suffering poverty and poor health. In the

spring of 767, while ill, Du was twice forced to move, settling eventually in Kuizhou 夔州 in present Sichuan 四川 Province.⁹ Despite his plight, there were several occasions for happiness: according to Chen Yixin's 陳貽焮 *Du Fu pingzhuàn* 杜甫評傳 (A *Critical Biography of Du Fu*), at least two events brought Du great relief in early 767. First, early that year, his beloved younger brother Du Guan 杜觀 visited him in Kuizhou. Excited by their reunion, Du wrote a series of poems for his brother.¹⁰

Second and more importantly, a stimulating message came from the capital city Chang'an 長安: the Military Commissioner of Hebei, Tian Shengong 田神功 (d. 767), had requested an audience with the emperor in the capital.¹¹ The An-Shi Rebellion of 755-762 so devastated the Tang empire that it never fully recovered. The rebellion eventually was suppressed after eight years of civil war, but much of the country remained under the military control of local warlords, or military commissioners. They controlled large forces, and many openly defied edicts from the central government, refused to pay tribute to the court, conjoined with one another through marriage, and

⁹ Kuizhou is in today's Sichuan Province. For Du Fu's life in Kuizhou, see Chen Yixin, *Du Fu pingzhuàn* (*Critical Biography of Du Fu*) (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2003), 967-976.

¹⁰ For example, in early 767, after receiving a letter from his brother, Du Guan, Du Fu wrote a five-character regulated verse: "You have just passed Jiangling; When can you arrive in Kuizhou? In chaos, separations are frequent; In reunion, chronic illness should dissipate quickly. In the southing wind, I open my tearful eyes; Every day I ascend the waterside pavilion. Regardless, my weak body needs support: Why not from the bones of the dead?" In *Quan Tang shi*, *juan* 231.

¹¹ See Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 et al., ed., *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 (*New Standard History of the Tang*), in vol. 12 of *Ershisi shi* 二十四史 (*Twenty-four Standard Histories*) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997), *juan* 144, 4702.

often were formally or functionally independent regimes. Consequently, in many areas, the authority of the central government existed in name only. Under these circumstances, Tian Shengong's visit to the emperor became a significant event with symbolic meaning. For people like Du Fu who were concerned with the fate of the nation, Tian's obedient attitude prefigured a possible recovery of imperial power. In his "Improvisation," Du Fu uses the symbolic term "baihe perfume," an aromatic essence that an emissary from Veigia had presented as tribute to the Han Emperor Wudi 武帝 (r. 141-87 B.C.E.).¹² Although ultimately the Tang political situation did not take the favorable turn that Du had hoped for, his initial joy and optimism are vividly expressed in "Improvisation" and moreover are conveyed by Wang Yuanqi's painting.

We have noted that Yuanqi's *Illustrative Painting of Du Fu's Poem* is an extraordinarily large colored painting. Depicting on its silk surface an imposing mass of dense scenery, the artist used the blue-and-green style to present a landscape bathed in the fresh but humid air that follows a sudden storm. Verdant mountains range across the fore and middle grounds of the composition, climb steeply, and merge into billowy clouds at the top. Cottages and buildings stand quietly among vegetation that includes pines, willows, cypresses, and vines.

Wang Yuanqi's use of Du's poetry in his paintings was not prompted by sudden

¹² See Chen Jing 陳敬, ed., *Xiang pu* 香譜 (*Collection of Perfumes*), in vol. 844 of *Siku quanshu* (masters) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1987), *juan* 1, 13.

impulse but reflected his deliberations on the origins and history of landscape painting. By the time of his art's maturity, Yuanqi had realized that merely imitating ancient masters would not support a further development of his work. As he claimed in *Wang Sinong tihua lu* 王司農題畫錄 (*Selected Colophons by Minister Wang of the Division of Revenue*), “a painter should stand apart; emulating ancient masters is no more than a temporary expedient. As the ancient critics have pointed out, ‘differing from the ancients is not [emulating] the ancients; too much similarity to the ancients leads to the loss of self.’”¹³ While critically interpreting the artistic legacy left by major painters of the past, Yuanqi sought new resources, technical and emotional, by which to perpetuate and enliven the orthodox school of painting. Since Yuanqi had inherited a personal gift for poetry from his scholarly background, it occurred to him that he could add the resources of ancient poetry to those of ancient painting as sources of inspiration for his work. Thus, from poetry, especially that by prominent poets like Du Fu, Wang Yuanqi acquired fresh ideas for his landscapes.

1.2 “The Thousands of Commentaries on Du Fu’s Poetry”

Wang Yuanqi’s illustration of Du Fu’s lines of 1702 was less a spontaneous creation than a product of the cultural climate of the early Qing. Studies of Du Fu’s work were

¹³ Wang Yuanqi, *Wang sinong tihualu*, juan 1, 6.

an important component of early Qing scholarship and epitomized the intellectual pursuits of the elite class of the Kangxi reign period.

Along with Li Bai 李白 (701-762) and Wang Wei, Du Fu is considered one of the greatest Chinese poets. In the history of Chinese literature, his reputation as “Poet Sage” and “Poet Historian” is based not only on the technical excellence of his poetry but also on his high level of patriotism and social responsibility. As Stephen Owen has pointed out, “within the Chinese poetic tradition Tu Fu is almost beyond judgment, because, like Shakespeare in our own tradition, his literary accomplishment has itself become a major component in the historical formation of literary values. The peculiar nature of Tu Fu’s greatness lies beyond the limited scope of literary history.”¹⁴ He produced more than a thousand poems, most of which reflect his profound compassion for humanity and his hatred of war. During early Qing times, scholar officials experienced the same ordeal of national subjugation as did the mid-Tang, and hence they had great sympathy for Du’s sentiments against the social unrest and upheaval of his time. Just after the downfall of the Ming, therefore, Du’s status rose to an unprecedented level, giving birth to a movement known as “*qianjia zhu Du*” 千家注杜, or “Thousands of Commentaries on Du Fu’s Poetry.”

So voluminous was scholarship on Du’s poetry during the early Qing that Zhou

¹⁴ Stephen Owen, *The Great Age of Chinese Poetry: The High T’ang* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981), 183.

Caiquan 周采泉, in his *Du ji shulu* 杜集書錄 (*Records and Catalogue of Du's Writings*), collected twenty-seven sets of early Qing emendations of and commentaries on Du's corpus as well as further commentaries on these twenty-seven sets by another three hundred authors and editors. During the Kangxi period, the hermeneutics of Du's poetry as represented by Jiang-Zhe and Huizhou scholars reached the height of its development. According to *Du ji shulu*, the most important scholarship on Du's poetry during the late Ming and early Qing includes *Du yi* 杜臆 (*Conjectures Regarding Du Fu*) by Wang Sishi 王嗣奭 (1566-1648), *Du Du siyan* 讀杜私言 (*An Informal Discussion after Reading Du Fu's Poetry*) by Lu Shiguan 盧世綸, *Qian zhu Du shi* 錢注杜詩 (*Qian's Commentary on Du Fu's Poetry*) by Qian Qianyi 錢謙益 (1582-1664), and *Du shi xiangzhu* 杜詩詳注 (*Detailed Commentaries on Du Fu's Poetry*),¹⁵ among many others.

The hermeneutics of Du's poetry has a long, extraordinary history. Anthologies of Du's poetry were published as early as the Song, and commentaries subsequently emerged in an unending stream. The earliest extant variorum edition of Du's work is *Wang zhuangyuan ji baijia zhu biannian Du Ling shi shi* 王狀元集百家注編年杜陵詩史 (*Annalistic Collection of Commentaries on Du Ling's [Du Fu] Poetry by Wang Zhuangyuan*), a 32-volume work compiled by Wang Shipeng 王十朋 (1112-1171) and

¹⁵ See Zhou Caiquan, ed., *Du ji shulu* (*Records and Catalogue of Du's Writings*) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1986), vol. 1, 18.

other Southern Song scholars.¹⁶ Other influential works on Du's poetry include *Jiu jia jizhu Du shi* 九家集注杜詩 (*Nine Variorum Editions of Du Fu's Poetry*) compiled by Guo Zhida 郭知達; *Huang shi bu qianjia jizhu Du Gongbu shi shi* 黃氏補千家集注杜工部詩史 (*Supplemental Variorum Editions of Du Gongbu's [Du Fu] Poetry*) by Huang Xi 黃希 and Huang He 黃鶴; as well as others. This early scholarship, which focused mainly on the editions, chronological order, and critical interpretations of Du's poetry, laid a framework for studies in the following centuries. But while Song research laid a foundation for later work, it was not a sound foundation. The uneven quality of the Song commentaries resulted in many questionable conclusions that were challenged by later scholars. Some early research failed to provide reliable sources, while other publications spuriously claimed to be authored by such famous people as Su Shi; such flaws damaged the authority and reliability of these works.

The second golden era of Du studies came in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Late Ming and early Qing scholars, using new standards of scholarship, strove to correct mistakes in earlier work. First, they emphasized the principle of deriving truth from observation, avoiding the use of exegetical interpretations and of quotations taken from context. After the upheaval of the Song-Yuan transition, during which the Mongols conquered China, scholars who had reached maturity under

¹⁶ Wang Shipeng, ed., *Wang Zhuangyuan ji baijia zhu biannian Du ling shi shi* (*Annalistic Collection of Commentaries on Du Ling's [Du Fu] Poetry by Wang Zhuangyuan*) (Jingdu: Zhengwen chubanshe, 1977).

the Song were bitter over the loss not merely of Song but of Chinese rule over their empire. Their mental trauma over foreign subjugation was reflected in their commentaries on Du's poetry. They tended to magnify the moral aspects of his poetry, exaggerating them in "advocating ethics and glorifying morals."¹⁷ They also overemphasized the role of patriotism in his work. Song commentators proposed a theory of *fengci* 諷刺, or allegorization, which holds that Du's poetry is rife with metaphor and metonymy, devices through which Du Fu expressed his political views and issued precautionary warnings. In one of his eight "Qiu si" 秋思 ("Autumn Meditations"), Du describes the palace of Han Emperor Wudi and recounts the story of his pursuit of immortality. Many commentators believed that this poem obliquely satirized Tang Emperor Xuanzong, who practiced Taoist alchemy to prolong his life.¹⁸ Early Qing scholars, however, were more careful and rigorous in their analyses of Du's work.¹⁹ In his *Du shi shuo* 杜詩說 (*Interpretation of Du Fu's Poetry*), Huang Sheng 黃

¹⁷ Hao Runhua 郝潤華 and Wang Yonghuan 王永環, "Huang Sheng *Du shi shuo* yu Qing chu Du shi quanshi fangfa" 黃生 "杜詩說" 與清初杜詩詮釋方法 ("Huang Sheng's *Interpretation of Du Fu's Poetry* and Interpretation Methods for Du's Poetry in the Early Qing"), *Du Fu yanjiu xuekan* 杜甫研究學刊 (*Academic Journal of Du Fu Studies*), no. 2 (2005): 60.

¹⁸ See Ye Jiaying 葉嘉瑩, *Du Fu qiuxing ba shou jishuo* 杜甫秋興八首集說 (*Variorum of Du Fu's Eight "Autumn Meditation" Poems*) (Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 1997), 258.

¹⁹ Early Qing scholars' attitudes toward the theory of allegorization were complicated. Some scholars partly acknowledged it. For instance, in his annotations to "Washing the Weapon and Steed," Qian Qianyi associated Du's poem with the court secrets of Emperor Xuanzong's period. See Hu Xiaoshi, "Du shi 'beizheng' xiaojian" 杜詩《北征》小箋 ("Commentary on 'Expedition to the North'"), in *Hu Xiaoshi lunwenji* 胡小石论文集 (*Corpus of Hu Xiaoshi*) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1982), 98. Nevertheless, Qing scholars were generally cautious in interpreting ancient poetic lines, objecting to any form of arbitrary speculation.

生 complains: “Previous annotators tended to associate Wudi with Minghuang [Emperor Xuanzong]. However, [in this poem], after a glance at Penglai Palace, the poet describes the scenery on his trip and expresses nostalgia for his old country. Why must people always involve his poems with court affairs? ...Later scholars failed to digest this poem and insisted on far-fetched ideas.... Their pure speculation led to misunderstandings of Du’s poetry!”²⁰

In *Du shi shuo*, Huang further reproaches irresponsible commentators:

For a long time, the features of Mr. Du’s poetry have been distorted by unwise commentators. They did not know the facts of Mr. Du’s life nor did they have a comprehensive understanding of his works. Their failures resulted from misunderstanding the purport of his work. Consequently, their commentaries often focus on minor details while losing the substance: they comment on single words while failing to grasp the essence of the text. The soul of Mr. Du’s work has long been stifled by mediocre commentators!”²¹

杜公之真面目，蔽於妄註者不少。至其為評，不能深悉公之生平，不能綜貫公之全集，且不融會一詩之大旨。是故評其細而遺其大，評其一字一句，而失其全篇，則公之真精神，汨沒於俗評者實多。

Although Wang Yuanqi seems to have been relatively indifferent to scholarship on poetry, he was influenced by certain principles of early Qing literary research, especially its cautious attitude toward ancient sources. Throughout his life, while diligently

²⁰ Huang Sheng, “Qiuxing ba shou” 秋興八首 (“The Eight ‘Autumn Meditation’ Poems”), in *Du shi shuo* (*The Interpretation of Du Fu’s Poetry*) (Hefei: Huangshan shushe, 1994), 307.

²¹ Huang Sheng, “Qiuxing bashou,” in *Du shi shuo*, 2.

studying ancient masters, Yuanqi insisted on the careful examination of ancient works. In his *Tihuagao*, he often pointed out the shortcomings of ancient artists and provided amendatory explanations. In his inscription to *Jiangnan Spring in the Style of Zhao Danian and Zhao Mengfu*, he comments:

Zhao Danian faithfully followed the methods of Huichong. People have thought that the delicate and refined brushwork of Huichong's painting faithfully depicted the beautiful scenery of spring. It is wonderful – and yet imperfect. Because his travels were limited [by an imperial edict to prevent plots and revolts by members of the imperial family], his work lacks vital momentum. However, comparing his brushwork with that of Songxue [Zhao Mengfu], I can see the similarities between them and also that Danian's brushwork never diverged from that of Dong [Yuan] and Juran.²²

趙大年學惠崇法，成一家眷屬，昔人謂其纖妍淡冶，真得春光明媚之象，但所歷不越數百里，無名山大川氣勢耳。今參以松雪筆意，峰巒雲樹，宛然相合，方知大年筆墨仍不出董巨宗風。

Here, carefully observing Zhao Danian's extant works, Wang Yuanqi rejects the idea that Danian's painting descended from the extravagant, bright, and showy style favored by professional painters. Instead, he claims that Danian was a follower of the soberer styles of two patriarchs of literati painting, Dong Yuan and Juran. Yuanqi's investigations of the authenticity of original sources echoed the rigorous, evidentiary ethos of the early Qing intellectual climate.

In addition to his careful examination of ancient masters, Yuanqi also pondered the

²² Wang Yuanqi, *Wang sinong tihualu*, juan 2, 1.

goal of landscape painting, emphasizing that it should portray “real mountains and water.” On a handscroll made for his cousin Wuqing 武清 in the style of Wang Meng, he notes: “It is only through the reality of mountains and water that one is able to arrive at vital brushwork; it is only through vital brushwork that one can create good works of art.”²³ It is noteworthy that Yuanqi’s emphasis on “real mountains and water” did not mean mechanically reproducing them from nature. Instead, “real mountains and water” refers to the spirit behind the appearance of a landscape. In his words: “In the vast expanses of mountains and water, one should grasp the spirit and intention of nature.”²⁴ Yuanqi’s pursuit of the authenticity of original sources – including both old masterworks and his concept of the reality of natural objects – echoed the rigor of the evidentiary spirit of early Qing researchers.

Second, early Qing scholars contributed the theory of “*yiyi nizhi*” 以意逆志, or “use understanding to trace what was originally in a writer’s mind.” The concept of *yiyi nizhi* was first used by Mencius (372-289 B.C.E.) in his *Mengzi* 孟子 (*Mencius*) when he conversed with Xianqiu Meng 咸丘蒙 on the proper interpretation of ancient poetry: “In explaining the poems of the *Book of Songs*, one must not permit its literary patterning to adversely affect [one’s understanding of] a statement; and one must not permit [one’s understanding of] a statement to affect adversely [one’s understanding of] what was on

²³ Wang Yuanqi, *Lutai tihuagao*, 104.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 110.

the writer's mind. We use our understanding to trace its meaning back to what was [originally] in the writer's mind – this is how to grasp its meaning.”²⁵ Mencius explicitly advocated comprehending a poem through the reader's personal experience and understanding as opposed to adhering to the literal meanings of its words or by interpreting it using rigid literary theories. He considered the author's original intention the ultimate goal of an interpretation; the reader should sense a poet's meaning by putting himself in the poet's position. Qing scholars approved of this idea. As opposed to Southern Song commentators, who wallowed in fragmented word-by-word explanations of texts, they relied on integral understanding and personal experience to achieve full understanding of a work. In his *Du yi*, Wang Sishi ascribes the defects of Song commentaries to a too-close attention to literal meanings.²⁶ In the prologue to *Du yi*, he explains his book's title: “When my book was barely finished, I named it ‘yi,’ which means intention.”²⁷ Huang Sheng further noted:

In commenting on poetry, one should first pay attention to the [author's] intention, by all means avoiding concentrating on the text at the expense of an accurate understanding of the author's original intention. For example, in ‘Autumn Meditations,’ poems filled with Du's yearning for the capital Chang'an and for his

²⁵ Mencius, “Wan Zhang shang” 萬章上 (“Wan Zhang I”), in *Mencius*, V. A. 4. ii., translated by Stephen Owen, *Zhongguo wenlun: yingyi yu pinglun* 中國文論：英譯與評論 (*Chinese Literary Theory: English Translation with Criticism*) (Shanghai: Shanghai shehui kexueyuan chubanshe, 2003), 23.

²⁶ Wang Sishi, “Chixiao xing” 赤霄行 (“Song of Heaven”), in *Du yi* (*Conjecture Regarding Du Fu*), in vol. 1307 of *Xuxiu siku quanshu*, juan 6, 498.

²⁷ Wang Sishi, “Du yi yuanshi” 杜臆原始 (“Fore Notes to a Conjecture Regarding Du Fu”), in *Du yi*, 378-379.

homeland, it goes too far to take them as satires on Emperor Minghuang.²⁸

凡說詩，當審其命意所在，而後不以文害辭，不以辭害志。如望京華、思故國，乃《秋興》之本意也。……若云譏及明皇，支離已甚，其害辭害志者豈細乎？

Undoubtedly, the assiduous pursuit of authorial intention greatly affected literati artists who considered ancient masters' intentions the guiding factor in understanding their painting. In his discussion of Huang Gongwang's brushwork, Wang Yuanqi remarks: "When ancient masters created brushwork, their intentions came first."²⁹ In a handscroll in the style of Huang Gongwang, he further explained:

As for the way of brush and ink, where the intention goes, the spirit enigmatically exists. The spirit exists in an inexpressible place and springs out where the idea goes. Dachi's success issued from his full control of [his intention]. People who do not understand him arbitrarily state what his intention was and where he exerted himself, but they tend to ignore the truly important thing: how to adjust the brush properly. Only when the skill [of brush control] is developed to a certain level can the breath of the painting be fluent and the composition become vivid.³⁰

筆墨一道，用意為尚，而之所至，一點精神在微茫些子間，隱躍欲出。大癡一生得力處全在於此。畫家不解其故，必曰某處是其用意，某處是其著力。而於濡毫吮墨，隨機應變，行乎所不得不行，止乎所不得不止，火候到而呼吸靈，全幅片段，自然活現。

In his *Wang Sinong tihualu*, Wang Yuanqi also claims that:

In masterpieces by ancient masters, their intentions were always established

²⁸ Huang Sheng, "Qiuxing bashou," in *Du shi shuo*, 309.

²⁹ Wang Yuanqi, "Landscape in the Style of Huang Gongwang," in *Lutai tihuangao*, 97.

³⁰ Wang Yuanqi, "Handscroll in Ink and Water in the Style of Huang Gongwang," in *Lutai tihuangao*, 116.

before and extended beyond their brushwork. The composition of a landscape was based on an exquisite plan; the quintessence of every tree and rock was first fully grasped. Therefore, these works are imbued with vitality and have attained perfection.³¹

古人之畫立意於筆墨之先，取意於筆墨之外。一丘一壑俱有原委，一樹一石俱得肯綮，所以通體靈動，無美弗臻。

Even as early Qing poetic theorists emphasized original intention in poetry, Wang Yuanqi understood the intention of the artist as antecedent to his brushwork. Based on this principle, every stroke should submit to the overall composition. This tallies with Yuanqi's theory of the "dragon vein," analyzed in the previous chapter.

A third significant contribution by early Qing commentators to literary criticism was their method of combining poetics and historiography. The lofty status of Du Fu's reputation resulted to a large extent from his deep humanity and his reflections on history. In his *Benshi shi* 本事詩 (*Poem of Biography*), the Tang author Meng Qi 孟榮 (active, latter half of the tenth century) mentions: "Suffering the disaster brought on by An Lushan 安祿山 (703-757), Du wandered the Gansu 甘肅 and Sichuan areas. Traveling, Du found sufficient raw materials for his creativity, recording everything he saw in his poems. He earned the sobriquet of 'Poet Historian' of his times."³² From then on, his poetry became indissolubly bonded with history.

³¹ Wang Yuanqi, *Wang sinong tihualu*, juan 1, 1.

³² Meng Qi, *Benshi shi (Poem of Biography)* (Taipei: Xinxing shuju, 1983), 87.

In the early Qing, as scholars applied historical methods to the study of Du's work, they gave much attention to its historical themes. The scholar Qian Qianyi was the first to introduce a method of analyzing poetry known as “*shishi huzheng*” 詩史互證, or “reciprocal representation by poetry and history,” in which evidence in one field is used to verify that in the other. A modern scholar of early Qing literature, Hao Runhua, notes that: “In his study, Qian paid equal attention to Tang history and Du's poetry. His precise commentaries on Du's poetry were made on the basis of a careful investigation of the social background of the High Tang and an examination of the development of Du's thought. His goal was to clarify the historical facts and fully elucidate the connotations of Du's poetry.”³³ Huang Sheng also praised Qian's idea of “reciprocal support between poetry and history.” In the *Du shi shuo*, he expresses appreciation for Qian's method: “In his annotations of Du's poetry, Qian Muzhai 牧齋 [Qian Qianyi] spared no effort to quote copiously from many sources and did his best to correct every mistake in previous scholarship on both history and poetry. The reciprocal support between poetry and history has truly opened up a fresh outlook on Du's work.”³⁴ Synthesizing various methods of textology, phonology, and philology in his study, Qian spent over forty years on the 2200 entries in his commentary on Du's poetry, completing it just before his death

³³ Hao Runhua, *Qian zhu Du shi yu shishi huzheng fangfa* “錢注杜詩”與詩史互證方法 (*Qian's Commentary on Du Fu's Poetry and Reciprocal Representation by Poetry and History*) (Hefei: Huangshan shushe, 2000), 83.

³⁴ Huang Sheng, *Du shi shuo*, 225.

in 1664. His work embodies the ideal of late Ming and early Qing scholarship – the relentless pursuit of an accurate understanding of the past. The deep interest of early Qing scholars in the past may puzzle Westerners. As Frederick W. Mote has noted in “The Arts and the ‘Theorizing Mode’ of Civilization”: “There is an apparent anomaly in Chinese civilization with regard to the uses of the past: the defining criteria for value were inescapably governed by past models, not by present experience or by future ideal states of existence.”³⁵

Early Qing scholars’ emphasis on the past undoubtedly had significant impact on visual art as well as on literature and scholarship. As a direct descendant of the founders of literati painting, Wang Yuanqi included numerous analyses and comments on the history of painting in his artistic and literary works. His achievements as an art historian are no less important than his accomplishments in painting in situating the Orthodox School as the preeminent school of painting in his time. In his attempt to ensure that orthodox painting became the canonical school of literati painting, he was careful to position his work within the preexisting lineage of literati painting. He wrote to his uncle Wang Shan about the origin and inheritance of orthodox painting:

Since the Jin (265-420) and Tang periods, great painters have emerged in every generation. As to the unity of principle [the essential form of a thing] and attraction [a quality in some things that catches viewers’ interest], Youcheng’s [Wang Wei] work

³⁵ Frederick W. Mote, “The Arts and the ‘Theorizing Mode’ of the Civilization,” in *Artists and Traditions*, ed. Christian F. Murck, 6.

was the first example. By the Song dynasty, because of the efforts of Dong [Yuan] and Juran, the customs and criteria [of landscape painting] had been established. Following these rules, artists developed their individual potentials, developed new creative ideas, and eventually created many new styles. For instance, in the Southern Song (1127-1279), Liu [Songnian], Li [Song], Ma [Yuan], and Xia [Gui] all excelled at dazzlingly delicate [but facile] brushwork. Their temperament was quite different from the majestic atmosphere of works by Dong, Juran, and the elder Mi [Fu]. During the Yuan dynasty, Zhao Wuxing [Mengfu] added the qualities of vigor and sublimity to surpassingly beautiful brushwork; Gao Fangshan [Kegong] developed variations on brush and ink. These artists belonged to the same family as Dong, Juran, and Mi Fu. Later, Wang [Meng], Huang [Gongwang], Ni [Zan], and Wu [Zhen] further elucidated the principles of [Zhao and Gao] with their own understanding. It is beyond doubt that the tradition established by Dong, Juran, and the Two Mis and followed by Wuxing and Fangshan has clear sources.³⁶

畫家自晉唐以來，代有名家。若其理趣兼到，右丞始發其蘊。至宋有董、巨，規矩準繩大備矣。研習既久，傳其遺法，而各見其能；發其新思，而各創其格。如南宋之劉、李、馬、夏，非不驚心眩目，有刻畫精巧處，與董、巨、老米元氣磅礴，則大小不覺徑庭矣。元季趙吳興發藻麗於渾厚之中，高房山示變化於筆墨之表，與董、巨、米家精神為一家眷屬。以後王、黃、倪、吳闡發其旨，各有言外意。吳興、房山之學，方見祖述不虛；董、巨、二米之傳，益信淵源有自矣。

In this statement, Wang Yuanqi includes all the important artists of the southern school. It is noteworthy, however, that a respect for the past by no means led to stagnancy or retrogression in Chinese civilization. Describing the attachment of the literati to tradition, Mote pointed out that "...the entire purpose of civilization and men's individual lives was to realize the maximum from this present moment, not to blindly repeat some past, nor to forgo the present in preparation for some anticipated future. All Chinese intellectual traditions shared this fundamental attitude, and foreign value systems

³⁶ Wang Yuanqi, *Lutai tihuagao*, 116.

buckled before it.”³⁷

Wang Yuanqi demonstrated his yearning for the past in his painting practice. His paintings usually “quote” copiously from the visual vocabulary of historical sources. They often include mountains in the style of Huang Gongwang, water after Zhao Mengfu, and trees derived from Ni Zan. In studying ancient works, he nurtured his own style; in his own words, “When one comes across a true work by an old master, one should study it very closely. One should look for its main ideas, how it is composed, how one may move out of and into it, where it is slanting and where straight, how things are placed, how the brush is used, and how the ink is distributed. It certainly contains parts which are superior to one’s own art; after some time one will quite naturally be in close harmony with it.”³⁸ Yuanqi’s extensive “citations” of the brushwork of older painters resembles early Qing scholars’ careful quotations from authoritative works by ancient scholars. As Mae Anna Quan Pang has observed, Wang Yuanqi emerged as a “research scholar” of high intellect and discipline.³⁹ By “quoting” ancient works, he “succeeded in merging himself into the continuous current of tradition.”⁴⁰ Even in many of his most original pieces, he deliberately associated his brushwork with a specific historical painter

³⁷ Mote, “The Arts and the ‘Theorizing Mode’ of the Civilization,” 6.

³⁸ Wang Yuanqi, *Yuchuang manbi*, translated by Osvald Siren, in *The Chinese on the Art of Painting* (Peking: H. Vetch, 1936), vol. 5, 209.

³⁹ Mae Anna Quan Pang, “Wang Yüan-ch’i (1642-1715) and Formal Construction in Chinese Landscape Painting,” PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1976, 125-126.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 125.

by claiming in his inscriptions that “this is a copy after” that painter.

The movement of “Thousands of Commentaries on Du’s Poetry” provides us with abundant information on the practice of academics in the early Qing, including common principles insisted on by early Qing scholars – a relentless pursuit of facts, a high regard for authorial intention, and an enthusiasm for tradition. These principles exerted influence on every corner of the academic field, namely, historical and textual criticism, phonetics, etymology, and so forth.⁴¹ Wang Yuanqi’s regard for fact and his antiquarian interest in imitating old masterpieces not only reflected his own artistic pursuit but also mirrored the general intellectual climate of his times. His success at painting is evidence that the canonization of orthodox painting could only have been founded on the rich and solid legacy of the past.

1.3 Illustrative Paintings of Du Fu’s Poetry

The pairing of painting and poetry had been a feature of literati painting long before Wang Yuanqi. In *The Chinese Painter as Poet*, Jonathan Chaves divides poetic paintings into three groups: (1) those inspired by famous poetic lines; (2) works evoking the beauty and symbolism of various flowers or other plants; and (3) painting-poem

⁴¹ For more background information on early Qing scholarship, see the entries for “Hui Tung” and “Ku Yen-wu,” in *Eminent Chinese of the Ch’ing Period*, ed. Arthur W. Hummel (Taipei: Ch’eng Wen Publishing Company, 1970), 357, 423.

combinations associated with comments on literature or history.⁴² Most of Wang Yuanqi's poetic paintings fall into the first group.

As early as the eleventh century in the Northern Song period, the idea that “poetry and painting can be virtually interchangeable in their content arises ... among well-known Northern Song literati, principally Su Shih and his circle.”⁴³ This thought was taken up in the painting academy sponsored by Emperor Huizong 徽宗 (r. 1101-1125), where artists “were evaluated on the basis of their literary abilities and knowledge of the classics as well as their proficiency as painters, and their progress was judged by how well their pictorial interpretations of assigned poetic themes fulfilled the established criteria.”⁴⁴ It was no later than the Southern Song period that a new form of poetic painting emerged and became popular among the royalty and aristocracy – double-sided fans (fig. 3-3) bearing a verse and an associated painting on opposite sides, a format popular among professional and non-professional artists alike. The development of poetic painting was interrupted by the demise of the Song. After a dormant period during the Mongol conquest, it was revived in the mid-Ming by a group of literati artists that included Shen Zhou and Wen Zhengming.

⁴² Jonathan Chaves, *The Chinese Painter as Poet* (New York: China Institute, 2000), 42.

⁴³ James Cahill, *The Lyric Journey: Poetic Painting in China and Japan* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), 8. For more discussion about the Song literati artists, see Susan Bush, *The Chinese Literati on Painting: Su Shih to Tung Ch'i-ch'ang* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1971), 24.

⁴⁴ Cahill, *The Lyric Journey*, 30.

There have been numerous studies of the relationship between poetry and painting. Among many other excellent scholarly works, Hans Frankel, in his “Poetry and Painting: Chinese and Western Views of Their Convertibility,”⁴⁵ describes “paintings as soundless poems and poems as paintings in sound.” In *The Chinese Literati on Painting: Su Shih to Tung Ch’i-ch’ang*,⁴⁶ Susan Bush explores in detail the poetry-painting relationship among literati and professional artists serving in the court from the Northern Song through the late Ming; Wai-kam Ho also elucidates the concepts of “picture-like” and “picture-idea” in literati painting;⁴⁷ Jonathan Chaves⁴⁸ and John Hay⁴⁹ discuss artists who inscribed their paintings with poems; and so forth. However, none of these scholars has pointed out the word-image relationship in Wang Yuanqi’s painting and its influence on the process of canonizing orthodox painting. In the following section, through an examination of Yuanqi’s paintings inspired by Du Fu’s poetry, some of them among the best of his illustrative paintings, I will analyze his distinctive expressive means in this genre.

⁴⁵ See Hans H. Frankel, “Poetry and Painting: Chinese and Western Views of Their Convertibility,” *Comparative Literature* 9, no. 4 (Fall 1957): 289-307.

⁴⁶ See Susan Bush, *The Chinese Literati on Painting: Su Shih to Tung Ch’i-ch’ang* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1971).

⁴⁷ Wai-kam Ho, “The Literary Concept of ‘Picture-like’ (Ju-hua) and ‘Picture-idea’ (Hua-i) in the Relationship between Poetry and Painting,” in *Words and Images*, ed. Alfreda Murck and Wen C. Fong, 359-404.

⁴⁸ See Chaves, *The Chinese Painter as Poet* (New York: China Institute, 2000).

⁴⁹ John Hay, “Poetic Space: Ch’ien Hsuan and the Association of Poetry and Painting,” in *Words and Images*, 173-198.

By the thirteenth century, illustrative paintings of Du Fu's poetry had become popular among Southern Song artists. The earliest extant painting based on Du's poetry is a handscroll preserved in the Shanghai Museum (fig. 3-4) that illustrates Du's lines, "Bamboo depths are for the guest to linger; The purity of lotus brings on a time of cool."⁵⁰ Its creator, Zhao Kui 趙葵 (1186-1266), also known as Duke Ji, was a scion of the Song royal family. In this painting, he carefully depicts a lush bamboo forest along a winding river. Among bamboo and partially hidden behind rock outcroppings, a scholar attended by maidservants watches lotus in a pond before his villa. Ignoring the Ma-Xia style adopted by most academic painters in the Southern Song, Zhao's painting reflects a strong inclination toward the literati tradition – a tranquil mood and hazy riverside scenery are conveyed by gentle texture strokes that remind us of the *Xiao and Xiang Rivers* (fig. 3-5), a painting by a predecessor of Zhao in literati painting, Dong Yuan.

Whether Wang Yuanqi saw Zhao Kui's work is unknown. His interest in the illustrative painting of Du's poetry was directly influenced by his grandfather, Wang Shimin. Shimin once made a ten-leaf album for his nephew, Dong Xuxian 董旭咸, picturing ten lines of Du Fu's poetry. Painted in ink and light blue and green colors on paper, these leaves depict the objects and scenes described in Du's poems. For example,

⁵⁰ Du Fu, "Pei zhu gui gongzi Zhangbagou xieji naliang" 陪諸貴公子丈八溝攜妓納涼 ("Accompanying the Young Nobles to Enjoy the Cool Air and Singing Girls at Zhangbagou"), translated by Richard Edwards, in "Painting and Poetry in the Late Sung," in *Words and Images*, 421.

on Leaf 2 (fig. 3-6), Shimin illustrates a line from “The Southern Neighbor”: “On white sand, green bamboo and a river hamlet stand in twilight; at a wooden door, a farewell in clear moonlight.”⁵¹ He used his familiar hemp-fiber texture strokes and horizontal dots to depict rock contours and lush vegetation on mountains. In the middle section of the painting, a luxuriant bamboo grove covers a riverbank. In the foreground, at the foot of the mountains, two small cottages are enclosed by fences. By the open door of a small courtyard, two men in long robes bid farewell to each other as a misty new moon, partly hidden among clouds, hangs in the sky. Wang Shimin was adept at transferring poetic imagery into pictorial form; in this album, every object in Du’s lines has been depicted in vivid detail.

Wang Shimin’s album was completed in the fourth year of Kangxi (1665), when Yuanqi was in his early twenties. A masterpiece of Shimin’s later years, this album must have greatly impressed his grandson. More than thirty years later, in the illustrative painting of a Du Fu poem made by Yuanqi in 1702 (fig. 3-2), the influence of Shimin’s work remains. Leaf 1 of Shimin’s album illustrates this couplet from Du’s “Jiuri Lantian Cui shi zhuang” 九日藍田崔氏莊 (“At the Villa of the Cui Family in Lantian on the Ninth Day”): “From thousands of ravines, blue water descends; Both

⁵¹ Du Fu, “Nanlin” 南鄰 (“The South Neighbor”), in *Quan Tang shi*, juan 226.

peaks of Jade Mountain stand out in the cold (fig. 3-7).”⁵² Yuanqi, in illustrating the line, “A thunderclap brings sudden storm to a thousand peaks; The aroma of flowers resembles *baihe* perfume,” uses a similar panoramic composition. Both paintings, executed in light-toned versions of the blue-and-green style, present monumental mountains and gorges. A style typical of Tang landscape painting, the blue-and-green mode, which may be traced to the primitive stages of landscape painting, was particularly favored by later professional painters. To avoid the bright colors that were used by professionals but often disparaged by literati painters, Shimin and Yuanqi forwent this style’s heavy emerald green and azure blue mineral pigments in favor of softer, water-based tones of these colors.

The inscriptions in Shimin’s album carefully transcribe Du’s lines in neat clerical script on each leaf. Although clerical was not Wang Yuanqi’s favorite script type – over 99 percent of his extant inscriptions and colophons are in regular and running scripts – on his hanging scroll of 1702, following his grandfather not only in mode and subject but in type of calligraphy, he also choose clerical for his inscription. Consistent with the archaic manner of the blue-and-green style, the inscription calligraphy of Shimin’s album also reflects Tang taste in that the structures of his characters are slightly taller than they are wide. This differs from Han clerical style as seen in such inscriptions as on the *Cao*

⁵² Du Fu, “Jiuri Lantian Cui shi zhuang” (“At the Villa of the Cui Family in Lantian on the Ninth Day”), in *Quan Tang shi*, *juan* 224.

Quan Stele (fig. 3-8), but it is typical of the Tang clerical style represented by the *Stone Classics on Filial Piety* by Emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (fig. 3-9). The structure of clerical script in the emperor's work was influenced by the tall structures of regular script characters, a script that was subject to great interest and experimentation in the Tang as calligraphers perfected what became its classic style. It is not only the structures of Shimin's clerical characters that reveal Tang sources: so does their brushwork. In some character elements, such as those in the upper right of "jian" 澗 (fig. 3-10a) on Leaf 1 and in the upper right of "jin" 錦 (fig. 3-10b) on Leaf 4, one may observe a pause in brush movement at the right-angle turns of their upper right corners. This characteristic, typical of regular script, was absorbed into clerical script by Tang calligraphers. By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, however, many epigraphers regarded the delicate beauty of Tang clerical script as decadent.⁵³ However, this point of view was too late to influence Shimin and Yuanqi in their illustrative paintings. In their eyes, the elegant and beautiful script created during the Tang was more suited than any other to the Tang poetry illustrated by their paintings.

Despite the similarities between their works we have just described, more significant are the differences between Shimin and Yuanqi's paintings. In an inscription at the end of his album, Wang Shimin expresses his enthusiasm for Du's poetry (fig. 3-11):

⁵³ For discussions of Han and Tang clerical script, see Qianshen Bai, *Fu Shan's World*, 192-199.

Every aspect of Shaoling's [Du Fu] poetry shows perfection as he exercises his inventive mind. It is much superior to the work of others.... Each time I read his regulated verse, I am impressed by the scenes and objects he depicts, as if they were visible before my eyes and I were immersed in the scene. To the extent possible, I always try to convey my intense emotions [in reaction to Du's poetry].

少陵詩體弘眾妙，意匠經營，高出萬層。……余每讀七律，見其所寫景物環麗高寒，歷歷在眼，恍若身遊其間，輒思寄興盤礴。

It was Du's outstanding descriptions of "*jingwu*" 景物 or "scenes and objects" that stimulated Shimin to create this album. Indeed, on each leaf, Shimin faithfully pictures every object mentioned in the lines he quotes. Such devotion to text has counterparts. In an album by Shitao, one of the Four Monk Painters of the early Qing, a series of ten lines by Du Fu were represented in bold and unconstrained brushwork. On Leaf 1, Shitao illustrates a line from "Baidi" 白帝 ("White Emperor [City]"): "The river pours down the steep gorge like a thunderclap; towering old trees and dark green vines grow [even] where sun and moon are dim (fig. 3-12)."⁵⁴ To emphasize the rapidity of the torrent, Shitao reserves the center of his composition for the wandering river. The swirling water of the river is depicted by irregular short curves that meander in S-shapes, an arresting effect. On both riverbanks, old trees cling to precipices. In each of their albums, Shimin and Shitao remained as faithful as possible to the text of Du Fu's poem. It is no exaggeration to say that Du's poetry was the spirit behind both their paintings, which, as a result, became pictorial forms of his poetry.

⁵⁴ Du Fu, "Bai di" ("White Emperor"), in *Quan Tang shi*, juan 229.

In *The Lyric Journey*, James Cahill strives to find reasons for the decline of Chinese painting during the Ming and Qing. He mainly ascribes this “regression” to a narrow-minded bias held by the literati class, who considered any pictorial concerns such as “entertaining and emotionally moving subjects, narrative or genre or other human-interest themes, decorative beauty, technical skill; that is whatever was considered to appeal to uncultivated tastes.”⁵⁵ Due to his firm conviction that the Ming and Qing literati artists were inept in transforming poetic lines into convincing pictorial representations,⁵⁶ Cahill seems to misapprehend both the aesthetic goals and theories of some of these later artists and the skills of others. The albums made by Wang Shimin and Shitao, for example, attest to a continuing consummate skill in illustrating poetic lines in a literal manner among early Qing literati artists. Nevertheless, his discussion broaches an important phenomenon: by the late Ming and early Qing, other literati artists had begun to distance themselves from the realistic presentations of texts. This, however, was not a result of declining technique but of changing expressive means.

Indicative of this, and compared to Wang Shimin and Shitao, Wang Yuanqi shows limited interest in replicating the details of poetic lines. Although his hanging scroll following his grandfather’s album leaf is not completely detached from the descriptive details of Du’s poem (at its top, for example, Yuanqi adopts the wet “cloudy mountain”

⁵⁵ Cahill, *The Lyric Journey*, 1.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 51.

method of Mi Fu and Mi Youren to graphically convey a rainy day), the relationship between poetry and painting has grown tenuous in this work. That Yuanqi was highly competent at vividly illustrating a poem is shown by the success of his *Wangchuan* 輞川 *Villa*. In the present work, however, he uses a more abstract manner to describe Du's verses. It is more than likely that his ultimate descriptive goal was to convey the spirit behind Du's objects; in Wen Fong's words, "he is less concerned with the words than the spirit of the poem."⁵⁷

In his paintings, Wang Yuanqi often seems to be converting poetic motifs into standardized visual concepts. This technique is evident in his numerous illustrative paintings of Wang Wei's poems, discussed above. For example, in his painting based on Wang Wei's lines from "Deer Fence" (fig. 4-12), Yuanqi makes little effort to reproduce the descriptive detail in these lines. Rather than replicate objects mentioned in Wang's poem, Yuanqi adopts the clean, concise style of Ni Zan to emphasize the Buddhist idea of "emptiness," which appears to be the concept that Wang, a devout Buddhist, is expressing through his poem's description of scene.

Similarly in his 1702 hanging scroll illustrating Du Fu's lines, Wang Yuanqi abstains from replicating the details of his textual inspiration. Adopting the blue-and-green manner, his attention is focused on transmitting the complex emotions expressed in Du

⁵⁷ Wen C. Fong, "Words and Images in Late Ming and Early Ch'ing Painting," in *Words and Images*, 510.

Fu's poem: "A thunderclap brings sudden storm to a thousand peaks; The aroma of flowers resembles *baihe* perfume." To realize this, he resorted to a poetic yet abstract approach that employed such fixed symbolic images as "green mountains" and "floating clouds."

Let us discuss the uses of mountain and cloud images. In ancient Chinese poetry, "green mountains" often symbolized one's hometown. In "Song Chai shiyu" 送柴侍御 ("Seeing off the Imperial Guardian Mr. Chai"), Wang Changling 王昌齡 (ca. 690-ca. 756) writes:

Green mountains are always covered by clouds and rain;
In moonlight, when was a hometown ever different?⁵⁸

青山一道同雲雨，明月何曾是兩鄉？

In a similar mood, Dai Shulun 戴叔倫 (732-789) sighs: "Autumn winds that blow during a journey induce fantastic reveries; green mountains across a river resemble those of my hometown."⁵⁹ Mountains and water are considered the most fundamental elements of hometown memories, easily giving rise to homesickness. In the "Fengjiyi chong song Yan gong" 奉濟驛重送嚴公 ("Second Farewell to Mr. Yan at Fengji Station"), Du Fu writes:

⁵⁸ Wang Changling, "Song Chai shiyu" ("Seeing off the Imperial Guardian Mr. Chai"), in *Quan Tang shi*, *juan* 143.

⁵⁹ Dai Shulun, "Ti Zhichuan shanshui" 題稚川山水 ("Inscription on Zhichuan's Landscape"), in *Quan Tang shi*, *juan* 274.

After long travel, we part now:
 Green mountains in vain reflect my feelings.
 When shall we grasp the cup again?
 Last night, we traveled under the moon together.⁶⁰

遠送從此別，青山空復情。
 幾時杯重把，昨夜月同行。

“Green mountains” also can serve as a temporal image in poetry. In the opening song of *Sanguo yanyi* 三國演義 (*Romance of the Three Kingdoms*), the author uses the image of green mountains to symbolize eternally immutable time:

The billowing Yangtze passing east
 Sprays pure heroes.
 Right and wrong, success and failure, turn to nought:
 Green mountains, as ever;
 Evening sunsets, often red.⁶¹

滾滾長江東逝水，
 浪花淘盡英雄。
 是非成敗轉頭空。
 青山依舊在，
 幾度夕陽紅。

Compared to the immutability of mountains, human life is short as a breath. Especially for those traveling far from home during troubled times, nostalgia and sadness for lost youth are common. As described in a poem by Sikong Shu 司空曙 (ca. 720 -

⁶⁰ Du Fu, “Fengjiyi chong song Yuan gong” (“The Second Farewell to Mr. Yan at Fengji Station”), in *Quan Tang shi*, juan 227. Translation by David Hawkes, in *A Little Primer of Tu Fu* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 114.

⁶¹ Luo Guanzhong 羅貫中, *Sanguo yanyi* (*Romance of the Three Kingdoms*) (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 2002), 1.

ca. 790),

We went south together in turbulent days.
 In peaceful times, I go home alone.
 In an alien land, my hair grew white;
 Returning home, I see green mountains.⁶²

世亂同南去，時清獨北還。
 他鄉生白髮，舊國見青山。

The “floating cloud” was also a significant image in traditional poetry. In his illustrative painting of Du Fu’s poem of 1702, Wang Yuanqi depicts white clouds floating among mountains after a sudden downpour. In his master’s thesis “Tang shi zhong ‘yun’ yixiang zhi chengxi yu yanzhan” 唐詩中“雲”意象之承襲與延展 (“The Adoption and Extension of the Imagery of the Cloud in Tang Poetry”), Peng Shouqi 彭壽綺 thoroughly analyzes the kaleidoscopic changes of clouds in Tang poetry.⁶³ In his third chapter, he discusses the “floating cloud,” associating it with wandering travelers. The image of floating clouds recalls lines in Li Bai’s poem “Song youren” 送友人 (“Seeing off a Friend):

Drifting clouds echo a traveler’s thoughts,
 The setting sun reflects my old friend’s feelings.⁶⁴

⁶² Sikong Shu, “Zei ping hou song ren bei gui” 賊平後送人北歸 (“Seeing a Friend off to the North after Suppression of the Rebellion”), in *Quan Tang shi*, juan 292.

⁶³ Peng Shouqi, “Tang shi zhong ‘yun’ yixiang zhi chengxi yu yanzhan” (“The Adoption and Extension of the Imagery of the Cloud in Tang Poetry”), Master thesis, Taiwan Guoli Zhongxing Daxue, 1998, 76-79.

⁶⁴ Li Bai, “Song youren” (“Seeing off a Friend”), in *Quan Tang shi*, juan 177.

浮雲遊子意，落日故人情。

As with “green mountains,” the image of “floating clouds” was intended to convey the author’s loneliness and his worry over an obscure future. While one may empathize with Du Fu’s feeling in the lines on which Wang Yuanqi based his painting, one can also understand Du’s complex feelings through the imagery in Yuanqi’s painting. Although the painter does not depict the objects mentioned in Du’s poem, his use of symbolic imagery helps him capture the poet’s intention and convey it to viewers. The value of the poem’s words and the painting’s images is multiplied by their presenting and representing the same poetic feelings, one explicitly, the other symbolically. On the one hand, words provide evocative themes for the painter to depict; on the other, painted images reveal the intentions of the poet. Lacking textual evidence, it is hard to prove that Yuanqi’s imagery was intended to be evocative, even when illustrating a specific text. However, despite the text’s detailed descriptions, the conceptualized imagery of Yuanqi’s painting seems to readily evoke the emotions expressed by the text. The skillful manipulation of imagery was one of the most important features of Wang Yuanqi’s art. In the following section, we shall analyze a few more of Yuanqi’s symbolic images.

2. Images in Wang Yuanqi’s Painting

It is widely acknowledged that “imagery has been a central concern of Chinese poetics from its very beginnings.”⁶⁵ By cultural convention, objects drawn from the natural world were employed in literature as emblems of various moral qualities. Traditional critics divided poetry into three “worlds” (*jing* 境):

The first is called the world of objects. When one wishes to write a landscape poem, then one sets forth a world of streams and rocks, clouds and peaks – the utmost in beauty and elegance. As the spirit is in the mind, when one situates one’s body in the world one sees the world in the mind, as if shimmering in one’s palm.... The second is called the world of feelings. Pleasure and joy, grief and resentment are all set forth in one’s ideas and situated in one’s body. Then one presses one’s thinking forward to deeply get to those feelings. The third is called the world of ideas, which also involves setting things forth in one’s ideas and contemplating them in one’s mind, so that the truth will be attained.⁶⁶

In the third stage, the author was expected to offer the reader “the pleasure of recognizing the unstated affinities which both took for granted and of reconstructing the circumstances that must have inspired his poem.”⁶⁷ Of literati painters, many were skilled writers, as well. As a result, the visualization of literary imagery became an important mode for conveying the inner world of a painter.

2.1 Rain and the Rain-Splashed Window

⁶⁵ Pauline Yu, *The Reading of Imagery in the Chinese Poetic Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 3.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 186.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 201.

Whether in ancient or modern times, rain has been a popular image in literature and visual art, alike. In an agrarian society like traditional China's, it was all the more central to human life and survival. Literary works frequently express great joy on occasions of seasonable rain. In his "Chunye xiyu" 春夜喜雨 ("Welcome Rain on a Spring Night"), Du Fu exults:

A good rain knows its season;
When spring arrives, it brings life.⁶⁸

好雨知時節，當春乃發生。

In "Shuijian qianxin" 水檻遣心 ("Relieving Boredom at a Water Pavilion"), Du describes a scene of beautiful rain:

In light rain, fish emerge from water;
Through gentle breezes, swallows fly swiftly.⁶⁹

細雨魚兒出，微風燕子斜。

On many more occasions, however, rain is associated with pessimistic emotions resulting from natural calamities or human tragedies. It particularly signified separation from family and friends. In "Furong lou song Xin Jian" 芙蓉樓送辛漸 ("Bidding Farewell to Xin Jian at Furong Pavilion"), Wang Changling 王昌齡 expresses his

⁶⁸ Du Fu, "Chunye xiyu" ("Welcome Rain on a Spring Night"), in *Quan Tang shi*, juan 226. Translation by Stephen Owen, in *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911*, ed. and trans. by Stephen Owen (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), 427-428.

⁶⁹ Du Fu, "Shuijian qianxin" ("Relieving Boredom at a Water Pavilion"), in *Quan Tang shi*, juan 227.

loneliness on a rainy night: “Cold rains stretch to the river, by night entering Wu, At daybreak bid traveler farewell, loneliness in Chu’s mountains.”⁷⁰ In a similar vein,

Wang Wei wrote:

Morning rain at Weicheng dampens light dust;
By the hostel, willows are fresh and green.
I urge my friend to drink a final cup of wine.
West of Yang Pass, no more friends.⁷¹

渭城朝雨浥輕塵，客舍青青柳色新。
勸君更盡一杯酒，西出陽關無故人。

In a later example, Wen Tingyun 溫庭筠 (ca. 812-866) expresses his sentiments on parting:

Parasol trees,
Streaks of midnight rain,
The taste of parting hard to bear.
Leaves waft down one by one.
Rain falls: incessant dripping
On empty steps until the dawn returns.⁷²

梧桐樹，三更雨，
不道離情正苦。
一葉葉，一聲聲，
空階滴到明。

⁷⁰ Wang Changling, “Furong lou song Xin Jian” (“Bidding Farewell to Xin Jian at Furong Pavilion”), in *Quan Tang shi*, juan 143. Translation by Stephen Owen, in *The Great Age of Chinese Poetry: The High T’ang*, 91.

⁷¹ Wang Wei, “Weicheng qu” 渭城曲 (“Song of Weicheng”), in *Quan Tang shi*, juan 27.

⁷² Wen Tingyun, *ci* (poem) to the tune “Genglouzi,” in *Quan Tang shi*, juan 891.

As a subject of painting, rain can be represented in various ways. In *Wind and Rain in a Water Village* (fig. 3-13) by Lü Wenying 吕文英 (1421-1505), the artist vividly depicts a small fishing village buffeted by a raging storm. An important member of the Zhe School, Lü was skilled at the realistic representation of landscape. In this work, he emphasizes the ferocity of the storm by diagonally washing the sky with graded tones of ink from upper right to lower left, creating a visual vibration. But most artists, especially those in the literati school, tended to avoid realistic detail when depicting rain, which was usually represented by such indirect means as overcast skies, cloudy mountains, or flooding water. For example, in *Rain on Mount Chu in the Style of Juran* (fig. 3-14), Wang Hui successfully constructs the dismal atmosphere of a storm. Here, the artist's talent is evident in his presentation of masses of cloud billowing among mountains. He washed considerable space with light grades of ink. While there is no "rain" in this painting, damp weather has been suggested by pervasive mist and fog.

In many cases, an artist relied on a particular style of painting to convey an impression of rain. The "cloudy mountain" landscape style invented by Mi Fu and his son Mi Youren was a preferred means among literati artists for expressing a damp atmosphere. The Mi family style landscape was painted with "a soft brush and alternate use of light washes and horizontal heavy dabs, or blotches of deep black ink, gleaming

luminously through the pale tones of the transparent mist.”⁷³ Gao Kegong, a prominent representative of this genre in the Yuan period, inherited the Mi family style and brought it to greater heights of development. Wang Yuanqi also left a number of works in the Mi-Gao cloudy-mountain style. His artful use of the brush in conveying enshrouding mist has been mentioned with respect to his illustrative painting of 1702.

In many of Wang Yuanqi’s works, the imagery of rain is not ancillary to a text: quite the other way around. In *Trees Thriving after Spring Rain* (fig. 3-15), Wen Zhengming provides a good example of this relationship between word and image. Here, Wen uses light ink and bright colors to construct luxuriant green mountains, serene river, and clear sky. In the top right, the artist inscribed:

After a shower in spring, green trees thrive;
West Mountain at nightfall – my favorite.

雨余春樹綠陰成，最愛西山向晚明。

It is from the poem on the painting that one realizes that the portrayed scene follows a recent rain. Unlike the paintings discussed above that illustrated poetic lines, especially in detail, here the poem was added as supplementary information to the painting, extending beyond the painting the artist’s idea of its meaning. In serving the goal of enriching the painting, the inscribed poem has become an inseparable component

⁷³ See Sir ǎn, *Chinese Painting*, vol. 2, 35.

of the work, but in a supportive rather than initiatory role.

Wang Yuanqi used rain imagery widely in his work. It appears repeatedly in his early pieces. On *Landscape in the Style of Huang Gongwang* made for Fan You in 1698 (fig. 3-16), Yuanqi writes: “On a fair day in spring, when the flowers under the eaves blossom in a fine rain, a letter from my old friend arrives from afar....” His quatrain expresses Yuanqi’s happiness on hearing from a good friend on a day of light drizzle. In Yuanqi’s mature work, rain imagery is often associated with deep contemplation and a mood of melancholy. On *Summer Mountain* (fig. 3-17), dated to the fourth month of 1700, Yuanqi wrote a poem to express his sadness in rainy weather:

Slow wind and slight rain knock at my window.
 Looking north, [I see] Yangzhou on the opposite bank of the [Yangtze] river.
 The infinite loneliness of separation hovers around cloudy mountains.
 I still remember a silver candlestick in my West Garden studio.

斜風細雨打篷窗，北望揚州隔一江。
 無限雲山離緒寫，西園猶記倒銀缸。

Both painting and poem were made in the summer of 1700 when Yuanqi was traveling north. It seems that, after the mourning period of three years that followed his mother’s death, Yuanqi became indecisive in the face of an unpredictable future. With the poem, the painting displays the delicate sentiment of the artist at the moment of leaving his hometown for an ambiguous future elsewhere.

On another hanging scroll, *Landscape in the Styles of Ni Zan and Huang Gongwang*

(fig. 3-18) made in the ninth month of 1710, Yuanqi borrows Ni's sparse style, which is often associated with a longing for disengagement from a morally contaminated world. As the inscription notes, the painting was completed sometime after the Moon Festival but was conceived earlier on a rainy day. The weather matched the visionary emptiness of Ni's sparse style of landscape, providing Yuanqi with the inspiration for this work. Rain is not illustrated in this work; instead, the catalytic touch of its sadness may be felt through the unity of painting and poetry.

Among numerous expressions of rain in painting, Wang Yuanqi paid special attention to rain-splashed windows. The word “*yuchuang*” 雨窗 (“rain-splashed window”) often appears in his written works, where it serves as an important image rich with connotations in both his paintings and poems. The literary source of the “rain-splashed window” image can be traced to a poem by Li Shangyin 李商隱 (ca. 813-858) of the Tang dynasty. In his “*Yeyu ji bei*” 夜雨寄北 (“Sent North on a Rainy Night”), Li writes:

When shall I come? We have no date.
 Once on mount Ba, night rains flooded the autumn ponds.
 When shall we meet, and trimming the lamp by your western window
 Talk of the night rains that flooded Mount Ba?⁷⁴

君問歸期未有期，巴山夜雨漲秋池。
 何當共剪西窗燭，卻話巴山夜雨時。

⁷⁴ Li Shangyin, “*Yeyu ji bei*” (“Sent North on a Rainy Night”), in *Quan Tang shi*, juan 539.

Here, the author describes a forlorn figure silhouetted against a window by dim candle light. The desolate atmosphere of the poem is accentuated through the synaesthesia of the poet's vision of a window that implies the sound of raindrops on it.

Wang Yuanqi used the image of the rain-splashed window in his work repeatedly. In the fifth month of 1709, he painted *Dark Green Cliff* (fig. 3-19) for his friend Tianbiao 天表. On this hanging scroll, he inscribed two of his poems. The first reads:

High mountain and flowing water carry my love afar.
Retiring from my official post, I get drunk at the eastern fence.
An old man like me is fortunate to have a friend like you;
[Our separation] recalls the time we trimmed a candle at my western window.

流水高山寄遠思，一官拋卻醉東籬。
老來結友如君少，盡在西窗剪燭時。

And the second:

Of the Four Masters, my primary model was Zijiu.
Excelling in simplicity and blandness, his painting naturally stands out.
Today, imitating the master's work for you [Tianbiao],
I recall the green cliffs at Heavenly Pond.

四家子久是吾師，平淡為功自出奇。
今日為君摹粉本，蒼巖翠壁想天池。

In his first poem, the artist uses the allusion “high mountain and flowing water” to liken the friendship between Yuanqi and Tianbiao to that between Zhong Ziqi and Yu Boya, two ancient hermits considered models of lasting friendship. In the next sentence, Yuanqi mentions the “eastern fence.” This alludes to Tao Qian's poem “Twenty Poems

after Drinking Wine V,” and thereby associates his friend Tianbiao with Tao Qian, poet and sometime recluse of the Eastern Jin (317-420). In the last line, he expresses the pain of separation from his friend by quoting from the last sentence of the Li Shangyin poem quoted above, “Sent North on a Rainy Night.”

The second poem Wang Yuanqi wrote on his *Dark Green Cliff* mentions the source of this painting’s brushwork – Huang Gongwang’s *Stone Cliff and Heavenly Pond*. But in neither painting does Huang or Wang show a trace of rain or a rain-splashed window. Instead, through the addition of poetry and especially its implied imagery of a rain-splashed window, a desolate atmosphere has been successfully integrated into each painting.

The image of the rain-splashed window can also be found in Yuanqi’s early works. Yuanqi made the hanging scroll *Cloudy Mountains* (fig. 4-6) in the spring of 1696. Later, as his eldest son Wang Mo 王謦 (1670-1756) was about to leave him for a trip to the south, he inscribed the painting as follows:

This painting was made in imitation of Gao Kegong’s cloudy mountains. I made it in the spring of the year *bingzi* before a rain-splashed window. On that day, many of my friends gathered at my place, composing poems and playing *weiqi*. When the guests competed for my painting, in the end, it was unexpectedly won by my son Mo. In recent years, he frequently traveled north and south, and the painting was laid aside and neglected. In the ninth month of this year, Mo is to travel south again. Before the trip, he came to show me this painting and request an inscription.

此圖仿高尚書房山雲山。余丙子春雨窗所作。是日，諸友俱集寓齋，聯吟手談爭欲得之，不意歸於謦兒。年來往來南北，遂致度閣。余亦不復記憶。今辛巳

九秋，暮又將南歸，出此請題。

The inscription is dated to the year *xinsi* (1701). Considering that Yuanqi was a truly prolific painter, and five years had passed since he wrote his original inscription, it is doubtful he remembered what the weather was when he made the painting. Instead, the reference here to a “rain-splashed window” was intended as a symbolic image intended to invoke the regret of parting and nostalgic memories of Yuanqi’s hometown, for which his son Wang Mo was about to leave.

Keeping the rich connotations of the “rain-splashed window” in mind is helpful in understanding Yuanqi’s monograph on painting, *Yuchuang manbi*, or *Jottings Beside a Rain-Splashed Window*. In this small, widely-admired volume, Wang Yuanqi repeatedly emphasizes his love for the work of ancient masters. In the seventh entry, he elucidates the sources of his painting and the lineage of the Southern School.⁷⁵ The same paragraph also indicates that he rather than his disciples or relatives compiled this monograph. Through the image of the “rain-splashed window,” readers feel the cold humidity of spring air, see the unending rain of midnight, and hear its gentle patter on the window. Sad feelings arise, especially that of separation. It is likely that Yuanqi selected the phrase “rain-splashed window” to suggest specific emotions – his sadness over past memories and his deep regret at the unavoidable absence of ancient masters.

⁷⁵ Wang Yuanqi, *Yuchuang manbi*, in Sir ǎn, *Chinese on the Art of Painting*, 210.

Through analysis of the emotive images of “rain” and “rain-splashed window” in Wang Yuanqi’s painting and writing, we may also comprehend the mutual interaction between words and images in his work. In the view of traditional literati, painting and poetry were “sister arts.”⁷⁶ At the same time, influenced by Confucian thought, inconsistently, they regarded poetry as superior to painting. In *The Chinese Painter as Poet*, Jonathan Chaves quotes the words of the famous Qing scholar and poet Wang Maolin 汪懋麟 (1640-1688) as evidence of the negative attitude of the literati towards pictorial art: “... viewing these paintings is inferior to perusing the relevant texts. Those elements of the texts encompassed in the paintings are less than one in a hundred, while painterly elements in the texts display a thousand attitudes and ten thousand forms.”⁷⁷ The attitude of the literati was derived from the inability of pictorial art to capture the non-visual aspects of scene, such as sounds, the passage of time, or emotional reactions, which are more easily expressed with words. Nevertheless, in Wang Yuanqi’s work, the ingrained notion that literary art has a higher value than pictorial art has been greatly eroded. In many of his paintings, words are amplified by images, rather than the other way around. Even in his illustrative paintings based on poetry, he avoided slavish imitation of his texts. In other words, rather than use paintings to illustrate texts, texts

⁷⁶ See Hans H. Frankel, “Poetry and Painting: Chinese and Western Views of Their Convertibility,” *Comparative Literature* 9, no. 4 (Fall 1957): 289-307.

⁷⁷ Wang Maolin, *Baichiwutongge ji* 百尺梧桐閣集 (*Collected Works of the Baichiwutong Pavilion*) (reprint of the Kangxi ed., Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1980), vol. 1, 317-318. Translation by Jonathan Chaves, in *The Chinese Painter as Poet*, 23.

may play a secondary role as they complement and expand the meanings of their paintings. With the added information provided by a text, a viewer may extrapolate implied imagery not only from a painting but from the painter's mind. In this way, the nexus of words and images maximizes the expressive power of each. A third possibility is that, when a painting and its accompanying poem each contribute different things to their combined work of art, these two contributing art forms are to some degree independent of each other, which can mean that neither poem nor painting dominates; instead, they become co-equal, mutually complementary, in balance with one another other."

2.2 The Small Boat

Another frequent image in Wang Yuanqi's painting is the small boat. A common subject among the literati, the small boat often appears in various forms and contexts in literati painting. These forms include a fishing boat on a river with an angler in a coir raincoat, a seine boat moored at a dock with fishing nets drying in the sun, and a covered boat bearing scholars who drink and chat. In the arts of the literati, the small river-borne boat is rich in meaning. One of the best-known examples is in Su Shi's famous prose poem, "Ode on Red Cliff": "Letting the boat go where it pleased, we drifted over the

immeasurable fields of water.”⁷⁸ In this ode, in which a friend of Su’s laments the impermanence of the material world, Su counters with an optimistic outlook on life. Since the Song, the Red Cliff Odes have inspired numerous paintings and become an iconic image in literati visual art.⁷⁹

A small boat drifting aimlessly on a river evokes a sense of insecurity and instability, from whence rise strong feelings of isolation. Thus, in Wang Yuanqi’s work, the small boat is often related to loneliness and a life of wandering. In one of his early works, *Night Rain on the Xiao and Xiang Rivers* (1699), a small boat hints at the artist’s feelings of desolation. On this painting, he writes:

Night rain on the Xiao and Xiang Rivers endures in painting;
In the mountains, thatched cottages are closed.
Who moored this small boat on the Cang river?
Nights, I sleep beneath my boat awning mid flowering reeds.⁸⁰

畫裏瀟湘雨氣餘，茅堂深閉暗山家。
何人卻繫滄江棹？一夜篷窗伴葦花。

Following the poem, the artist continues: “I have never seen *Night Rain at the Xiao and Xiang Rivers* by Mi Nangong 南宮 [Mi Fu]. In the summer of the year *jimao*

⁷⁸ Su Shi, “Chibi fu” 赤壁賦 (“Ode [*fu*] on Red Cliff”), translated by Burton Watson, in *The Chinese Painter as Poet*, appendix 1, 138.

⁷⁹ For more discussion of the Red Cliff, see Stephen Wilkinson, “Paintings of ‘The Red Cliff Prose Poems’ in Song Times,” *Oriental Art*, n.s., 27, no. 1 (Spring 1981): 76-89; and Daniel Altieri, “The Painted Visions of the Red Cliffs,” *Oriental Art*, n.s., 39, no. 3 (1983): 252-264.

⁸⁰ Wang Yuanqi, *Wang sinong tihualu*, *juan* 1, 19.

(1699), in deep depression, I met with Yupei. To divert myself from sadness, I made this painting in the style of Gao Kegong....”⁸¹ While nominally emulating Mi Fu and Gao Kegong, here the artist paints in his own style. His poem, in mentioning a “small boat” on a rainy night, resonates with the sadness of the inscription.

The year 1699 was important in Wang Yuanqi’s life. That spring, in company with the empress dowager, the Kangxi emperor set out on his third imperial inspection tour of the south. When he arrived in Suzhou, local officials gave him the expected royal welcome. Wang Yuanqi was given the honor attending the welcoming ceremony.⁸² Later that year, completing the three-year mourning period for his mother, he had expected to return to the capital to continue his official career. By now, Wang Yuanqi had acquired the social status of a venerable painter deeply revered by many admirers and followers. Moreover, his uncle, Wang Shan, occupied a powerful position in the Ministry of Personnel.⁸³ These favorable conditions should have ensured Yuanqi a bright future.

What caused the sorrow he mentions in the inscription on his *Xiao and Xiang Rivers* of 1699? Although Yuanqi does not explain himself in his writings, *Guochao qixian leizheng chubian* 國朝耆獻類徵初編 (*First Edition of the Collected Manuscripts of*

⁸¹ Ibid., 19.

⁸² Zheng Wei, “Wang Yuanqi nianbiao,” 99.

⁸³ Zhao Erxun et al., eds., *Qing shi gao*, juan 286.

Venerated Elders of the Qing Dynasty Sorted by Category) provides a possible explanation. It was earlier this year that his first wife, Lady Li, passed away in his hometown.⁸⁴ Married to Yuanqi when they were both young, Lady Li was reportedly industrious and thrifty in managing the household and lived amicably with her husband's family.⁸⁵ Grieving his beloved wife, Yuanqi must have been disconsolate. Evidence of this is that, in his poem, he alludes to two anecdotes. In the third line, the "small boat in River Cang" was apparently inspired by Wu Weiye's "Ye Fan Shaobo ci" 謁范少伯祠 ("Visiting the Shrine Dedicated to Fan Shaobo"), in which Wu writes:

Mooring a small boat in River Cang, I learn to fish;
What use is *The Book of Ji Ran* after retreating to Five Lakes?⁸⁶

...

There would be lifelong regret in abandoning my beautiful lover;
I must leave the king of Yue and the futureless life of an official without
hesitation!⁸⁷

艤棹滄江學釣魚，五湖何必計然書？

.....

浪擲紅顏終是恨，拜辭烏喙待何如。

⁸⁴ Li Huan, ed., *Guochao qixian leizheng chubian*, juan 56, 3461.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, juan 56, 3461.

⁸⁶ Ji Ran 計然, also known as Ji Ni 計倪 or Ji Yan 計硯, was Fan Li's mentor. It was said that he left a book for Fan which included many tactics and strategies that were of great assistance in the war between Wu and Yue.

⁸⁷ Wu Weiye, "Ye Fan Shaobo ci" ("Visiting the Shrine of Fan Shaobo"), in *Meicun ji* 梅村集 (*Anthology of Meicun*), in vol. 1312 of *Siku quanshu* (collections), juan 11, 7.

"Wuhui" 烏喙 refers to the King of Yue, Goujian.

Fan Shaobo, better known as Fan Li 范蠡 (active early fifth century B.C.E.), was the Premier and advisor to King Goujian 勾踐 (r. 496-465 B.C.E.) of the state of Yue. After Yue was conquered by the state of Wu, Fan followed Goujian to Wu as hostage. Enduring hard times, they were returned to their homeland after three years. Aided by the clever Fan Li, Goujian eventually restored the state of Yue and defeated the king of Wu. It is said that, after his victory, Fan Li resolutely resigned from Goujian's court and withdrew to a secluded spot beside West Lake accompanied by a famous beauty, Xishi 西施. In his poem, Wu Weiye does not emphasize the great achievement of Goujian and Fan Li, who were seen as models of the monarch-subject relationship, but appreciates Fan for choosing love and abandoning high position.

After quoting Wu Weiye, Yuanqi refers in line four of his verse to a sentence from the “Xi jiang shang song yufu” 西江上送漁父 (“Seeing off a Fisherman on West River”) by the Tang poet Wen Tingyun: “At night, moored amid reed flowers, I sleep alone under my boat's awning.”⁸⁸ Wen's poem makes clear his sadness at parting with friends. In its last line, Wen describes two swallows flying as a pair, a popular literary symbol for lovers. It is possible, and in my opinion probable, that, by his flexible use of the words of earlier poets, Yuanqi intended to convey his loneliness and insecurity after losing his

⁸⁸ Wen Tingyun, “Xi jiang shang song yufu” (“Seeing off a Fisherman on West River”), in *Quan Tang shi*, juan 578.

wife. The boat mentioned in the poem reminds the reader of famous lines in a *ci* poem by Li Qingzhao 李清照 (1084-1155) to the tune of “Wuling Spring,” which concludes:

They say that spring is still young at Shuangxi:
How I would love to go boating there.
Still, I fear those tiny boats
Could not carry this much sorrow.⁸⁹

聞說雙溪春尚好，
也擬泛輕舟。
只恐雙溪舴艋舟，
載不動、許多愁。

As symbol of an unstable, lonely life, the small boat is also seen in Yuanqi’s *Illustrative Painting of Four Farewell Poems* (fig. 3-20) painted for Gong Bingzhi 龔秉直 (active, late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries) in the tenth month of 1701. Gong Bingzhi (or Jingli 敬立, as he is addressed in Yuanqi’s inscription) was his distant relative. About the same age as Yuanqi, Bingzhi lived and studied in Yuanqi’s house in Taicang during their early years. As adults, however, they separated and had few chances to meet thereafter. Not until the winter of 1701 did they reencounter one another in a small boat on the Huai river after long separation. To mark this rare meeting and again bid farewell, Yuanqi wrote a group of four poems. In the second, he uses the image of the small lonely boat to recall their painfully short reunion:

⁸⁹ Li Qingzhao, “Wuling chun” 武陵春 (“Wuling Spring”), in *Shuyu ci* 漱玉詞 (*Ci Poems [Composed] at Shuyu Spring*), in vol. 1487 of *Siku quanshu* (collections), 5.

Parted two years, we traveled north and south.
 On an orphaned skiff by the bank of the Huai
 I met you by surprise.
 We talked all night; then such sorrow of separation.
 The west wind blows on the shore. Waves leap up at the sky.

兩載相思南北分，孤舟淮浦忽逢君。
 離愁一夜連床話，湖岸西風浪接雲。

The “orphaned skiff” represents Yuanqi and his friend, each of whom spent much time traveling alone without fixed abode. In his three remaining poems, Yuanqi employs a series of images often used in literature to suggest separation and a longing for reunion, including “wild geese of Women” and “moonlit tower on a cold night.” *Illustrative Painting of Four Farewell Poems*, a hanging scroll made with ink and light color on paper, was done in the style of Huang Gongwang. A terraced mountain ridge ascends to the right, while a deep recession on the left encloses small houses, a little bridge, and masses of clouds and mist. Its combination of desolate atmosphere and deeply-felt poems allows a viewer to relate its steep rocks and quiet villages to the artist’s lonely life of hard travel.

In the fourth month of 1709, Wang Yuanqi painted *Small Skiff* (fig. 3-21) for his friend Tuishan 退山. Mounted as a handscroll and painted in ink and color on paper, this work is a bright example of the blue-and-green style. At center is a hillock surrounded by large stretches of open water. Small houses are scattered on the riverbank, but few inhabitants are evident. Among marshes of wild reeds at middle

right, a small boat is quietly anchored to a river shoal. In this silent environment, the boat appears frail and lonely, as though it had been moored after a difficult journey. In the upper right, Yuanqi inscribes two poems. One reads:

Gracefully tossing his sleeve,
 [Tuishan] plans to return home and sail the Juou.
 With no complaint of loneliness, his skiff drifts over shifting waves.
 Insofar as he finds footholds in flowering reeds,
 He happily wanders Five Lakes as if he were wind.

拂袖東歸泛具區，白鷗浩蕩未嫌孤。
 蘆花深處從君宿，一任風吹過五湖。

According to Yuanqi's inscription, *Small Skiff* was a farewell gift for his old friend Tuishan, who once more was about to depart. "Juou" and "Five Lakes" are terms for the lakes of the Taihu Basin, where Wang Yuanqi's hometown was located. Beginning in the forty-seventh year of Kangxi (1708), after he was appointed *rijiang qijuzhu guan* 日講起居注官 (Imperial Diarist), Yuanqi was required to stay within call of the emperor. After accompanying the emperor on his sixth Imperial Inspection Journey, Yuanqi went back to Beijing and lived there for some years. According to his inscriptions and colophons, from that time on, the venues of his creations included "the residence at Haidian," "Delightful Spring Garden," "Double Vines Studio," and "Grain Offering Hall," all of which were Wang Yuanqi's residences in Beijing. During this period to his death in 1715, his hometown Taicang is seldom mentioned in his inscriptions. It is likely that Yuanqi had few chances to return to his hometown during these years, and the aging

painter's nostalgia for his hometown must have grown. Parting from his good friend Tuishan could only have aggravated his feelings of loneliness and insecurity. *Small Skiff* seems to show that, while residing in a place far from home, Yuanqi's life must have resembled a small boat floating on a stream with no clear destination.

2.3 Autumn Colors

Another emotionally loaded image in Yuanqi's painting, the colors of autumn, often appears in works from his maturity and frequently in the style of Huang Gongwang. On a spring day in 1701, at his residence in Beijing, he made *Autumn Colors of Mount Yu* (fig. 3-22). The swelling bulges of creviced rocks range upward from the middle section of the composition, receding along a clear zigzag "dragon vein" into the distance. The supple application of light color and richly graded ink and the patternized leafage of blotchy trees are characteristics of Huang Gongwang's style. In the empty space in the upper-left corner, Yuanqi wrote an inscription: "Everyone praises the beauty of autumn scenery. The best of autumn scenes are only found here. Covered by red and yellow leaves, mountains are mirrored in misty water." To emphasize the painting's principal motif – autumn scenery – the artist deliberately laid down brilliant scarlet to indicate autumn leaves. A related example of this theme is *Autumn Mountain in the Style of Huang Ziju [Huang Gongwang]* (fig. 3-23) of the sixth month of 1702. Designed on a smaller scale, this hanging scroll's composition is simpler than in *Autumn Colors of*

Mount Yu, but its brushwork depicting rock contours, its use of color and ink, and its motif of red leaves are the same.

The imagery of autumn colors was rich in emotional value for Wang Yuanqi and other artists. In the ninth month of 1713, Yuanqi painted the color landscape *Autumn Mountain in the Style of Dachi* (fig. 3-24) for his friend Zhou Gongchen 周拱宸. In his inscription, he notes that, on that autumn day, a souging wind and fallen leaves elicited feelings of tenderness and sadness that reminded him of a line in “*Jianjia*” 蒹葭 (“Rush Leaves”) in the *Shijing* 詩經 (*Book of Songs*) that mentions the “lady beyond the autumn stream.”⁹⁰ Since the pre-Qin period (before 221 B.C.E.), the “lady beyond the autumn stream” has symbolized the lover, the friend, and a love of home, a symbol that came into frequent use especially in later prose and poetry. In the 1713 hanging scroll under discussion, its lofty mountains and peaceful river are given an autumnal context by scarlet leaves that, in adorning its fore-, middle-, and backgrounds, visually underline Yuanqi’s inscription.

Red leaves appear in almost all of Wang Yuanqi’s color paintings that feature autumn scenery. By the ninth century, red leaves were treated as tokens of deep affection between lovers in the romantic Tang novel “*Liu hong ji*” 流紅記 (“The Floating Red

⁹⁰ “*Jianjia*” (“Rush Leaves”), in “*Qin feng*” 秦風 (“Songs of Qin”), *Shijing* (*Book of Songs*), translated by Arthur Waley, *The Book of Songs: The Ancient Chinese Classic of Poetry* (New York: Grove Press, 1996), 101-102.

Leaf”).⁹¹ In this work, Lady Han writes a poem on a red leaf and sets it adrift on the waters of a palace drain. A young Confucian scholar Yu You 于祐 spots it and sends a return message by similar means. Later on, Yu becomes an associate of a nobleman, Han Yong 韓泳. Yong treats him so kindly that he releases his maid-in-waiting, Lady Han, to marry Yu You. On the nuptial night, Lady Han finds the leaf with her poem in Yu’s studio. They consider the red leaf their matchmaker, and their experience becomes a popular story among subsequent generations. After this time, the “red leaf” symbolized godsent marriage.

But the meaning of the “red leaf” motif continued to expand. Early in the Tang, the affection connoted by a red leaf expanded from love affairs to include deep friendship. The famous Tang poet Bai Juyi 白居易 (772-846) wrote this poem to Du Mu 杜牧 (803-ca. 852):

In cold mountains on a winter morning,
 Red leaves don a new appearance.
 They look burnt, but not by the fire;
 They look like flowers that did not wait for spring.
 Canopies made of thin rose gauze are arrayed in lines;
 Scarlet scarves flit among mountains.
 Pausing my sedan, I take a look:
 I see only you [Du Mu] and me in wind.⁹²

⁹¹ “Liu hong ji” (“The Floating Red Leaf”), in *Yuyin conghua* 漁隱叢話 (*Series of Notes on the Fisherman Recluse*), ed. by Hu Zi 胡仔, in vol. 1480 of *Siku quanshu* (collections), part 2, *juan* 16, 5.

⁹² Bai Juyi, “He Du lushu ti hongye shi” 和杜錄事題紅葉 (“A Responsory Poem to Du Mu’s Poem on the Red Leaf”), in *Bai Xiangshan shiji* 白香山詩集 (*Poetry of Bai Xiangshan*), in vol. 1080 of *Siku quanshu* (collections), *juan* 31, 6.

寒山十月旦，霜葉一時新。
 似燒非因火，如花不待春。
 連行排絳帳，亂落剪紅巾。
 解駐籃輿看，風前唯兩人。

Surrounded by fiery-red leaves in the mountains, the poet thinks of his friend and imagines sharing this beautiful scenery with him. In a poem by the Tang author Xu Hun 許渾 (?-ca. 858), red leaves appear at a sentimental parting with a friend:

To farewell songs, your boat sets out on a journey.
 Among green mountains and riptides, red leaves dance in the wind.
 When I wake at dawn, my dear friend is far;
 Only violent storm disturbs West Tower.⁹³

勞歌一曲解行舟，紅葉青山水急流。
 日暮酒醒人已遠，滿天風雨下西樓。

Sentimentality is taken to an extreme in “Fengye ci” 楓葉辭 (“Ode to Maple Leaves”) by Bai Yuchan 白玉蟾 (1194-?) of the Song dynasty:

Red maple leaves fall and fly in the sky,
 Captured by the west wind, they swirl and dive,
 Then drift beyond clouds without return.
 Even wild geese feel deep sadness at our farewell.
 Our final separation this autumn is fated,
 Inevitable as birth and death.
 Ascending a height to see my traveling friend,
 I play my zither in farewell to the glow of the sun.⁹⁴

⁹³ Xu Hun, “Xieting songbie” 謝亭送別 (“Bidding Farewell at Xie Pavilion”), in *Quan Tang shi*, juan 538.

⁹⁴ Bai Yuchan, “Fengye ci” (“Ode of the Maple Leaves”), in *Quan Song shi* 全宋詩 (*Complete Song Poems*), ed. by Fu Xuancong 傅璇琮 et al. (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1991), vol. 60, 37492.

丹楓隕葉紛墮飛，撩撥西風盡倒吹。
 雲外飄飄呼莫回，四方沈冥雁為悲，辭柯一去遐不歸。
 已判此秋長別離，生者有盡死有期。
 憑高望遠深相思，手揮絲桐送斜暉。

“Autumn mountains,” another image with significant emotional content in literary contexts, is something of an extension of the “red leaves” image. Viewers familiar with literary contexts will understand that, in Wang Yuanqi’s work, the use of “autumn mountains” imagery, beyond merely depicting autumn scenery, implies deep affection between the artist and the recipient of his painting.

Autumn scenes also are seen as stirring feelings of *qiuyuan* 秋怨, or autumn sadness. In “Hongye” 紅葉 (“Red Leaves”) by the noted Song poet Yang Wanli 楊萬里 (1127-1206), red leaves trigger authorial sadness:

Perplexed by deep sorrow,
 I pour out thousands of poems
 Yet still am not consoled.
 Though I have filled a wall with a thousand poems,
 Poems on autumn’s pain must be brushed on red leaves.⁹⁵

詩人滿腹著清愁，吐作千詩未肯休。
 寫遍壁間無去處，卻將紅葉強題秋。

In a similar vein, another Song *ci* poet, Xin Qiji 辛棄疾 (1140-1207), sighs:

Today, my knowledge of sorrow is deep

⁹⁵ Yang Wanli, “Hongye” (“Red Leaves”), in *Chengzhai ji* 誠齋集 (*Anthology of Chengzhai*), in vol. 1160 of *Siku quanshu* (collections), *juan* 10, 17.

Yet I stop before speaking
 Stop before speaking –
 Instead I say the sky is cool, and autumn, fine.⁹⁶

而今識盡愁滋味，
 欲說還休，欲說還休。
 卻道天涼好個秋。

In literature and art, scholars and artists often linked the impermanence of human life to the transience of autumn. In their eyes, life is akin to red leaves in an autumn wind – despite their former flourishing, their fate is certain – and winter’s coming will quickly destroy their beauty without exception. As a high-ranking official serving for years among the contentions of a politically riven court, Wang Yuanqi tended to be hesitant and cautious; perhaps he was stressed and exhausted, as well. His sensitivity to the instability of life and official position is confirmed by a colophon on *Color Landscape after Huang Gongwang* (1713): “In late autumn of the year *guisi* (1713), leaves fell into a sougning wind. In this dreary and desolate season, Gongchen was about to leave for the south. At this moment, suffering from autumn sadness, my heart is deeply moved....”⁹⁷

The autumn days that stirred Wang Yuanqi’s autumn sadness could also evoke feelings of nostalgia. Zhang Ji 张籍 (ca. 767- ca. 830) expresses a parallel idea in his “Autumn Thoughts”:

⁹⁶ Xin Qiji, “To the tune Chounuer,” in *Jiixuan ci* 稼軒詞 (*Ci [Poems] by Jiixuan*), in vol. 1488 of *Siku quanshu* (collections), *juan* 4, 24.

⁹⁷ Wang Yuanqi, *Lutai tihuagao*, 119.

As autumn winds blew in Luoyang City
 I wrote my family with heavy heart.
 For fear that words might be missing
 I reopened the envelope before it left.⁹⁸

洛陽城裡見秋風，欲作家書意萬重。
 復恐匆匆說不盡，行人臨發又開封。

In his short *sanqu* poem, the Yuan poet Ma Zhiyuan 馬致遠 (1250-1321) makes a remarkable collage of nine images of autumn melancholy.

Withered vine, weathered tree, crow on a bough;
 Tiny bridge, flowing brook, country dwelling;
 Ancient road, westward wind, scraggy horse.
 Toward sundown in the west
 At the end of the world – unhappy soul, broken heart.⁹⁹

枯藤老樹昏鴉，
 小橋流水人家，
 古道西風瘦馬。
 夕陽西下，
 斷腸人在天涯。

Since in Chinese these images are not connected by verbs, the logical relationships among them can only be constructed in the reader's mind. For Wang Yuanqi and others who had been absent from home for years, pictures like those in "Autumn Thoughts" must have arisen often in their minds. It is small wonder that, in the inscription to his

⁹⁸ Zhang Ji, "Qiusi" 秋思 ("Autumn Thoughts"), in *Quan Tang shi*, juan 386.

⁹⁹ Ma Zhiyuan, "Autumn Reflection," in *Qu hua* 曲話 (*Notes on Songs*), ed. by Li Tiaoyuan 李調元, in vol. 37 of *Bai bu congshu jicheng* 百部叢書集成 (*Compilation of A Hundred Series of Books*) (Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1965-1970), juan 1.

Autumn Mountains of 1709, Yuanqi writes: “In late autumn of the year *jichou* (1709), a chill wind blows, and snow has covered the hills. Mountains suffused with amber leaves and red maples strongly evoke a gentleman’s aspirations and yearning for travel....”¹⁰⁰

3. Wang Yuanqi’s New (“Wang-style”) Light Color Landscape

Since the early years of painting in China, autumn scenery has been a favorite theme of artists and has been depicted in various forms. Sometimes, it was represented by insects, birds, and plants typically active in autumn. For example, a Shen Zhou album depicts a cicada on the withered twig of a willow tree, to the left of which he writes: “There has been over a month of autumn. The weakening call of the cicada lingers among the branches.” (fig. 3-25) In *Reclusive Fisherman, Autumn Trees* (fig. 3-26), the supple, relaxed brushwork of the Yuan artist Sheng Mao 盛懋 (active, first half of the fourteenth century) presents a fisherman accompanied by a flock of wild geese. Again in *Reed Catkins and Geese* (fig. 3-27) by Wu Zhen, wild geese erupting from withered reed flowers reinforce the desolate atmosphere of autumn.

In many of his inscriptions and colophons, Wang Yuanqi claims that his paintings of autumn mountains are in the style of Huang Gongwang; however, he also admits that he

¹⁰⁰ Wang Yuanqi, *Lutai tihuagao*, 114.

has never seen Huang's original work of autumn mountains.¹⁰¹ In other words, his understanding of Huang's autumn mountains came from his grandfather, Wang Shimin. Shimin once encountered one of Huang's masterpieces, *Autumn Mountains*, in the home of his friend Zhang Ziyu 張子羽 in Jingjiang. He was so moved by Huang's skillful brushwork that he praised it as "the first and foremost work in Ziju's [Huang's] life."

Unfortunately, Zhang Ziyu subsequently lost this painting, and its whereabouts has since been a mystery. What is important for our purposes, however, is that Wang Yuanqi's knowledge of Huang Gongwang's *Autumn Mountains* is based on Wang Shimin's descriptions of it and on his use of Huang's style in his work. Thus, Wang Yuanqi's "imitations" of Huang's *Autumn Mountains* have been filtered through secondary sources, making Yuanqi's interpretation of the Huang style his own creation to a substantive degree. For one thing, Yuanqi's autumn mountain paintings differ even from those by Shimin. In particular, his adventurous use of such brilliant colors as scarlet red and emerald green betray the genesis of his style: they are the direct influence of Zhao Mengfu; more distantly, they were ancestored by the blue-and-green landscape style of the Tang.

In Wang Yuanqi's autumn mountain paintings, the most impressive element is the

¹⁰¹ In his inscription on *Autumn Mountains in the Style of Dachi* made for his friend Zhou Zhigui in 1713, Yuanqi writes: "I have never had the chance to see the original of Dachi's *Autumn Mountains*. My late grandfather said that he had viewed it at Zhao Ziyu's house in Jingkou. It was indeed the first and foremost work in Dachi's life...." See Wang Yuanqi, *Lutai tihuaqao*, 119.

masses of “rosy clouds” – red leaves among mountains. In the winter of 1710, in an album of landscapes imitating old masters, Wang Yuanqi brushed *Autumn Landscape at South Mountain* (fig. 3-28) in the style of Zhao Mengfu. Painted in the light blue-and-green mode, this fresh, delicate composition has a background of cool, elegant tones. Against this, amber and red leaves in the foreground soften an otherwise cold and desolate atmosphere, recalling Zhao’s *Watering Horses in the Suburbs* (fig. 4-21). Zhao’s work, from the first year of Huangqing (1312), is representative of his later years. Following a realistic, heavily colored mode that prevailed among Tang figure painters, Zhao depicts ten steeds walking and frolicking along a river. Their scarlet-robed herdsman riding on horseback holds a whip in his arms and looks back at a pair of animated horses. Here, both subject matter and realistic brushwork remind us of the time-honored tradition of depicting horses and horsemen in Tang court painting, including Zhang Xuan’s 張萱 (active, mid-eighth century) *Lady Guoguo’s Spring Outing* (fig. 3-29) and *Playing Polo* (fig. 3-30) from the mural in Prince Zhanghuai’s tomb in Qianxian, Shaanxi Province. At the center of Zhao’s scroll, a slender maple inclines obliquely. Its red leaves echo the herdsman’s scarlet robe, both of which are striking against the verdant meadow along the riverbank.

Zhao’s fondness for scarlet is evident in his figure paintings. In his *Mounted Official* (fig. 3-31), currently preserved in the Palace Museum, Beijing, he uses exquisite brushwork to depict a red-coated official on horseback. In his inscription on the

painting's left side, he makes clear his relationship to his Tang antecedents: "It not only difficult to paint, it is even more difficult to understand painting.... In this painting I do feel that I can match the Tang masters. There must be people in the world with the great vision [to recognize this]."¹⁰² Zhao's revitalization of the Tang tradition was of great value to literati artists in later centuries. It would not seem a coincidence that, when Wang Yuanqi painted the Wangchuan Villa with, for the literati, its symbolic representation of Tang life, he painted a red-robed figure seated in the studio of its central complex (fig. 3-32). Moreover, the masses of red leaves among the mountains also recall the archaic use of heavy color archaistically revived by Zhao Mengfu.

The heavy blue-and-green style practiced by the Song artist Zhao Lingrang 趙令穰 (active, latter half of the eleventh century) also stimulated Wang Yuanqi to innovations in color painting. In *Blossom and Willows in a Water Village after Zhao Lingrang* (fig. 3-33), an album leaf dedicated to his friend Yunzheng 雲徵 in 1713, Wang Yuanqi does not use the classic tripartite landscape characterized by lofty mountains in the background, water in the middle ground, and a hillside with tall trees in the foreground. Following Zhao Lingrang's most characteristic spatial arrangement, such features as hillocks, rustic houses, and vegetation move into the distance along a zigzag course underlain by the receding plane of a "level-distance" landscape. Wang Yuanqi ferreted out the origin of

¹⁰² Translated by Chu-tsing Li. See Chu-tsing Li, "Grooms and Horses by Three Members of the Chao Family," in *Words and Images*, 211-212.

this type of composition in earlier artistic tradition. As he notes in his *Tihuagao*:

[The Northern Song artist] Huichong's 惠崇 [active, late tenth to early eleventh centuries] *Spring in Jiangnan* represents the scenery of fields and mountains. Danian's [Zhao Lingrang] method was derived from this model, but he developed it with more drama and a transcendent verve. Students should carefully digest the subtlety of his brush and ink, and by all means avoid confining their interest to his dense willows and bright flowers."¹⁰³

惠崇《江南春》，寫田家山家之景。大年畫法悉本此意，而纖妍淡冶中更開跌宕超逸之致。學者須味其筆墨，勿但於柳暗花明中求。

A similar composition can be seen in the ten-leaf album, *Ten Views of a Humble Cottage* (fig. 3-34), on which Wang Yuanqi inscribes, "Imitation of Zhao Danian [Lingrang] and Songxue [Zhao Mengfu]." In yet another inscription on a painting dated 1707, Wang Yuanqi elucidates the combined influence of Zhao Lingrang and Zhao Mengfu on his work:

Zhao Danian faithfully followed the methods of Huichong. People have thought that the delicate and refined brushwork of Huichong's painting faithfully depicted the beautiful scenery of spring. It is wonderful – and yet imperfect. Because his travels were limited [by imperial edict to prevent plots and revolts by members of the imperial family], his work lacks vital momentum. However, comparing his brushwork with that of Songxue [Zhao Mengfu], I can see the similarities between them and also that Danian's brushwork never diverged from that of Dong [Yuan] and Juran.¹⁰⁴

趙大年學惠崇法，成一家眷屬，昔人謂其纖妍淡冶，真得春光明媚之象，但所歷不越數百里，無名山大川氣勢耳。今參以松雪筆意，峰巒雲樹，宛然相合，

¹⁰³ Wang Yuanqi, *Lutai tihuagao*, 110.

¹⁰⁴ Wang Yuanqi, *Wang sinong tihualu*, juan 2, 1.

方知大年筆墨仍不出董巨宗風。

It is likely that Wang Yuanqi's study of the blue-and-green landscape styles of Zhao Lingrang and Zhao Mengfu was conducted under the guidance of Wang Jian, one of the two older masters of the "Four Wangs." Six years younger than Wang Shimin, both Jian and Shimin studied painting under Dong Qichang. Jian's extant oeuvre reveals his strong interest in the blue-and-green style. Among works in this style, a handscroll dated 1658 (fig. 3-35) is of the greatest significance. Painted in heavy mineral pigments on paper, the 198.7 cm of this handscroll present a continuous mountain range stretching along quiet water, a composition recalling that of Huang Gongwang's *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains*. What differs from Huang's austere ink painting, however, is Wang Jian's rich, bright colors. As pointed out in the inscription on the scroll, Jian looked for inspiration in Zhao Mengfu's *Autumn Colors on the Qiao and Hua Mountains* and Huang Gongwang's *Floating Mountains and Distant Peaks*. In a subsequent colophon on Jian's handscroll, Wang Zhuan 王撰, Yuanqi's uncle, further explores the derivation of Jian's blue-and-green landscapes: "In particular, his blue-and-green landscape technique has caught the essence of the 'Three Zhaos.' The present brilliant scroll is based on the methods of Songxue [Zhao Mengfu] and Zijiū [Huang Gongwang], showing extreme finesse in its execution." The "Three Zhaos" refer to Zhao Lingrang, Zhao Boju 趙伯駒 (1119-1185), and Zhao Mengfu, all influential blue-and-green landscape painters.

However, although Wang Yuanqi was considerably influenced by the Tang

blue-and-green tradition as transmitted by the Three Zhaos and Wang Jian, allusion to old styles accounts for only part of his achievement. His practice of color landscape shows that he was active in forwarding the art of the color landscape with a new inventiveness that considerably changed the standard characteristics of the genre. He intentionally discarded some characteristics of the work of earlier landscapists, including angular rocks with sharp, crystalline facets and trees delineated with double lines. Infusing his own ideas into the archaic color painting tradition, Yuanqi introduced a distinctive “Wang-style” light color landscape painting.

The traditional light color landscape – the light brown landscape – began with Dong Yuan and culminated with Huang Gongwang. Since its inception, it has been favored by literati artists because its reserved coloring, soft yet elaborate, is consonant with the ideal of the gentleman, who was seen as austere, modest, discreet. As opposed to the heavy blue-and-green style with its heavy, bright mineral pigments, the light brown landscape is usually limned with pale brown washes enriched by light yellow and green tones over a base drawing in ink. As it is introduced in *Jieziyuan huapu* 芥子園畫譜 (*Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting*), the light brown landscape was revived by Huang Gongwang, who “used ochre to wash rock surfaces, applying pigment lightly and sometimes outlining mountain contours with brown lines.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ Wang Gai 王概 et al. ed., *Jieziyuan huazhuan: shanshui* 芥子園畫傳: 山水 (*Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting: Landscape*) (Beijing: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1960), 27.

Ink in subtle gradations also plays an important role in light brown landscapes. The Qing critic Shen Zongqian 沈宗騫 (active, late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries), in his *Jiezhou xue hua bian* 芥舟學畫編 (*Note on the Study of Painting by Jiezhou [Shen Zongqian]*), observes that “The light brown landscape gives priority to ink.”¹⁰⁶ Among Huang Gongwang’s light brown landscapes, *Stone Cliff and Heavenly Pond* (fig. 2-14) is the most published and praised. The rhythms of its hemp-fiber texture strokes provide its mountain rocks with tactile surfaces. Over ink sketches, subtle tonal changes in pale brown and green washes lend volume to dynamically complex masses. A colophon on this painting by Yuan connoisseur Liu Guan 柳貫 (1270-1342) reveals that Huang Gongwang learned painting from the work of Zhao Mengfu; therefore, he should have acquired his mastery of Tang blue-and-green landscape by studying Zhao. In doing so, he deliberately avoided the brilliant colors and flat coloration characteristic of the Tang style in favor of washes in pale colors whose translucence, compared to the flat colors of the Tang style, lent not only delicacy and complexity to his work but more importantly structurally enhanced it with greater volume and visual depth. These light colors were further strengthened by a supporting network of sophisticated texture strokes in ink. It was owing to Huang Gongwang’s efforts that the light brown landscape invented by Dong Yuan was reinvigorated and subsequently

¹⁰⁶ Shen Zongqian, *Jiezhou xue hua bian* (*Note on the Study of Painting by Jiezhou*), in vol. 1068 of *Xuxiu siku quanshu* (masters), *juan* 4, 565b.

became a distinguished category of literati painting. Given that black ink is generally the basis of all literati painting, its varieties are distinguished not by their universal characteristic of ink but by more narrowly distinguishing qualities, including the intensity and types of color. Thus, we have such types of painting as the light brown landscape and the blue-and-green style.

Wang Yuanqi's color paintings, notably his early works, reflect his painstaking study of Huang Gongwang's light brown landscapes. For example, *Understanding Dachi* (fig. 3-36), a hanging scroll dated 1694, is an imitation of Huang's *Stone Cliff and Heavenly Pond*. In these works, the artists use light tones of brown-yellow and green. After outlining sinuous mountain contours with light ink lines, both use light colors to wash the facets of rocks. Diluted brown and green pigments, applied with a wet brush, bleed into one another, representing the natural shading of mountain surfaces while making them volumetric. Another hanging scroll made in 1696 (fig. 3-37) also demonstrates Yuanqi's adherence to Huang Gongwang's light color landscape. It, too, is a copy of Huang's *Stone Cliff* but in a looser style with richer variations in tone. "Alum lump" rocks are colored yellow-green and bordered by untouched areas denoting clouds and mist, which reach up among the mountains. This combination of color, ink, and void is used to construct a craggy mountain and tranquil valley.

But Wang Yuanqi's study of light color landscape did not stop with the work of his predecessors. His keen sense of color drove him to further explore color in painting.

A study of his oeuvre shows that, during the mature stage of his art, a new manner of color landscape appeared and came to fruition in the years preceding 1710. First, he widened the selection of colors he used in light brown landscapes. In *Autumn Mountains* (fig. 3-38), dedicated to Wu Laiyi 吳來儀 in 1707, which is representative of this mode, the occasional emergence of scarlet in the fore and middle grounds and of an indigo blue wash in the distance brings vigor and vitality to the scene. Although such colors as these were not entirely rejected by other literati painters in the light color landscape, they were rarely executed with the frequency and intensity found in Yuanqi's work. He also boldly adopted other bright colors which had scarcely been employed in the tradition of the light brown landscape. In the *Small Skiff* handscroll of 1709 mentioned above (fig. 3-21), he diluted bright turquoise green and indigo blue nearly to transparency, blending them with rattan yellow to create spontaneous shading on mountain rocks. In *Blossoms and Willow Trees in a Water Village* (fig. 3-33), part of the 1713 album also discussed above, a pale pink was included in his color vocabulary. Yuanqi's penchant for rich, luminous colors was obviously influenced by the blue-and-green landscape of the Tang. However, compared to Wang Jian's mechanical imitation of the Three Zhaos, Wang Yuanqi adapted their style to his own vision, successfully combining bright mineral pigments with the austere light brown landscape style. He was skilled at applying heavy colors with a wet brush, using water to dilute his colors to varying degrees of saturation. In many of his light color landscapes, such

as Leaf 1 (fig. 3-39) in the 1713 album and Leaf 2 (fig. 3-40) in *Ten Views of a Humble Cottage*, he used intense colors such as emerald green and navy blue, but he diluted them to lighter shades more compatible with literati taste.

Secondly, Yuanqi tended to give equal value to ink and color. Traditionally, the use of inked texture strokes was the dominant feature of the light brown landscape. In Dong Yuan's *Summer Mountains* (fig. 3-41) and *Wintry Groves and Layered Banks* (fig. 2-11) and in Huang Gongwang's *Stone Cliff and Heavenly Pond*, form is rendered mainly by shades of ink and by variation in the shapes and types of texture strokes. Color remains subordinate to ink, acting as a supplement to pictorial forms established primarily by ink. But Wang Yuanqi abandoned discrimination against color in his painting. In *Tihuagao*, he proclaims: "The method of color is not different from the application of ink. To control it properly, one should focus more on the 'breath' of a painting than on its colors. Color is within ink, ink within color. The success of ancient masters was predicated on [their understanding of] this."¹⁰⁷ In essence, he gave equal value to both. An example of this is *Autumn Mountains after Dachi* (1713) (fig. 3-42), in which he applied ink and color to the same areas to realize degrees of shading. Here, green and yellow imperceptibly merge with ink, actualizing the effect of "color in the ink and ink in the color." In his *Yuchuang manbi*, he repeats that color and ink cannot be treated

¹⁰⁷ Wang Yuanqi, *Lutai tihuagao*, 94.

separately; they are tightly associated by “structural breath”:

The use of color is to supplement what is not done by brush and ink; it is also to enhance what is achieved by brush and ink. Nowadays people do not understand this. Colors are treated as merely colors, and brush and ink are left as brush and ink. [As a result, the colors] neither fit the structural force (*shi*) of the landscape, nor penetrate beyond the surface of the silk. One sees only harsh patches of red and green that are annoying and tiresome. The only remedy is not to treat colors as colors alone, but instead, emphasize the structural “breath” (*qi*) of the composition. As a painter gradually brings out the *yin* and *yang*, front and back [in a composition], colors are naturally enlivened by the “breath.” This way [colors] will not float on the surface and will not coagulate, and will naturally become part of the design. This is not something that can be achieved in haste.¹⁰⁸

設色即用筆用墨，所以補筆墨之不足，顯筆墨之妙處。今人不解此意。色自爲色，筆墨自爲筆墨。不合山水之勢，不入絹素之骨。惟見紅綠火氣，可憎可厭而已。惟不重取色，專重取氣，於陰陽向背處，逐漸醒出。則色由氣發，不浮不滯，自然成文，非可以操心從事也。

Finally, but not least, Yuanqi was dissatisfied with the simple, inflexible brushwork of traditional colored landscapes. In many of the color paintings of his maturity, flat washes of color are replaced by a series of constructive strokes – sequences of color touches are set down to attain a high degree of formal complexity. In the typical traditional light brown landscape, mountain surfaces are usually washed using a limited number of colors. As evident in *White Clouds among Autumn Mountains* (fig. 3-43) by Yuanqi’s mentor and direct model Wang Shimin, light brown was applied first, followed by indigo in short, strong strokes to suggest topographical relief and spatial recession.

¹⁰⁸ Wang Yuanqi, *Yuchuang maibi*, translated by Wen C. Fong, in the addendum to *In Pursuit of Antiquity*, 182.

In places, the diluted indigo merges softly into a light brown ground, naturally forming shades that convey a sense of volume. However, the expressive force of the color is greatly diminished by its lack of tonal variation; to achieve this, Shimin relied on texture strokes in ink. Although Wang Yuanqi made light brown landscapes in the traditional manner throughout his career, his innovative talent becomes evident in the structural brushwork of his late light brown landscapes. The mountain surfaces in *Trees in Mist before a Humble Cottage*, dated to 1715 (fig. 3-44), are divided into sequences of colorful splatters. Yuanqi emphasizes the vertical climb of the central mountain's "dragon vein" as it rises from the lower center of the painting toward the mountain peak. Over this long ridge, he precipitously applied blocks of color touches in green, orange, and yellow to evoke the mountain's rugged rocks and dense foliage.

In Yuanqi's handscroll *Accumulating Green on South Mountain* (fig. 3-45), the hues are not as rich as those in *Trees in Mist*. The mountain range is built up of brushstrokes of more diluted color intermingled with texture strokes in ink. In the middle section, conical hills were made with broad washes that recall the technique of traditional light brown landscapes; nevertheless, as a whole, the composition is mainly occupied by incisive overlapping brushstrokes of saturated colors.

An album leaf by Yuanqi in the landscape style of Ni Zan (fig. 3-46) from 1713 is a brilliant demonstration of structural brushwork. In the right middle ground, a hillock is built from a patchwork of light brown diluted indigo blue and white paper. Here,

Yuanqi no longer hews to the reality of his motifs; his aim was to disassemble each motif into elemental color strokes and then rebuild it, resulting in a luminous chromaticism. The creative facture of his constructive strokes is, in my opinion, one of Yuanqi's most important contributions to landscape painting. It is no exaggeration to say that this new method was one of the most significant aspects of his later art.

Observing Wang Yuanqi's oeuvre, one can see a trend in his artistic output: beginning with the work of ancient masters, he pressed on to create landscapes of increasing abstraction. In addition to using stylized patterns and brushwork, he extracted and simplified his motifs, establishing a series of concept-based images. In depicting objects, he often decomposed his brushwork, abandoning the more representative presentations of tradition in favor of a more structural approach that consisted of increasingly abstract strokes that stand not so much for objects as for themselves. These efforts were part of his goal to canonize the orthodox school as the mainstream of literati painting. A highly cultivated scholar, Wang Yuanqi was familiar with literary allusions and imagery. Applying these elements to painting, he was able to capture viewers' attention and arouse their interest. For Wang Yuanqi, painting was more than the iconographic representation of nature; it also expressed emotional and spiritual values. In this regard, he treated painting and poetry equally, because, as Yan Yu 嚴羽 (active, late thirteenth century) has pointed out, they both "sing what is in the

heart.”¹⁰⁹ Moreover, as to painting technique, he tried to open a new path for literati painting by introducing new methods to colored landscape. Unfortunately, there is no evidence that any of his disciples and followers mastered or even understood the innovative style he invented. Nevertheless, his bold work and personal success in the light color landscape genre brought orthodox painting to a new stage.

¹⁰⁹ Yan Yu, *Canglang shihua* 滄浪詩話 (*Comments on Poetry by Canglang*), no. 5, translated by Stephen Owen, *Zhongguo wenlun: yingyi yu pinglun*, 445.

CHAPTER FOUR

WANG YUANQI'S ART AFTER 1700 (II): THE HEYDAY OF ORTHODOX PAINTING

1. Wang Wei and the Wangchuan Villa

1.1 *Illustration of Yunlin's Suiyou Pavilion*

Wang Yuanqi, having concluded a mourning period of three years honoring his father's death by the autumn of the thirty-ninth year of Kangxi (1700), left his hometown Taicang to return to Beijing, as mentioned at the beginning of Chapter Three. After his return to the capital, he participated in a variety of social activities and made paintings for friends and colleagues. On the fourteenth day of the eleventh lunar month of 1700, Wang Yuanqi painted a hanging scroll, *Illustration of Yunlin's Suiyou Pavilion* (fig. 4-1), for his friend and student Sun Fu 孫阜 (active, early eighteenth century). A native of Wuzhong 吳中, Jiangsu Province, Sun Fu was one of Wang Yuanqi's most outstanding pupils. Instead of pursuing the usual official career of a literati artist, he became a professional painter and eventually was appointed to the imperial painting workshop.¹ Yuanqi's *Illustration* for Sun is based on a poem by the great Yuan painter Ni Zan. Ni and his friends often gathered at the Suzhou villa of the bibliophile Xu Dazuo 徐達左

¹ See Yu Jianhua, ed., *Zhongguo meishujia renming cidian*, 1653.

(active, late fourteenth century).² In the eighth month of the *guichou* year of the Hongwu era (1373), Ni visited Xu at his estate for a few days. At Xu's Suiyou Pavilion, the two drank wine, composed poems, and viewed art works by old masters. To commemorate this memorable occasion, Ni Zan painted a hanging scroll for Xu and inscribed one of his poems on it, which was subsequently anthologized in Li Zuoxian's 李佐賢 (1807-1876) *Shuhua jianying* 書畫鑒影 (*Reflections of Calligraphies and Paintings in a Mirror*):

As autumn descends into the grove,
I come to visit this lonely cottage
Where ire and worry leave me for now.
In quiet night, breezes drift from mountain marsh,
Crickets call this lonely traveler....³

來訪幽居秋滿林，塵囂暫可散煩襟。
風發研沼搖山影，夜靜寒蛩和客吟……

By lucky accident, Sun Fu had acquired Ni Zan's autograph of this poem, although Ni's painting had long been missing. Regretting this loss, Sun requested that his mentor, Wang Yuanqi, paint something to complement Ni's poem. In his *Illustration*, Yuanqi borrows Ni Zan's typically sparse compositional style. This painting's mountains gently

² Xu Dazuo, *zi* Liangfu 良夫, was a native of Suzhou. See Feng Guifen 馮桂芬, ed., *Suzhou fuzhi* 蘇州府志 (*Local Annals of Suzhou Prefecture*) (Suzhou: Jiangsu shuju, the ninth year of Guangxu 光緒 [1883]), *juan* 15.

³ Li Zuoxian, ed., *Shuhua jianying*, *juan* 20; Ni Zan, *Qingbi ge quanji* 清閼閣全集 (*The Complete Works of Qingbi Pavilion*) (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1983), *juan* 6.

slope along its upper edge and are separated by far reaches of water from foreground trees and rocks that line a near shore. The purity of this quiet scene tallies with the desolate atmosphere of Ni's poem even as it recalls his representative style of painting.

More interestingly, the mounting of this painting bears appreciative colophons by a number of celebrated officials and scholars, most of which were written soon after Wang finished the painting. In the upper right corner, Minister of Justice Hu Huien 胡會恩 (active, late seventeenth to early eighteenth centuries) writes:

How far away is Suiyou Pavilion!
 White clouds surround pines that stand in the wind.
 Of the gathered talents of this pavilion,
 Ni Yu [Ni Zan] excelled at poetry, calligraphy.

...

Who made this illustrative painting?
 It must have been done by Wang Mojie [Wang Wei]:
 Under a pair of phoenix trees
 Hides a cottage of lonely thatch.

遂幽軒邈何許？松風□畔白雲濃。
 中有高人自儔倡，倪迂寫作兩超逸。

.....

誰其補者王摩詰，蕭蕭野屋夾雙桐。

In the upper left corner opposite Hu's colophon, a famous calligrapher, Li Dune 勵杜訥 (1628-1703) wrote:

...

Other than Ni, man of genius,
 Who can write such elegant rhymes?
 Accompanying Yunlin's [Ni Zan] splashing ink
 Are the spirit and principles of Wangchuan [Wang Wei]....

.....

前身不是倪高士，雅韻難求第二人。
夢想雲林潑墨時，輞川家法竟兼之。

On the right margin of the mounting, the calligrapher Zhang Tingzan 張廷瓚
(active, late seventeenth century) wrote:

Beautiful lines are left in Qingbi Pavilion⁴
Among clouds and mist of Youcheng's [Wang Wei] skilled brush.
Like the pair of dragons that met at Yanjin,⁵
The unity of two excellencies [of Ni and Wang] here reaches perfection.

清閼閣中留好句，右丞筆老寫雲烟。
雙龍忽向延津合，具此方稱二妙全。

Moreover, also on the right margin of the mounting above Zhang Tingzan's poem,
another inscriber wrote:

... [Looking at] this painting of Suiyou Pavilion in Wang Youcheng's style,
[One feels that] the universe changes, that life's disillusionations are swept away.
Low cottages sheltered by two phoenix trees:
Morning dew's drip dampens their windows....

.....

遂幽一卷畫，變滅掃虛空。
補者王右丞，矮屋覆雙桐。

⁴ "Qingbi Pavilion" was Ni Zan's studio's name. See Yu Jianhua, ed., *Zhongguo meishujia renming cidian*, 1128.

⁵ An old story claims that, in the Jin dynasty, the magistrate of Feng County, Zhang Hua 張華, found a pair of swords named Chungou 純鈞 and Zhanlu 湛盧 and stored them separately. Later, when the two swords were coincidentally brought together by different owners at Yanjin 延津, they transformed into a pair of dragons and rose into the sky. The idiom "the meeting of swords at Yanjin" refers to a lucky coincidence. See Ling Mengchu 凌濛初, *Erke pai'an jingqi* 二刻拍案驚奇 (*Astonished Slaps On the Desktop II*) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1996), vol. 3, 46.

桐蔭□朝露，滴入巖牖中。

.....

It is noteworthy that, in addition to extolling Ni Zan's literary talent and praising Wang Yuanqi's painting skill, these colophons associate Wang Yuanqi's illustrative painting with the work of the founding father of Chinese literati painting – Wang Wei, famous poet and painter of the Tang dynasty. While it is well known that Wang Yuanqi deeply admired the painting of Huang Gongwang and strove to follow him throughout his career, he did not restrict his style to this Yuan master's. As suggested in these colophons, by the beginning of the eighteenth century, he had become a self-declared heir of the first patriarch of literati painting, Wang Wei, whose reflective artistic tradition he further explored. Thus, it is no coincidence that he became increasingly enthusiastic about the work of Wang Wei after his return to Beijing in 1700. Although his paintings in the style of Wei are fewer than his works related to Huang Gongwang, his pursuit of Wei is a phenomenon to be reckoned with in his artistic career and merits scholarly discussion.

1.2 Wang Wei and His Wangchuan Villa

A painting in the Metropolitan Museum's collection by Wang Yuanqi entitled *Wangchuan Villa* (fig. 4-2) has attracted frequent attention from art historians. Mounted as a handscroll, brushed in ink and color on paper, *Wangchuan Villa* is over 18 feet long.

Dated 1711, it is based on a stone-engraved version of what has become the most standard *Wangchuan Villa* composition attributed to Wang Wei.

Wangchuan Villa represents Wang Wei's estate, which extended along the banks of the Wang River. The unifying elements of the design are the winding Wang River, which appears and disappears at various places, and mountains that form a continuous range in the background. Between these and divided into sections by transverse hillocks, the painter adds groves and orchards, gardens and cultivated fields, and building compounds enclosed by high fences.

While the owner of the Wangchuan Villa, Wang Wei, has long been esteemed as the founder of literati painting, nevertheless, for him, "painting was never of greater importance than his other artistic occupations, music, poetry, calligraphy, and gardening, in all of which he attained a degree of perfection."⁶ After passing the civil service examination in 721, Wang served in government as a local official and junior censor. In 755, however, a rebellion led by An Lushan brought sudden change to his life. After An Lushan's army sacked the capital Chang'an and the imperial court fled to the southwestern province of Sichuan, Wang Wei was forced to accept a position at the rebel court. This event stained his honor and greatly affected his career in later years. When the imperial court defeated the rebels after a long, debilitating war, Wang Wei was

⁶ See Sir , *The Chinese on the Art of Painting*, vol. 1, 125.

accused of treason and imprisoned. Although eventually acquitted of charges, the indictment destroyed his confidence and any interest in continuing his career.⁷ As a result, in his later years, he built a villa in his hometown, Wangchuan, a county a few miles from Chang'an, where he lived in semi-seclusion. He once painted the scenery of his Wangchuan Villa on the wall of the Qingyuan Monastery, which was dedicated to his late mother. An important element of this wall painting was that Wang Wei inscribed it with a series of twenty poems describing various sites on the grounds of his estate.

Some centuries later, the theme of the Wangchuan Villa unexpectedly became a favorite subject of literati artists. For example, one of Wang Wei's most famous followers, Li Gonglin 李公麟 (1049-1106), once depicted his own estate in a painting titled *Mountain Villa* (fig. 4-3), which currently exists in several versions. An associate of the great poet and calligrapher Su Shi, Li obtained his *jinshi* degree in 1070. Frustrated by his unsuccessful official career, he devoted himself to painting until he excelled in almost every genre. Imitating Wang Wei's *Wangchuan Villa*, Li selected twenty sites from his estate to depict in *Mountain Villa*. He also had Su Shi's younger brother, Su Zhe 蘇轍 (1039-1112), write a series of twenty poems on these sites, as Wang Wei had done for his own. The *Mountain Villa* scroll alternates sections of painted scene with calligraphed poetry; the texts do not infringe upon the picture-space.

⁷ Ibid., vol. 1, 126.

Such a format is quite archaic, having been used for centuries, for instance, in Gu Kaizhi's 顧愷之 (ca. 344-405) famous handscroll, *Admonitions of the Palace Instructress to the Court Ladies* (fig. 4-4) in the British Museum. Since it was believed that Wang Wei and his Wangchuan Villa epitomized the scholar's way of life, "its composition was considered by the orthodox masters as the fountainhead of a thousand years of painting history."⁸

1.3 Illustrative Paintings Based on Wang Wei's Poetry

Among versions of the *Wangchuan Villa* by major painters, Wang Yuanqi's handscroll of 1711 is considered one of the most important. As noted above, before 1700, Yuanqi's study of traditional literati painting focused mainly on the work of the great painters of the Yuan dynasty. However, during the last fifteen years of his life and artistic career, he deliberately associated many of his paintings with Wang Wei. Among other works, he made a series of paintings in the styles of previous painting masters to illustrate poems by Wang Wei.

As one example of these, Wang Yuanqi painted a hanging scroll in autumn 1701 for his friend Huangshi 皇士 on the theme of a couplet from Wang Wei's poem, "Bidding Farewell to Mr. Li" (fig. 4-5):

⁸ Whitfield, ed., *In Pursuit of Antiquity*, 181.

After a night of mountain rain,
From treetops, a hundred cascades of silk.⁹

山中一夜雨，樹杪百重泉。

Representing mountains in heavy mist after a rainstorm, both the composition and brushwork of this painting resemble typical works of the Yuan artist Gao Kegong, which feature splashed brushwork that dissolves forms into spots and blotches. This was not the only work Yuanqi painted in the style of Gao. In 1696, he brushed an earlier Gao-style painting for his eldest son Wang Mo (fig. 4-6). However, he did not add an inscription to this earlier work in Gao's style until the autumn month in which he brushed his Gao-style work of 1701. In other words, it would seem that his 1701 inscription on his 1696 Gao-style painting may have been the inspiration for Yuanqi to paint "Bidding Farewell to Mr. Li" in the same style in that month.

Wang Wei's poem "Bidding Farewell to Mr. Li" also provided the theme for a hanging scroll executed in 1706 (fig. 4-7). On this later painting, Wang Yuanqi notes: "In the ninth month of the year *bingxu* [1706], I picture the poetic ideas of Mojie 摩詰 [Wang Wei] in the manner of Juran." Comparing this hanging scroll with *Living in the Mountains* (fig. 4-8) by the tenth-century master Juran, one sees that, although Juran's work has darkened with age, the fundamental features of these two paintings are similar.

⁹ Wang Wei, "Song Zizhou Li shijun" 送梓州李使君 ("Bidding Farewell to Mr. Li from Zizhou"), in *Quan Tang shi*, *juan* 126.

Both present a dominant central mountain motif in ink with fine gradations of tone that range from transparent grey to deep black. The mountains are formed by deeply folded and terraced slopes, while streams cascade over terraces, and leafy trees stand like screens on rocky ledges. In addition, at the foot of the mountains, cottages are partially hidden among large rocks in both paintings.

Wang Yuanqi was most familiar with the techniques and styles of Yuan artists and therefore often borrowed from their methods when illustrating Wang Wei's poems. One example is a leaf in an album of 1712 based on Wang Wei's poem, "Searching for the Temple of Mounded Fragrance" in the manner of Huang Gongwang (fig. 4-9), of which Yuanqi inscribed two lines:

Soaring cliffs hush burbling streams.
Blue-green pines chill sunlight's color.¹⁰

泉聲咽危石，日色冷青松。

Emulating Huang Gongwang's style, Yuanqi used light colors and short horizontal strokes to outline trees and the contours of hills, techniques that are reminiscent of Huang's in *Stone Cliff and Heavenly Pond* (fig. 2-14). Here, Huang's textured slopes, open plateaux, and clusters of round boulders are the basic building blocks of Wang's composition. A cluster of trees – each of a different type – serves to bridge the gap

¹⁰ Wang Wei, "Guo Xiangji si" 過香積寺 ("Searching for the Temple of Mounded Fragrance"), in *Quan Tang shi*, juan 126.

between foreground and middle ground, helping to unify the composition while providing a visual counterpoint to the mountain. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Wang Yuanqi had taken Huang Gongwang as a model since youth. He and his grandfather, Wang Shimin, were enthusiastic promoters of Song and Yuan art, making great efforts to search out and collect Huang Gongwang's works. On the handscroll *Landscape Painting for Zheng Nianshang in the Style of Huang Dachi*, Wang clearly expresses his views on Huang Gongwang and the Song-Yuan masters:

The techniques of painting were perfected in the Song. Yuan artists searched for and grasped the implicit meaning of painting, discerning its spirit. They made dense [brushwork] open and expressed the spirit of simplicity in strange formats. The true essence [of painting] was then disclosed. Among the Four Yuan Masters, whose individual essences lie in their overflowing leisurely moods and revelations of the mysteries of nature, Dachi [Huang Gongwang] was the most enlightened disciple [of previous masters].¹¹

畫法莫備於宋，至元人搜抉其義蘊，洗發其精神。實處轉松，奇中有淡，而真趣乃出。四家各有真髓，其中逸致橫生，天機透露，大癡尤精進頭陀也。

For almost half a century, Wang devoted much time and effort to absorbing Huang's style. Even in his later years, and despite his personal style of painting, when painting in Huang's style, Wang followed it faithfully. He once wrote with conviction to a friend: "Since my early twenties, I had been educated by my late grandfather. During the past fifty years and more, what I have learned is Dachi [Huang Gongwang]; what I have

¹¹ Wang Yuanqi, *Lutai tihuagao*, 90.

taught is Dachi. Setting my sights on him, [I acquired] the secret skills of painting....”¹²

Through Huang Gongwang’s method, which opened for him a door to the fountainhead of literati painting, Wang Yuanqi further explored the more archaic models of landscape painting. When illustrating Wang Wei’s line, “Blue-green pines chill sunlight’s color,” Yuanqi consistently employed the relatively archaic “boneless” style, as in an album created in 1705 (fig. 4-10). In doing so, he omitted ink outlines, employing only washes of transparent color to create a serene, quiet atmosphere. A light blue-green color emphasizes the “coldness” of the sunlight, as if everything in the valley had been frozen at one moment.

In an album leaf preserved in the Shanghai Museum, Wang Yuanqi illustrates another couplet by Wang Wei (fig. 4-11):

Live in the land of immortals,
Make floating clouds your coat.¹³

人家在仙掌，雲氣欲生衣。

The brushwork of this painting is blunt and bold. As the artist notes in his inscription, it was executed in the manner of the Yuan master, Zhao Mengfu. Zhao’s great fame and prominent position in the history of painting are based on his insistent

¹² Ibid., 126.

¹³ Wang Wei, in *Quan Tang shi*, juan 129.

evocation of the spirit of antiquity.¹⁴ His preferred models were such painters of the Tang period as Wang Wei and Han Gan 韓幹 (ca. 706-783). Although Zhao was a versatile artist skilled in antique genres, it was his achievement in colored landscape painting that earned him highest acclaim. In the present album leaf, Wang Yuanqi adopted Zhao's blue-and-green style of landscape, derived from the now-archaic style of academic painting favored by Tang artists. Its chief tones are green and light brown. Color was applied over an ink sketch; then, texture strokes and dots in dark ink were added to convey a sense of volume. Through Zhao Mengfu's method, Yuanqi successfully conveys the "worldly paradise" depicted in Wang Wei's poem.

On another album leaf, Wang Yuanqi transcribes this couplet from Wang Wei's "Deer Fence" (fig. 4-12):

This mountain is empty of men –
Only their voices carry this far.¹⁵

空山不見人，但聞人語響。

At first glance, the painted scene here may seem irrelevant to that depicted in Wang Wei's couplet. However, one may catch the artist's intent by associating it with the simple, summary manner and a scenic format that are typical of Ni Zan's work. His

¹⁴ For more information about Zhao Mengfu's color paintings, see Chu-Tsing Li, *Autumn Colors on the Ch'iao and Hua Mountains: A Painting by Chao Meng-fu* (Artibus Asiae Supplementum XXI, 1965); Chu-Tsing Li, "Recent Studies on Zhao Mengfu's Painting in China," *Artibus Asiae*, vol. 53, no. 1/2 (1993): 195-210.

¹⁵ Wang Wei, "Lu Zhai" 鹿柴 ("Deer Fence"), in *Quan Tang shi*, juan 128.

manner is easy to recognize, partly because of his subject matter and its arrangement, partly because of his style. (fig. 4-13) Structurally, his paintings usually consist of three elements – distant mountains, calm water stretching across a middle ground, and old trees on a bank of land in the foreground. Using this standard composition, Ni created a desolate world, quiet and clean, without clamor or contamination. Ni rarely depicted figures in these bare landscapes. His omission of figures and the clear purity of his style allowed Wang Yuanqi to use the characteristics of Ni's typical extant works to echo Wang Wei's words, "this mountain is empty of men."

The paintings discussed above show Wang Yuanqi's enthusiasm for Wang Wei's poetry, through which Yuanqi sought to pursue the origin and essence of literati painting. By Yuanqi's time, unfortunately, Wang Wei's paintings had been lost for centuries. Thus, rather than emulate Wang Wei's originals, Yuanqi relied on interpretations by later painters of the Song and Yuan dynasties who were considered Wei's stylistic successors, artists such as Juran, Gao Kegong, Zhao Mengfu, Huang Gongwang, and Ni Zan. Loosely based upon these later models, Yuanqi's works were personal interpretations that he used to express his thoughts and attitudes toward the founder of orthodox painting. In his words, "In the art of the Six Principles [i.e., painting], it was Youcheng [Wang Wei] who first mastered [the secret of] 'breath-movement, life-motion' and thus captured the

true composition of the universe.”¹⁶

1.4 Wang Yuanqi’s *Wangchuan Villa* (1711)

Yuanqi’s pursuit of Wang Wei’s spirit was consummated in his great handscroll of 1711, *Wangchuan Villa*. As mentioned above, Wang Wei’s original painting of his estate at Wangchuan was a mural on the wall of Qingyuan Monastery. By the late ninth century, owing to the Great Anti-Buddhist Persecution of the Huichang era (845), many Buddhist temples had been destroyed and priests secularized.¹⁷ It is said that the Qingyuan Monastery did not escape this fate.¹⁸ For the following two centuries, like the demolished Qingyuan Monastery, Wang Wei’s *Wangchuan Villa* was buried in oblivion. The destruction of this mural and all Wang Wei’s painting raises questions about Yuanqi’s *Wangchuan Villa*: in what ways does Yuanqi’s work reflect Wang Wei’s style? And from what sources did he reconstruct his lost model? In the colophon following this painting, Wang Yuanqi partly answers these questions:

...Last autumn, I acquired a popular stone engraving [of the Wangchuan composition]. Using the poems found in [Wang Wei’s] collected works as a reference, I made this scroll with my own ideas, so that it differs from ‘physical

¹⁶ Wang Yuanqian, *Wang Sinong tihualu*, juan 2, 16.

¹⁷ See Arthur F. Wright, “Buddhism and Chinese Culture: Phases of Interaction,” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 17, no. 1 (Nov., 1957), 38.

¹⁸ See Shi Weiping 時衛平, “Wang Wei shihua yu chanzong yingxiang” 王維詩畫與禪宗影響 (“Wang Wei’s Poetry and Painting and the Influence of the Chan School”), *Dongnan wenhua* 東南文化 (*The Culture of Southeast China*), no. 1 (1995): 118.

likeness' as conceived by professional painters.

……客秋偶見行世石刻，并取集中之詩，參考以我意自成，不落畫工形似。

In this paragraph, Wang Yuanqi mentions three elements that influenced the creation of his painting – the stone engraving, Wang Wei's poems, and his own interpretation. Let us consider each in turn.

By the tenth century, accompanying the rise of his status in art history, Wang Wei's paintings began to be reconstructed on the basis of his literary works.¹⁹ By the early eleventh century, the Wangchuan composition had been revived in handscroll format and was perpetuated by numerous artists in the following centuries. Among the many painters of Wangchuan scrolls, Guo Zhongshu 郭忠恕 (d. 977) had the greatest reputation.²⁰ At least three copies of his *Wangchuan Villa* by later artists survive today, one of which is preserved in the Metropolitan Museum (fig. 4-14). Guo deliberately adopted an archaic, unnatural manner to simulate what he took to be the elements of the eighth-century original, including its schematic, almost map-like layout. When the handscrolls of Guo and Wang Yuanqi are juxtaposed, the similarity between their compositions is striking. Throughout, the twenty scenes that characterize the Wangchuan model are arranged in the same order in both paintings. The one exception

¹⁹ See Kohara Hironobu et. al., *Ō I 王維 (Wang Wei)*, in *Bunjinga suihen 文人畫粹編 (Selection of Literati Painting)* (Tokyo, 1975), vol. 1.

²⁰ Wu Hung, "The Origins of Chinese Painting (Paleolithic Period to Tang Dynasty)," in *Three Thousand Years of Chinese Painting*, ed. Yang Xin et al., 81-83.

is the section depicting Qi Lake (fig. 4-15). In the Wang composition, water occupies a wider area, and a pavilion has been moved from the center of the scene to its left corner on the lake bank.

In 1617, a *Wangchuan Villa* attributed to Guo Zhongshu was engraved in stone by the local government of Lantian County, Shaanxi Province. In the fall of 1710, Wang Yuanqi saw a rubbing of this engraving. The next year, he spent nine months completing his own version of the Wangchuan Villa theme (fig. 4-16). The stone version of Guo Zhongshu's *Wangchuan Villa*, however, provided only a compositional basis for Yuanqi's painting. Since brushwork and color cannot be reproduced in stone, these are necessarily Yuanqi's own. But the inadequacies of stone engraving had the advantage of releasing Yuanqi from a rigid imitation of the earlier work. While using the stone engraving as his compositional guide, Yuanqi freely departed from both nature and his model, reconstructing the model engraving in his own brushwork.

Wang Yuanqi's handscroll is prefaced by the artist's transcription of Wang Wei's twenty poems describing scenes on his Wangchuan estate. In these poems, Wang reminisces about the past and expresses his thoughts on life. For instance, in "Mengcheng Hollow," Wei writes:

My new home is near Mengcheng.
Of ancient woods, worn willows remain.
Who will come to live here next?

Will he grieve for men now gone?²¹

新家孟城口，古木餘衰柳。
來者復為誰，空悲昔人有。

The worn-out willows demonstrate the poet's sensitivity to the weight of time and history. Success and failure alike flash by; one must respond to change calmly. In a responsory poem, his friend Pei Di 裴迪 (716-?) sighs with further regret:

I built my hut below this ancient city.
Often now, I climb a nearby tower.
The city's antique form is lost.
People come and go alone.²²

結廬古城下，時登古城上。
古城非疇昔，今人自來往。

In his poem, Pei Di indicates the location of Wang Wei's villa as "below the ancient city." However, in Wang Yuanqi's handscroll, the building stands beside the ruins of an old walled enclosure (fig. 4-17). Instead of the thatched hut mentioned in another of these twenty poems, it is presented as a luxurious complex. Without Pei Di's poem, we could have hardly understood the significance of the material depicted in Yuanqi's painting, nor could we feel so strongly the vicissitudes of life or the certainty of death about which Wang Wei wrote.

In "Deer Fence," the poet describes the quiet and beautiful scenery of a portion of

²¹ Wang Wei, "Mengcheng ao" 孟城坳 ("Mengcheng Hollow"), in *Quan Tang shi*, juan 128.

²² Pei Di, a responsory poem to Wang Wei's "Mengcheng Hollow," in *Quan Tang shi*, juan 129.

his estate:

This mountain is empty of men –
 Only their voices carry this far.
 Deep in the woods, slanting light
 Dapples jade green moss.²³

空山不見人，但聞人語響。
 返景入深林，複照青苔上。

Standing on this secluded mountain, did the poet comprehend the Buddhist teaching of emptiness? Wang Wei's pictorial and poetic creations often have religious connotations. His style name, Mojie 摩詰, was based on the name of one of the great teachers of Buddhism, Vimalakirti, whose name in Chinese is Weimojie 維摩詰. Those familiar with the religious undercurrents in his literary works will easily discern their author's implicit expression of Buddhist thought in "Deer Fence."

Wang Yuanqi's transcription of Wang Wei's poems is an informed practice. The twenty poems are terse yet highly expressive textual descriptions of twenty scenes on Wei's estate that, placed at the beginning of Yuanqi's scroll, shape its viewers' understanding of it (fig. 4-18). Thus, before arriving at the painting, the viewer is already imbued with its narrative and can therefore better participate in interpreting it. Despite differences between pictorial renderings and verbal expressions in this piece, Wang Yuanqi ensures that each vehicle complements the other: the written text greatly

²³ Wang Wei, "Lu Zhai," in *Quan Tang shi*, juan 128.

enriches our understanding of the painting's meaning.

In addition to the rubbing of the stone engraving and Wang Wei's poetry, the third influence on Wang Yuanqi's *Wangchuan Villa* was his painterly approach to its pictorial model. This is not to say that his approach is a matter of pure creation. As usual, his brushwork can be traced to ancient sources. In *Wangchuan Villa*, Yuanqi relies especially on the manner of Zhao Mengfu. In 1709, two years before his *Wangchuan* composition, Yuanqi had painted another handscroll, *Fishing in River Country at Blossom Time* (fig. 4-19) in the manner of Zhao Mengfu. A number of Zhao's colored landscapes, such as *Qiao and Hua Mountains* (fig. 4-20) and *Watering Horses in the Suburbs* (fig. 4-21), follow the style of the academic school. These paintings, executed in bright colors and ink in a somewhat dry manner, represent the style of Zhao on which Wang Yuanqi modeled his *Fishing in River Country*.

Despite the small scale and relatively simple structure of the earlier *Fishing in River Country*, it is comparable to *Wangchuan Villa* in terms of composition and brushwork (fig. 4-22). The details of these paintings show great similarity in the outlining of rocks, the positioning of buildings, the shapes of boats, and the way trees are arrayed. In retrospect, the short *Fishing in River Country* serves as prelude to the long symphony of *Wangchuan Villa*. In his inscription after the shorter scroll, Wang Yuanqi makes clear his debt to Zhao Mengfu's *Reclusive Fisherman on a Flowery River*. Indeed, Zhao was renowned for his skill in the genre of lightly colored landscape. In his short handscroll,

Fishing in River Country, Yuanqi apparently emulates Zhao's favorite technique – light colors and ink applied in a slightly dry manner.

Obviously, the eighteen-foot-long *Wangchuan Villa*'s complicated structure and variety of brushwork techniques were by no means spontaneous. As Wang Yuanqi states in his inscription, *Wangchuan Villa* was a major project that took nine months to complete. In my opinion, the rudiments of its layout had been in the painter's mind for longer than that, forming a slowly developing blueprint based on earlier works, especially his handscroll *Fishing in River Country* of 1709 after Zhao Mengfu.

One question regarding Wang Yuanqi's *Wangchuan Villa* remains: what attracted him to this theme in his later years? Alternatively, considering his high position at court, one might ask: why did a high-ranking minister like Wang Yuanqi have a special interest in the retirement home of an ancient frustrated official? Although Wang Yuanqi did not address this question in his painting inscriptions and other writings, two possible factors lie behind his interest in the Wangchuan Villa theme. The first is a general one that lays the background for Yuanqi's broad interest in Wang Wei. By the first decade of the eighteenth century, Yuanqi, along with his increased status at court, had reached the height of his painting career. Conscious that he was in a position to influence the future history of painting, his ambition had expanded from creating individual works to establishing a monument to his art by confirming the dominance of the Orthodox School of literati painting, especially in opposition to the individualist works of the Four Great

Monks as well as to the Yushan School, whose members had partly abandoned the Southern School tradition. To achieve these goals, he refused to confine his scope to a single model – such as Zhao Mengfu or Huang Gongwang – or to the styles of a single dynasty, such as the Yuan. He made great efforts to transcend his predecessors, to reach back to the most distant origins of literati painting as defined by Dong Qichang in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Although in his early years Dong had addressed his attention to painters of the Song in his search for the origins of literati painting, eventually he pushed his efforts back to the Tang, nominating Wang Wei as the fountainhead of literati painting. Hence, it was logical that Yuanqi took Wang Wei as his ultimate model. In the end, Yuanqi's effort to synthesize and solidify the stylistic origins of the Orthodox School of literati painting resulted from his perceived participation in the lineage of the orthodox patriarchs of painting that began with Wang Wei.

The second possible reason for Yuanqi's inclination to recreate Wang Wei's *Wangchuan Villa* is that, despite his high position at court, Wang Yuanqi, living in the vortex of political struggle that typified bureaucratic life in the central government, may have suffered from insecurity. In the early years of his reign, the Kangxi emperor followed the traditional system of imperial succession. His first son by his first wife,

Yinreng 胤礽 (1674-1725), was named Crown Prince at age two.²⁴ Over the long years of Kangxi's reign, a "Crown Prince Party" was formed and threatened the stability of the dynasty. As the relationship between father and son gradually worsened, twice the Kangxi emperor removed the Crown Prince as his successor, in 1708 and 1712.²⁵ The struggle between emperor and prince greatly affected the standing and reputation of the ministers around each. This included Wang Yuanqi's uncle, Wang Shan, who was tutor to the Crown Prince.²⁶ Devoted to the prince, he made every effort to support him, even as Yinreng was imprisoned by the emperor. This attitude enraged the emperor and brought ruin and shame upon Wang Shan.²⁷ After Shan's tragedy, and as his close relative, Wang Yuanqi would have had to have been circumspect about his words and activities. Living in this oppressive atmosphere must have brought fear and frustration and aroused in him a yearning for a reclusive way of life. Eventually, he found a spiritual Arcadia in Wang Wei's *Wangchuan Villa*. Amid the luxuriant scenery of Wangchuan, real for one artist, painted for the other, these two men, separated by centuries, threw off their similar vexations to enjoy peace and tranquility at the end.

²⁴ Zhao Erxun et al., ed., "Xuanju" (4), in *Qing shi gao*, juan 220.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, juan 220.

²⁶ Liang Shaojie 梁紹傑, "Qing Kangxi chao daxueshi Wang Shan zou qing jianchu shimo" 清康熙朝大學士王掞奏請建儲始末 ("The Grand Secretary Wang Shan's Memorialized Request on the Nomination of the Crown Prince in the Kangxi Period of the Qing Dynasty"), *Gugong bowuyuan yuankan* 故宮博物院院刊 (*Academic Journal of the Palace Museum*), no. 1 (2007): 120-143.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 133-137.

The analysis above helps clarify the nature and roots of a sympathetic association between Wang Wei and Wang Yuanqi. The colophons by Yuanqi's colleagues and friends on the *Illustration of Yunlin's Suiyou Pavilion* show that, by the beginning of the eighteenth century, Wang Yuanqi was considered the direct successor of the founder of the literati painting by his contemporaries. His practice of imitating Wang Wei reinforced and demonstrated his determination to inherit and carry forward the tradition of literati painting. After his return to Beijing in 1699, Wang gradually became the most prestigious master among literati artists. His style and theory became acknowledged as orthodox in his time.

Yuanqi's success not only resulted from his personal efforts in painting practice but also benefited from the appreciation and support of the monarch. In the last fifteen years of his life, Yuanqi spent most of his time in Beijing. Besides official affairs, he also devoted much of his time and energy to several massive, imperially-sponsored cultural projects, especially to vast compilations of classic writings. Through these activities, his status as the leader of orthodox painting school was further consolidated.

2. Imperially-Sponsored Cultural Projects

Among the cultural achievements of Kangxi's reign, some of the most important

were the creation of dictionaries and *leishu* 類書, or collectanea of books by category. Well-represented by the famous *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 (*Complete Library of the Four Treasuries*), the *leishu* is a reference compendium of various sources compiled by subject. Usually these collectanea were monumental, their multiple volumes republishing numerous books from the past. The tradition of *leishu* can be traced back to the Three Kingdoms period (220-280). Commissioned by Emperor Wendi 文帝 (r. 220-226) of Wei (220-265), *Huang lan* 皇覽 (*Imperial Readings*) was compiled by the famous scholars Li Shao 劉劭 (active, the latter half of the second century to the mid-third century) and Wang Xiang 王象 (active, the first half of the third century) in the Huangchu 黃初 reign period (220-226). Unfortunately, the text of *Huang lan* had been lost by the Song. The earliest extant *leishu* is *Beitang shuchao* 北堂書鈔 (*Compiled Materials of North Hall*) compiled by Yu Shinan 虞世南 (558-638) during the Daye 大業 reign period (605-618) of the Sui dynasty (581-618). Government-sponsored *leishu* usually appeared during periods of peace and prosperity, which allowed the nation to devote to these projects the vast amounts of time and energy they required. Surviving government-sponsored *leishu* include *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚 (*Collection of Literature Arranged by Categories*) commissioned by Emperor Gaozu 高祖 (r. 618-626) of the Tang, *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (*Extensive Records of the Taiping Era*) and *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 (*Imperial Readings of the Taiping Era*) compiled in the Northern Song,

and *Wenyuan yinghua* 文苑英華 (*Finest Blossoms of the Garden of Literature*) created in the Southern Song, among many others.

A highly-cultured ruler, the Kangxi emperor showed deep enthusiasm for academic activities, especially for the compilation of *leishu*. Discontented with the poor quality of previous *leishu*, he once complained to his ministers: “There has never been a good *leishu* in the past. The *Tang leihan* 唐類函 (*Case of Reference Books by Category of the Tang*) is barely satisfactory in terms of its stylistic rules and layout, and thus it still needs improvement.”²⁸ Under the Kangxi emperor’s order, the first large-scaled *leishu* of the Qing period, *Yuanjian leihan* 淵鑿類函 (*Case of Categorized Reference Books with Deep Insight*), saw light of day at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

Yuanjian leihan

Supervised by the Grand Secretary Zhang Ying 張英 (1636-1708), *Yuanjian leihan* was modeled on previous *leishu* and historical records. The draft manuscript of *Leihan* was presented to the Kangxi emperor in 1701. The final version contains 450 *juan* of text plus 4 *juan* of tables of contents. Following the layout of the *Tang leihan*, it is divided into 2500 categories under forty-three sections.²⁹ The entries in each section are

²⁸ Zhang Ying et al., “Jincheng biao” 進表 (“Memo of Presentation”), in *Yuanjian leihan* (*Case of Categorized Reference Books with Deep Insight*), in vol. 982 of *Siku quanshu* (masters), 2.

²⁹ The table of contents reveals the wide coverage of this all-inclusive encyclopedia: Heaven, Seasons, Earth, Sovereigns, Queens and Imperial Consorts, Heirs to the Throne, Officials, Nobles, Statecraft, Ritual, Music, Literature, Military Accomplishments, Borderlands, People, Buddhism, Daoism,

excerpts from a variety of historical texts that are chronologically organized, with clear sources cited for each item. Dates of the quotations range from early historic times to the Jiajing 嘉靖 period (1522-1566) of the Ming dynasty.

In the early eighteenth century, the Qing dynasty was in its formative period. After great political and military achievements, the Kangxi emperor turned his attention to cultural undertakings. Since his youth, the Kangxi emperor had soaked himself deeply in Confucianism, studying the Confucian classics, advocating Confucian ethics, and even comparing himself to Confucius. As mentioned in Chapter Two, he made a special trip to Qufu to worship Confucius, inscribed steles for the Confucian Temple there, and held the *Boxuehongci* Special Examination of 1679. Apparently, the commissioning of *Yuanjian leihan* was filled with symbolic significance. As Kangxi noted in the preface of *Yuanjian leihan*: “The compilation of *leishu* tallies with the Sage’s intention of ‘winning honor for great writings.’ ... Although scholars are unable to read every book under heaven, this *leishu* provides them with synopses of every book, helping them to understand the essence of these works. With regard to acquiring knowledge via thorough investigation and expounding Confucian ethics through sincere writing, many should derive great benefit from this work!”³⁰ Like Confucius, who was committed to

Mysteries, Alchemy, Craftsmanship, Capitals, States and Prefectures, Residences, Estates, Ammunition, Treasure, Textiles, Decoration, Costumes, Objects, Shipping, Foods, Grains, Medicine, Vegetables, Fruits, Flora, Grass, Trees, Ornithology, Zoology, Ichthyology, Entomology.

³⁰ Xuanye (the Kangxi emperor), “Preface,” in *Yuanjian leihan*, 1.

transmitting ancient culture, the Kangxi emperor ordered the creation of several *leishu* and launched a series of culturally-related projects during his reign. In the creation of these *leishu*, his eagerness to imitate the Sage is apparent.

A total of 136 scholars compiled *Yuanjian leihan*. The editor-in-charge, Zhang Ying, was a native of Tongcheng 桐城, Anhui 安徽 Province. After earning his *jinshi* degree in 1667, he took the position of Imperial Diarist, serving the emperor in the South Study. The other participants were also reputable Chinese scholars. For example, the aforementioned poets and scholars, Wang Shizhen and Wang Shan, each played an important role in producing this *leishu*. In sponsoring such large cultural projects, the Kangxi emperor provided their participants with opportunities for “winning honor for great writings,” an ultimate goal in the minds of most scholars. In return, the magnum opus produced by these scholars enabled the Kangxi emperor to realize his ideal of “becoming the Sage.”

***Gujin tushu jicheng* 古今圖書集成 (*Complete Collection of Illustrations and Writings of All Ages*)**

Commissioned in 1701, *Gujin tushu jicheng*, formerly titled *Wenxian huibian* 文獻彙編 (*Assembly of Documents*), was another important *leishu* created in the Kangxi period. The process of its compilation, however, was unexpectedly long and

complicated. It was not until the sixth year of Yongzheng 雍正 (1728) that the work was completed and published. The series includes 10,000 *juan* of main texts and forty *juan* of tables of contents bound as 5020 volumes in 520 cases, for a total of 160 million words. This all-embracing work deals extensively with astronomy, geography, ethics, philosophy, literature, history, science, art, politics, agriculture, fishery, medicine, education and the civil service examinations, and so on, covering almost every aspect of the natural world and social life. Although the later compilation *Siku quanshu* is larger and more frequently quoted by modern scholars, under the rigorous censorship caused by the literary inquisition during the Qianlong era (1736-1795), a great number of books were destroyed or expurgated before preparing it.³¹ As a result, compared to *Siku quanshu*, the sources in *Gujin tushu jicheng* are more comprehensive and reliable.

The main compiler of *Gujin tushu jicheng*, Chen Menglei 陳夢雷 (1650-1741), suffered many adversities during his lifetime.³² During the Revolt of the Three Feudatories, he was forced to accept an official position in Geng Jingzhong's 耿精忠 (1644-1682) rebel government. After the revolt was suppressed, as a punishment

³¹ During the Qing, the literary inquisition, or *wenziyu* 文字獄, began in Shunzhi's reign (1643-1661) and became severe in the Qianlong 乾隆 era (1736-1796). From 1741 to 1788, there were 53 cases of literary persecution. See Fan Shuzhi 樊樹志, "Wenhua zhuanzhi yu wenziyu" 文化專制與文字獄 ("Cultural Despotism and Literary Inquisitions"), in *Guoshi shiliujiang* 國史十六講 (*Sixteen Lectures on the History of China*) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2006), 260-264.

³² In his "Yu Li Houan juejiao shu" 與李厚菴絕交書 ("Breaking off Relation with Li Houan"), Chen Menglei laments the misfortunes of his early years. See "Yu Li Houan juejiao shu," in *Songhe shanfang wenji* 松鶴山房文集 (*Anthology of Songhe Mountain Villa*), in vol. 1416 of *Xuxiu siku quanshu*, *juan* 13, 171-176.

for serving a rebellious warlord, Chen was banished to Fengtian, a state far to the northeast. It was not until the Kangxi emperor's inspection trip to the east in 1698 that he was remitted and called to Beijing, serving the Kangxi emperor's third son, Yinzhi 胤祉 (1677-1732), as a literary attendant.³³ A scholar both studious and noble, Prince Yinzhi owned an excellent private library. Considering the flaws of previous *leishu*, he wished to construct a better one based on his collection. Chen Menglei was so moved when he heard of Yinzhi's intention to compile a *leishu* that he wrote to the prince with emotion: "For over fifty years of my life, I have not had pastimes other than reading every day. Receiving the order [to compile this work], I am filled with elation and happiness. How lucky I am [to be able to join in this project]! If permitted, I would take the liberty to bear the responsibility alone!"³⁴ Chen Menglei's project also attracted the Kangxi emperor's attention; as a result, the compilation received full imperial support in manpower and material resources.

However, after the Kangxi emperor's death, misfortune again befell Chen Menglei. Since Prince Yinzhi was friendly with the deposed Crown Prince Yinreng, a political rival of the new Yongzheng emperor, Yinzhi and his staff were detested by the new emperor. Only a month after Yongzheng ascended the throne, Chen was banished again, and the

³³ See *Shizong Xian huangdi shangyu neige* 世宗憲皇帝上諭內閣 (*Emperor Shizong Xian's Edicts to the Inner Chamber*), in vol. 414 of *Siku quanshu*, *juan* 2, 16.

³⁴ Chen Menglei, "Jin Huibian qi" 進彙編啟 ("Report of Presenting the *Assembly of Documents*"), in *Songhe shanfang wenji*, *juan* 2, 38.

manuscript of *Gujin tushu jicheng* was confiscated. Although the Yongzheng emperor made a major effort to underplay the contributions of Yinzhi and Chen Menglei to *Jicheng*, he admitted that this work was of great political significance and academic value. As he states in his preface to *Jicheng*: “This work presents a splendid overview of the imperial library and has achieved a state of perfection.”³⁵ The Yongzheng emperor’s attitude showed that, despite violent political struggles at court, the Kangxi emperor’s cultural policy was not abandoned after his death. On the contrary, its far-reaching influence continued to affect the intellectual atmosphere in the following Yongzheng and Qianlong reigns.

***Peiwen yunfu* 佩文韻府 (*The Rhyme Storehouse of Peiwen Studio*)**

Peiwen yunfu, or *The Rhyme Storehouse of Peiwen Studio*, is a rhyme dictionary used in the composition of poetry. The Kangxi emperor participated in this project and thus titled the work after his private studio. Qing literati were often keen to include allusions to or quotations from ancient texts in their poems, but the selection of any quotation was limited by the rhyme scheme of the poem under composition. *Peiwen yunfu* contains abundant literary quotations sorted by tone and rhyme, greatly simplifying the problem of locating technically correct quotations for use in new poems. According

³⁵ Yinzhen 胤禛 (the Yongzheng emperor), “Preface,” in *Gujin tushu jicheng* 古今圖書集成 (*Complete Collection of Illustrations and Writings of All Ages*), ed. Jiang Tingxi et al. (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1934), 1.

to Kangxi's preface, this dictionary was based on similar previous works compiled in the Yuan and Ming dynasties, including *Yunfu qunyu* 韻府群玉 (*Jade from the Rhyme Storehouse*) by Yin Shifu 陰時夫 (active, late thirteenth to early fourteenth centuries) and *Wuche yunrui* 五車韻瑞 (*Five Carts of Auspicious Rhymes*) by Ling Zhilong 凌稚隆 (active, mid-sixteenth century). To create *Peiwen yunfu*, the Kangxi emperor, beginning in the sixth month of 1704, met frequently with scholars selected from the Hanlin Academy, including the Grand Secretaries Zhang Yushu 張玉書 (1642-1711), Chen Tingjing 陳廷敬 (1639-1712), and Li Guangdi 李光地 (1642-1718), along with seventy-three others. They carefully examined previous rhyme books, corrected their mistakes, and created new entries that they critiqued based on preexisting editions. The new dictionary was completed in the tenth month of 1711. Composed of 106 *juan*, it “embraces literary works from ancient times to the present. This all-inclusive dictionary is incomparable among rhyme books.”³⁶

Peiwen yunfu was a notable landmark in the study of *yinyun xue* 音韻學, or phonology. Together with philology (*wenzi* 文字) and exegetics (*xungu* 訓詁), phonology was a by-product of the school of *puxue* 樸學, or “practical learning,” of the early Qing period, which focused especially on the study of the Confucian classics. Attaching great importance to textual veracity, early Qing scholars also had a high regard

³⁶ Xuanye, “Preface,” in *Peiwen yunfu (The Rhyme Storehouse of Peiwen Studio)*, ed. Zhang Yushu et al., in vol. 1011 of *Siku quanshu* (masters), 1-2.

for elegance in rhetoric. As a result, their literary works are usually rife with obscure words and profound allusions. The famous twentieth-century scholar Qian Zhongshu 錢鐘書 once criticized Wang Shizhen for the affectation of his poetry: “He relied too much on excerpting novel anecdotes and elegant words [from ancient works]. It would seem that, without using antique allusions, he could hardly write a word.... Even worse, his readers were usually fascinated by the ‘elegance’ of his works and tended to tolerate flowery wording in his poetry.”³⁷ Wang Shizhen’s writing style represents two tendencies common in the work of early Qing scholars: to include in their writings many words, phrases, or sentences selected from – and referential to – past sources, and to ensure that tones and rhymes in poetry strictly follow applicable rules. This conservative, rule-bound academic atmosphere and approach to literary aesthetics gave rise to the need for and compilation of *Peiwen yunfu*. Drawing on a considerable number of literary works from the pre-Qin through late Ming periods, it remains one of the most important reference sources for idioms and literary quotations in the study of poetry.

³⁷ Qian Zhongshu, “Wang Yuyang shi” 王漁洋詩 (“Wang Yuyang’s [Wang Shizhen] Poetry”), in *Tan yi lu* 談藝錄 (*On the Art of Poetry*) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984), 98.

Peiwenzhai shuhua pu 佩文齋書畫譜

Another significant work bearing the name of the Kangxi emperor's studio is *Peiwenzhai shuhua pu*, or *The Encyclopedia of Calligraphy and Painting of Peiwen Studio*. This is a large-scaled *leishu* devoted to the visual arts, containing essays and monographs on artistic creation, catalogues of calligraphy and paintings, and biographies of artists in historical depth. Wang Yuanqi not only participated in this project but directed it. Besides the benefit of the abundant information to be found in this compilation, more historically important was the role its creation played during the early Qing in establishing the authority of the historical canon of painting advocated by the Orthodox School.

As an enthusiastic supporter of culture and art, the Kangxi emperor, in addition to studying the Confucian classics, devoted much energy to calligraphy. In the ninth year of Kangxi (1670), the famous calligrapher Shen Quan 沈荃 (1624-1684) was called to the Forbidden City to make models of calligraphy for the young emperor.³⁸ Under his instruction, Kangxi made rapid progress in this art. Over the next few years, other calligraphers, including Zhang Ying, Gao Shiqi, and Wang Shizhen, were successively named imperial advisors on calligraphy. Kangxi was assiduous and earnest in his

³⁸ See Zhao Erxun et al., ed., "Biography of Shen Quan," in *Qing shi gao*, *juan* 266.

pursuit of this art; in his own words, “from day to day, I insist on reading and practicing calligraphy. Gradually, I have grasped the essence [of writing].”³⁹ Recalling his study of calligraphy, the Kangxi emperor once said: “Since youth, I have been addicted to handwriting. I practice over a thousand characters every day without fail. During the past thirty years and more, whenever I saw prominent calligraphic works on paper or stone inscriptions by ancient masters, I would carefully imitate them. I love it with my whole heart!”⁴⁰ When he studied calligraphy extensively in his early years, his models included Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (ca. 303-361), Wang Xianzhi 王獻之 (ca. 344-386), Yan Zhenqing 顏真卿 (709-ca. 784), the Four Masters of the Song,⁴¹ and Zhao Mengfu. Among prior masters, Dong Qichang was reportedly his favorite. In middle age, he concentrated on Dong’s style and eventually became his faithful follower.

However, the Kangxi emperor’s support of calligraphy was founded on more than personal interest. He treated calligraphy as an important tool for training Confucian scholars and believed that, to some extent, calligraphy mirrored its writer’s character and morals. In his preface to *Peiwenzhai shuhua pu*, he states: “Writing is one of the Six Classical Arts. As Liu Gongquan 柳公權 (778-865) has pointed out, an upright heart

³⁹ Xuanye, *Shengzu Ren huangdi yuzhi wenji* 聖祖仁皇帝御製文集 (*Anthology of Emperor Shengzu Ren*), in vol. 1298 of *Siku quanshu* (collections), *juan* 28, 1.

⁴⁰ Xuanye, *Shengzu Ren huangdi shengxun* 聖祖仁皇帝聖訓 (*Emperor Shengzu Ren’s Teachings*), in vol. 169 of *Siku quanshu*, *juan* 5, 17.

⁴¹ The “Four Masters of the Song” refers to four famous calligraphers active in the Northern Song – Su Shi, Huang Tingjian 黃庭堅 (1045-1105), Mi Fu, and Cai Xiang 蔡襄 (1012-1067).

causes proper use of the brush. Likewise, Chengzi [Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033-1107)] also said that ‘writing requires a devotional attitude.’⁴² In his preface, he also mentions that, viewing and examining ancient artistic catalogues, he found numerous typographical and other errors in their references. For this reason, he commissioned the compiling the 100-juan *Peiwenzhai shuhua pu*. The purpose of this monumental work was “to cultivate one’s temperament and enrich one’s leisure. This means not only that we should follow the pursuits of the ancient sages for our pleasure but also that we should establish a reference source for those who ardently love writing and painting.”⁴³

Under Kangxi’s supervision, the compilation of the *Shuhua pu* began in the tenth lunar month of 1705 and was completed in 1708. Five officials and scholars were involved in this project. Their names are listed on the front page of the book in order of official rank: Attendant Gentleman of the Ministry of Rites and Chancellor of the National University Song Junye 宋駿業 (d. 1713), Left Vice Censor-in-Chief of the Censorate Sun Yueban 孫岳頒 (1639-1708), Academician Reader-in-Waiting of the Hanlin Academy Wang Yuanqi, and two lower-ranking officials, Wu Jing and Wang Quan 王銓 (active, late seventeenth to early eighteenth centuries). As the emperor’s artistic advisor, Wang Yuanqi directed this project.

⁴² Xuanye, preface of *Peiwenzhai shuhua pu* (*The Encyclopedia of Calligraphy and Painting of Peiwen Studio*), ed. Wang Yuanqi et al., in vol. 819 of *Siku quanshu* (masters), 1.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 2.

In the “Synopsis” of *Shuhua pu*, later Qing scholars briefly reviewed the history of artistic criticism and rated this imperially-sponsored *leishu* a perfect work of its kind.

They note:

Creation of calligraphy and painting both commenced in remote ages, but neither research into authenticity and forgery nor essays on connoisseurship arose at that time. It was not until the Eastern Han (25-220) that the field of art criticism emerged. Scholars’ interest first focused on brushwork. Then, artist biographies and rankings were made. Finally, colophons on ancient art works were collected and compiled into books. Some of these works have been handed down, yet, many are missing. The earliest comprehensive work of this sort is the *Fashu yaolu* 法書要錄 (*Significant Records of Calligraphy*) and *Lidai minghua ji* 歷代名畫記 (*Records of Famous Paintings of All Ages*) by Zhang Yanyuan 張彥遠 of the Tang dynasty. After that, records of art became prevalent. However, most of these works are simple compilations of isolated words and sentences; none of them is complete or perfect. Our Emperor Shengzu Ren [Kangxi] has long committed himself to civilizing the people and devoting himself to calligraphy and painting. He wrote colophons on the best art works in the imperial collection and opened the imperial library to facilitate research. By his personal effort, this magnificent work was produced....⁴⁴

書畫皆興於上古，而無考辨工拙之文。考辨工拙蓋自東漢以後。其初惟論筆法，其後有名姓品第，有收藏著錄，有題跋古跡，有辯證真偽。其書或傳或不傳。其兼登眾說，彙為一編，則自張彥遠《法書要錄》、《歷代名畫記》始。唐以後沿波繼作，記載日繁，然大抵各據見聞，弗能賅備。我聖祖仁皇帝久道化成，遊心翰墨。禦制書畫題跋，輝煌奎藻，冊府垂光。復詔發中秘之藏，蒐羅編輯，一一親為裁定，勒為是編。

The entries in this huge book are classified into sixteen categories:

Criticism of calligraphy: 10 *juan*;

Criticism of painting: 8 *juan*;

⁴⁴ Ji Yun 紀昀 et al., “Synopsis,” in *Peiwenzhai shuhua pu*, 10-11.

Catalogue of imperial calligraphies: 2 *juan*;

Catalogue of imperial paintings: 1 *juan*;

Biographies of calligraphers: 23 *juan*;

Biographies of painters: 14 *juan*;

Catalogue of anonymous calligraphies: 6 *juan*;

Catalogue of anonymous paintings: 2 *juan*;

Colophons on calligraphies and paintings by the Kangxi emperor: 1 *juan*;

Colophons on calligraphies by various emperors of all dynasties: 1 *juan*;

Colophons on paintings by various emperors of all dynasties: 1 *juan*;

Colophons on calligraphies by celebrities of all dynasties: 11 *juan*;

Colophons on paintings by celebrities of all dynasties: 7 *juan*;

Analyses of calligraphies: 2 *juan*;

Analyses of paintings: 1 *juan*;

Connoisseurship on calligraphy and painting of all dynasties: 10 *juan*.

Peiwenzhai shuhua pu was not only framed on an unprecedentedly large scale, but more importantly, it gave clear sources for its contents, which greatly facilitates art historical studies. *Shuhua pu* involves 1844 references in total. Each entry is followed by sources for its quotations. Duplications and contradictions are carefully avoided to the extent that the entire opus seems the work of one hand. As the compilers of *Siku quanshu* comment, “this book achieved extreme subtlety in its techniques for analyzing

art. In addition, as a good example of extensive and detailed citing, it established a standard for later scholarship.”⁴⁵

Shuhua pu is consistent in structure and style. In *Shuhua shulu jieti* 書畫書錄解題 (*Paraphrases of the Titles in Catalogues of Calligraphy and Paintings*), modern scholar Yu Shaosong 余紹宋 compares the art section of *Gujin tushu jicheng* with the *Shuhua pu* and thinks they are similar in stylistic rules and layout. But he adds that the classifications in *Shuhua pu* are more precise and logical.⁴⁶ Later art catalogues and dictionaries, including *Liuyi zhi yi lu* 六藝之一錄 (*Records on One of the Six Classical Arts*) by Ni Tao 倪濤 (active, late seventeenth to early eighteenth centuries), *Shulin zaojian* 書林藻鑒 (*Comments on the Forest of Calligraphy*) by Ma Zonghuo, *Shuxue shi* 書學史 (*History of the Study of Calligraphy*) by Zhu Jia 祝嘉, and even modern scholarship on calligraphy and painting have all benefited from the writing style of, and abundant resources poured into, *Peiwenzhai shuhua pu*.

Nevertheless, despite its magnificence, modern scholars have shown that *Peiwenzhai shuhua pu* contains many errors and flaws. For example, in his essay “*Peiwenzhai shuhua pu shulu Xu shushi huiyao zhengwu*” 佩文齋書畫譜署錄續書史會要正誤 (“Discrimination of the Quotations from the *Continued Collection and Synopsis of the*

⁴⁵ Ibid., 11.

⁴⁶ Yu Shaosong, ed., *Shuhua shulu jieti (Paraphrases of the Titles in Catalogues of Calligraphy and Paintings)* (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 2003), 560-561.

History of Calligraphy in The Encyclopedia on Calligraphy and Painting of Peiwen Studio”), Zhang Jinliang 張金梁 compares the quotations from *Xu shushi huiyao* 續書史會要 (*Continued Collection and Synopsis of the History of Calligraphy*) in *Shuhua pu* with the original texts and found a number of mistakes in *Shuhua pu*. He also points out that these inaccurate citations might have resulted from the extremely complex process of its compilation.⁴⁷ Even so, considering that it was one of the most important imperially-sponsored projects of the early Qing and that the Kangxi emperor invested great personal interest in it, the question arises of how the compilers could have allowed so many “mistakes” in *Shuhua pu*. Carefully examining the quotations in the *Shuhua pu*, one can see that these “errors” and “omissions” in *Shuhua pu* might not have been caused solely by compiler carelessness. Wang Yuanqi and other compilers took great pains to collect and organize the ancient documents and texts that were the basis of their compilation – but their efforts went far beyond a simple gathering of available materials.

First, the editors of *Peiwenzhai shuhua pu* did not simply accumulate materials, they selected them, and in this respect *Shuhua pu* reflects the biases and opinions of its makers. For one thing, they placed great emphasis on landscape painting. This bias becomes evident when one compares *Shuhua pu* with an earlier imperially-sponsored art dictionary,

⁴⁷ See Zhang Jinliang, “Peiwenzhai shuhua pu shulu Xu shushi huiyao zhengwu” (“Discrimination of the Quotations in the *Continued Collection and Synopsis of the History of Calligraphy in The Encyclopedia on Calligraphy and Painting of Peiwen Studio*”), *Guji zhengli yanjiu xuekan* 古籍整理研究學刊 (*Journal of Ancient Book Collations and Studies*), no. 5 (September, 2002): 78-82.

Xuanhe huapu 宣和畫譜 (*Painting Catalogue of the Xuanhe Era*), generated in the late Northern Song period. The author of *Xuanhe huapu* divided paintings into ten categories: Taoist and Buddhist immortals, figures, palaces and mansions, foreigners, dragons and fish, landscapes, animals, birds-and-flowers, ink bamboo, and vegetables and fruits. The categories related to figures are in forward positions, while landscape painting is listed sixth, behind even the minor category of “dragons and fish.” In this earlier work, figure painting occupies seven *juan* out of twenty and includes works by 87 artists; landscape painting fills but three *juan* involving 40 painters. Although the prestige and popularity of landscape painting had risen substantially during the tenth century, figure painting remained the dominant genre in art criticism when *Xuanhe huapu* was issued.

By the early Qing period, the situation had reversed, with the personal values of the compilers of *Peiwenzhai shuhua pu* ensuring that major attention was given to the literati and their landscape paintings. Among the 35 quoted sources in “Techniques of Painting” (*juan* thirteen and fourteen of *Peiwenzhai shuhua pu*), eighteen are concerned with landscape, more than the sum of those on other genres. Moreover, compilers of *Peiwenzhai shuhua pu* emphasized landscapes by literati artists. For example, in *juan* 12, “Discussions of Painting Styles” by various artists and theorists from the Song through Qing, the compilers created multiple individual entries for selected literati painters and critics, including Su Shi, Mi Fu, Tang Hou, and so forth. It is noteworthy

that the comments by Dong Qichang, a major model for Wang Yuanqi, occupy five entries, overwhelming those by all other critics.

The selection of sources was shaped by the compilers in other respects, too. For instance, in the biography of Wang Wei, the compiler quotes texts from thirteen historical records and monographs on art, including *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 (*Old Standard History of Tang*), *Lidai minghua ji*, *Tang guoshi bu* 唐國史補 (*Supplemented National History of Tang*), *Tang chao minghua lu* 唐朝名畫錄 (*Records of Famous Paintings of the Tang*), and so on.⁴⁸ Most of these materials are drawn from rare books of the Tang and Song periods. But after including *Dongpo ji* 東坡集 (*Anthology of Dongpo*), which contains the work of the Northern Song literati Su Shi, the compilers overlooked much art criticism of the Song through Ming periods, disregarding even such important works as *Xuanhe huapu* and *Huashi huiyao* 畫史會要 (*Collection and Synopsis of the History of Calligraphy*). Instead, they moved directly to the work of the late Ming artist and theorist Dong Qichang, citing especially his discussion of the Northern and Southern Schools of painting in his *Hua zhi* 畫旨 (*Tenets of Painting*). This pattern of textual selection smacks of strong partiality on the parts of the compilers. It appears that the compilers' text selections were intended to emphasize particular artists, critics, and theories of art.

⁴⁸ See "Wang Wei," in *Peiwenzhai shuhua pu*, juan 47, 1.

Second, whether intentionally or not, the compilers of *Shuhua pu* sometimes cited false references to enhance the reputation of literati artists. For example, in the biography of Huang Gongwang in *juan* 54, a compiler quotes:

Gongwang once lived in Fuchun. Frequently appreciating the charms of the river and mountains [at Fuchun] and taking pleasure in fishing on the shoals, he had a bold and unconstrained character. He often traveled with brush and paper in his long sleeves. When he saw beautiful scenery, he would draw it immediately. He then migrated to Changshu, where he was inspired by the fantastic scenes of dawn and dusk and the irregular changes of rain and shine during the four seasons. He acquired the spirit of Nature's marvelous creations and expressed it with his brush. Hence, thousands of mountains and canyons and innumerable peaks and ranges are impressively depicted [in his paintings]. Most of his paintings feature light brown colors; bright blue-and-green landscapes are rare. Although he claimed that he followed Dong Yuan, his skills indeed surpassed those of the ancient masters.⁴⁹

公望居富春，領略江山釣灘之概，性頗豪放。袖攜紙筆，凡遇景物，輒即模記。後居常熟，探閱虞山朝暮之變幻，四時陰霽之氣運，得於心而形於筆，故所畫千丘萬壑，愈出愈奇，重巒疊嶂，越深越妙。其設色淺絳者為多青綠，水墨者少。雖師董源實出於藍。

At the end of this paragraph, a note indicates that this description of Huang Gongwang's life and his light brown landscape painting was quoted from *Tuhui baojian* 圖繪寶鑒 (*Precious Mirror of Painting*). However, the text cannot be traced using the source information provided by *Peiwenzhai shuhua pu*, for not only is it absent from this cited source but also from every other extant ancient catalogue and monograph. It seems most likely that it was created by the compilers and then inserted in *Shuhua pu*

⁴⁹ "Huang Gongwang," in *Peiwenzhai shuhua pu*, *juan* 54, 2.

with an empty citation to enhance the reputation of the master painter Huang Gongwang.

Third, to improve the authority of a quotation, the compilers of *Shuhua pu* would sometimes attribute texts written by lesser figures to more famous masters. For example, *juan* thirteen includes a quotation from “Tang Wang Wei shanshui lun” 唐王維山水論 (“Discussion of Landscape Painting by Wang Wei of the Tang”). This is an essay on the techniques of landscape painting and is included in *Wang shi huayuan* 王氏畫苑 (*Painting Garden of the Wang Family*) edited by Wang Shizhen 王世貞 (1526-1590). In the format of a *fu* 賦, or prose-poem, it extensively discusses such issues of painting as composition, perspective and proportion, techniques for drawing rocks and trees, representative scenes for portraying the four seasons, and so forth. For many centuries, this essay baffled later artists and scholars because it is extant in two versions that differ in their titles, order of sentences, and attributed authors. Rather than a thesis by Wang Wei, a preponderant number of scholars and critics believe it was written by the painter Jing Hao of the Five Dynasties (907-960) and originally entitled “Shanshui fu” 山水賦 (“Prose-Poem on Landscape”). Moreover, the writing style of this essay is characterized by parallel sentences and ornate rhetoric, prominent features of the prose-poem, which implies that the “Jing Hao” title, “Shanshui fu,” is more suited to the style and format of this text.

With regard to authorship, this work’s “Jing Hao” attribution and text have the more reliable provenance. First, early historical materials and artistic works compiled in the

Tang and Song present no evidence that indicates that this text was in any way related to Wang Wei. In the earliest extant record of this essay, *Wudai minghua buyi* 五代名畫補遺 (*Supplemented Collection of Famous Paintings of the Five Dynasties*) by Liu Daochun 劉道醇 (active, mid-eleventh century) of the Northern Song, it is attributed to Jing Hao, although the full text is not transcribed.⁵⁰ In his *Hua jian* 畫鑒 (*Mirror of Painting*), Tang Hou mentions that “Shanshui fu” by Jing Hao was “indeed an ancestral teaching for later artists like Fan Kuan 范寬 (active, late tenth to early eleventh centuries).”⁵¹ Many art catalogues and dictionaries compiled in later times, such as *Huishi weiyan* 繪事微言 (*Sublime Words on Paintings*) by Tang Zhiqi 唐志契 (1579-1651),⁵² *Huashi huiyao* by Zhu Mouyin 朱謀璣 (active, mid-seventeenth century),⁵³ *Shanhu wang* 珊瑚網 (*The Coral Net*) by Wang Keyu 汪珂玉 (b. 1587),⁵⁴ and *Gengzi xiaoxia ji* 庚子銷夏記 (*Notes on a Summer Retreat in the Year Gengzi*) by

⁵⁰ See Liu Daochun, ed., “Shanshui men” 山水門 (“Landscape”), in *Wudai minghua buyi* 五代名畫補遺 (*Supplemented Collection of Famous Paintings of the Five Dynasties*), in vol. 812 of *Siku quanshu* (masters), 7.

⁵¹ See Tang Hou, ed., *Hua jian* (*The Mirror of Painting*), in vol. 814 of *Siku quanshu* (masters), 10.

⁵² See Tang Zhiqi, ed., *Huishi weiyan* (*Sublime Words on Paintings*), in vol. 816 of *Siku quanshu* (masters), *juan* 1, 6.

⁵³ See Zhu Mouyin, ed., *Huashi huiyao* (*Collection and Synopsis of the History of Calligraphy*), in vol. 816 of *Siku quanshu* (masters), *juan* 1, 71.

⁵⁴ See Wang Keyu, ed., *Shanhu wang* (*The Coral Net*), in vol. 818 of *Siku quanshu* (masters), *juan* 48, 38-39.

Sun Chengze⁵⁵ all accept the idea of “Jing Hao’s ‘Shanshui fu.’” This text is also listed under Jing Hao’s name in two of the most massive and important Qing *leishu*, *Yuanjian leihan* and *Siku quanshu*.

As noted above, “Discussion of Landscape Painting by Wang Wei of the Tang” (“Tang Wang Wei shanshui lun”) as quoted in *Peiwenzhai shuhua pu* was taken from Wang Shizhen’s *Wang shi huayuan*. The “Wang Wei” version of this text is also found in *Shuo fu* 說郛 (*City of Theories*) by Tao Zongyi 陶宗儀 (1321-1407)⁵⁶ and *Shigutang shuhua huikao* 式古堂書畫匯考 (*Collected Criticism of the Calligraphies and Paintings of Shigu Hall*) by Bian Yongyu 卞永譽 (1645-1712).⁵⁷ According to *Shuo fu*, it seems that this version emerged no earlier than the late Yuan or early Ming.⁵⁸ In other words, the continuous provenance of the “Jing Hao” version beginning in the Northern Song compared to the wide gap of over four centuries between the Tang and Yuan dynasties that precedes the first reference to Wang Wei’s “Shanshui lun” combine to make the authenticity of the latter version less than convincing.

⁵⁵ See Sun Chengze, “Jing Hao Lushan tu” 荆浩廬山圖 (“Notes on *Mount Lu* by Jing Hao”), in *Gengzi xiaoxia ji* (*Notes on a Summer Retreat in the Year Gengzi*), in vol. 826 of *Siku quanshu* (masters), *juan* 3, 10.

⁵⁶ See Tao Zongyi, ed., *Shuo fu* (*City of Theories*), in vol. 881 of *Siku quanshu* (masters), *juan* 91, 2-4.

⁵⁷ See Bian Yongyu, ed., “Tang Wang Youcheng ‘Shanshui lun’” 唐王右丞山水論 (“Discussion of Landscape Painting’ by Wang Youcheng [Wang Wei] of the Tang”), in *Shigutang shuhua huikao* (*Collected Criticism of the Calligraphies and Paintings of Shigu Hall*), in vol. 828 of *Siku quanshu* (masters), *juan* 31, 1-3.

⁵⁸ See Tao Zongyi, ed., *Shuofu*, *juan* 91, 2.

Furthermore, the “Jing Hao” version is of superior literary quality compared to the “Wang Wei” version. Although both versions cover the same topics, the wording and phrasing of the two versions differ considerably. The “Jing Hao” version is written in an elegant style, with ornate parallel sentences composed of four or six characters. A similar structure is seen in the “Wang Wei” version, but it is occasionally mixed with expressions that violate the rules of *fu* composition. For example, in discussing techniques for drawing rocks and trees, the author notes: “The mountain peaks should not be made in the same manner; the tips of the trees should not be drawn in the same way.”⁵⁹ The verb “*bude*” 不得 (“should not”) is repeated in this sentence, but such repetition within a sentence is usually avoided in the rhetoric of the *fu*, and its presence here reveals the impoverished vocabulary of the author of the “Wang Wei” version.

Thus, the “Jing Hao” version is the more acceptable in various ways and has been adopted by the greater number of critics and theorists. Despite this wide support, the compilers of *Peiwenzhai shuhua pu* insisted on including the less popular version and its apparently arbitrary attribution to Wang Wei. This lackluster choice probably served double purposes, both of which increased the authority of the orthodox lineage of painting: the tactic of attributing this text to Wang Wei lends this *fu* more authority even as it adds to the literary credits of Wang Wei.

⁵⁹ Bian Yongyu, ed., “Tang Wang Youcheng ‘Shanshui lun’,” 1.

In brief, an examination of the text of *Peiwenzhai shuhua pu* reveals that the sources of its quotations are not as accurate as one might have expected. But these errors are not occasional; moreover, they likely were purposive. It seems no coincidence that many of the errors or inadequacies in *Shuhua pu* have a systematic quality in that they are advantageous to Dong Qichang's art historical views on the primacy of literati landscape painting. Indeed, the imperially-sponsored *Peiwenzhai shuhua pu* presented Wang Yuanqi and his assistants with a golden opportunity: with the emperor's support and advocacy, these individuals became the supreme authorities in the field of art criticism. In addition, by selecting the texts and editing the entries of the most significant art dictionary of their time, Wang Yuanqi and his colleagues also acquired the opportunity to shape the canons of art as they saw fit.

Finally, the status of the compilers is also noteworthy. Besides Wang Yuanqi, four other scholars were involved in the compilation of *Shuhua pu*. Sun Yueban obtained his *jinshi* degree in 1682; his highest official title was Attendant Gentleman of the Ministry of Rites. The Kangxi emperor commended his calligraphy and often assigned him to transcribe imperial edicts and eulogies from steles.⁶⁰ Song Junye was born in Changshu County in Suzhou, Jiangsu Province. An important painter of his time, he was accomplished in small-format copies of landscapes by Song and Yuan masters and was a

⁶⁰ See Yu Jianhua, ed., *Zhongguo meishujia renming cidian*, 683.

good judge of talent in painting. In 1691, he received an order to recruit professional painters for the project *Nanxun tu* 南巡圖 (*Painting of the Kangxi Emperor's Southern Inspection Tour*). From numerous candidates, he picked Wang Hui and recommended him for the position of chief painter of *Nanxun tu*. The success of this magnificent project won Junye a major reputation and the emperor's special favor and trust.⁶¹ Wu Jing was son of the famous poet and playwright Wu Weiye. He earned his *jinshi* degree in 1688 and was appointed to Supervising Secretary of the Office of Scrutiny for War. Like his father, Wu Jing was known for his achievements in poetry and art. The Kangxi emperor once called him to the imperial villa, Changchun Garden, to paint the screens of the Qingxi Studio.⁶² Wang Quan, a fifth-generation descendent of the famous Ming calligrapher Wang Ao 王鏊 (1450-1524), was a native of Changzhou. Owing to his talent in painting and calligraphy, he was selected to be Tribute Student Second Class in 1690. His highest title was Supervising Secretary of the Office of Scrutiny for Rites.⁶³ What is most arresting about these compilers of *Shuhua pu*, however, is that all, including Wang Yuanqi, were natives of Suzhou and the surrounding area. Such uniformity of origin seems more than coincidental.

⁶¹ See Chin-sung Chang, "Different Views of 'Nanxun tu'," in "Mountains and Rivers, Pure and Splendid: Wang Hui and the Making of Landscape Panoramas in Early Qing China," 331-332.

⁶² See Li Junzhi 李潛之, ed., *Qing huajia shishi* 清畫家詩史 (*History of Poetry by Qing Painters*), in *Qingdai zhuanji congkan* 清代傳記叢刊 (*Series of Biographies of the Qing Dynasty*) (arts), ed., Zhou Junfu 周駿富 (Taipei: Mingwen shuju, 1985), *juan yi* 1, 460-461.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, *juan yi* 2, 498.

Reinforcing this suspicion, among the *Shuhua pu*'s six collators, only Qiu Yansheng 裘巖生 and Wu Xuan 吳暄 (both active, first half of the eighteenth century) were not from Suzhou. The remaining four – Wang Shisheng 王世繩, Sun Qifan 孫起范, Jiang Shen 蔣深 (all active first half of the eighteenth century), and Gu Aiji – were Suzhou natives.⁶⁴ Even if one argues that such a gathering of Suzhou natives may have been coincidental, at least during the compilation of *Shuhua pu*, these Suzhou scholars effectually formed a small coterie akin to a regional clique.

Such regional alliances among the literati extended well beyond the few people guiding the creation of *Shuhua pu*, and they could prove sources of serious political conflict. While sponsoring the massive *Shuhua pu* project, the Kangxi emperor must have been aware that literati artists, critics, and scholars from Suzhou, like those from other regions, were broadly allied in their activities and interests. Although Kangxi had discouraged potentials for factional conflict at court since the early years of his reign,⁶⁵ he showed great tolerance toward the coterie of Suzhou scholars. This attitude on the part of the emperor undoubtedly allowed Suzhou artists to take the lead in canonizing

⁶⁴ For brief biographies of Jiang Shen and Gu Aiji, see Yu Jianhua, ed., *Zhongguo meishujia renming cidian*, 1632 and 1550. For Sun Qifan's biography, see Hao Yulin 郝玉麟 et al., ed., *Guangdong tongzhi* 廣東通志 (*Annals of Guangdong Province*), in vol. 562 of *Siku quanshu* (histories), *juan* 29, 100. For Wang Shisheng's birthplace, see Zhao Hong'en 趙弘恩 et al., ed., *Jiangnan tongzhi* 江南通志 (*Annals of the Jiangnan Area*), in vol. 511 of *Siku quanshu* (histories), *juan* 137, 3.

⁶⁵ In the early years of Kangxi's reign, factional conflict between prime ministers Mingju and Suoetu had had a negative impact on state affairs, and the Kangxi emperor subsequently became sensitive to the formation of cliques among his ministers. See Wu Han 吳晗 ed., *Chaoxian Li chao shilu zhong de Zhongguo shiliao* 朝鮮李朝實錄中的中國史料 (*Chinese Historical Materials from a Memoir of the Yi Dynasty of Korea*) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), part 3, *juan* 2.

literati painting in conformance with the Orthodox School as theorized by Dong Qichang and as extended into contemporary painting by Wang Yuanqi.

In the field of painting, relations among artists, connoisseurs, scholars, and critics were typically personal, a reflection of relationships in society generally. This meant, in an age when travel was relatively slow and difficult, that schools of painting based on geographical region were a common feature in the history of painting: an individual's familial and extra-familial relations formed in the region of his birth were strongest because formed earliest. Thus, while members of the "Suzhou clique" were various in their interests and occupations, they tended to build mutually supportive relations across different occupations and fields of interest.

In Wang Yuanqi's case, regional relationships meant that many of his early followers and supporters were from the south, especially from the area of his hometown, Suzhou, and the common cultural background and deep friendships of these individuals greatly facilitated their mutual communication and collaboration. Yuanqi's friends, for example, included Song Junye and Sun Yueban, high-ranking officials and prestigious artists, as well as others, including Wu Jing, Jiang Shen, and Gu Aiji, who were among Yuanqi's close friends and devoted followers. Born in the same place, these scholars shared a common feeling of cultural identity descendant from earlier literati artists active in this area.

A number of famous artists had emerged in the Suzhou area as early as the end of

Yuan rule. The most influential masters from that region included Zhu Derun 朱德潤 (1294-1365), Ni Zan, and Wang Meng. Together they “sowed the seeds of literati painting”⁶⁶ and were taken as models by later literati artists. By the middle Ming, Suzhou artists had taken leading roles in art circles. In particular, led by Shen Zhou and Wen Zhengming, they formed the Wu School, which consisted primarily of well-educated amateur artists. Although two of the Four Masters of the Wu School,⁶⁷ Tang Yin and Qiu Ying, are considered professional painters, artists of this school chiefly favored typical literati tastes, including, in painting, wash-and-ink landscapes and paintings in light color. Many of them excelled at combining poetry, calligraphy, and painting, a skill apparent in many works by Shen Zhou and Wen Zhengming. These so-called “amateur painters” were usually versed in the methods of the Four Great Yuan Masters as well as those of such earlier masters as the Two Mis, Dong Yuan, and Juran.⁶⁸

With respect to the literati tradition, the Wu School’s influence on later generations was deep and far-reaching. By Wang Yuanqi’s time, the dominance of the Wu School

⁶⁶ Yang Xin, “The Ming Dynasty,” in *Three Thousand Years of Chinese Painting*, eds. Yang Xin et al., 215. For further discussion of Suzhou and its literati culture, see James Cahill, *Parting at the Shore: Chinese Painting of the Early and Middle Ming Dynasty, 1368-1580* (New York: Weatherhill, 1978), 59-60.

⁶⁷ “Four Masters of the Wu School” refers to the four influential artists who were active in the mid-Ming period – Shen Zhou, Wen Zhengming, Tang Yin, and Qiu Ying.

⁶⁸ For further discussion of the Wu School, see James Cahill, “The Beginning of the Wu School: Shen Chou and His Predecessors,” and “Wen Cheng-ming and His Followers: The Wu School in the Sixteenth Century,” in *Parting at the Shore*, 57-96, 211-253.

had declined, but its legacy was continued by such later schools of literati painting as the Susong School represented by Zhao Zuo 趙左 (active, late sixteenth to early seventeenth centuries), the Yunjian School led by Shen Shichong 沈士充 (active, early seventeenth century), and the Songjiang School made famous by Dong Qichang. Thus, with Wang Yuanqi and most of the other principals of the *Shuhua pu* project hailing from Suzhou, that city's thinkers and artists governed the shaping of the new upsurge of literati painting in their time. Through the publication of *Shuhua pu*, their textual selections for that compendium became institutionalized canons that effectively influenced and guided the study, instruction, and aesthetic direction of the Orthodox School of literati painting.

***Wanshou shengdian* 萬壽盛典 (*Magnificent Record of the Emperor's Birthday*)**

Wanshou shengdian, or *Magnificent Record of the Emperor's Birthday*, was another major project in which Wang Yuanqi participated. The Kangxi emperor's sixtieth birthday fell on the eighteenth day of the third lunar month of 1713. Since sixty years form a full calendrical cycle in the Chinese calendar, a sixtieth birthday is considered one of life's milestones. To celebrate this special birthday for the Kangxi emperor, a series of events were held in the capital. The emperor himself invited many elders to the Changchun Garden to share his happiness, including Wang Yuanqi. Besides a sumptuous feast, the emperor also presented him with a marten hat, two robes decorated

with dragons, and a rare ink stone. One of Yuanqi's sons was admitted to the national college, and the emperor also conferred honorary titles on his other sons and grandsons.⁶⁹

In the fourth lunar month of 1713, the Kangxi emperor commissioned Song Junye to make a painting to commemorate this celebration. Song had been the key figure in organizing the making of *Painting of the Kangxi Emperor's Southern Inspection Tour* and was greatly admired for his success. Song took painstaking efforts with his new project, but unfortunately he died of illness only a few months later.⁷⁰ As a result, Wang Yuanqi was given command of the painting project in the leap fifth month of the same year. He established a workshop in the west wing of his mansion and invited a number of artists to join him.⁷¹ Since Wang specialized in landscape but was unfamiliar with figure painting,⁷² he carefully selected scores of figure painters to join him, among whom the most famous was Leng Mei 冷枚 (active, late seventeenth to early eighteenth centuries). A pupil of the distinguished court painter Jiao Bingzhen 焦秉貞 (active, late seventeenth century), Leng Mei was praised as the most outstanding figure painter of

⁶⁹ Cheng Muheng 程穆衡, ed., *Loudong qijiu zhuan 婁東耆舊傳 (Biographies of Venerated Elders in Loudong)*, juan 5, quoted from "Wang Yuanqi nianbiao," ed., Zheng Wei, 116.

⁷⁰ See Wang Yuanqi et al., eds., *Wangshou shengdian chujì 萬壽盛典初集 (The First Magnificent Record of the Emperor's Birthday)*, in vol. 654 of *Siku quanshu* (histories), juan 40, 5-7.

⁷¹ See Cheng Muheng, ed., *Loudong qijiu zhuan*, juan 5, quoted from "Wang Yuanqi nianbiao," ed., Zheng Wei, 116.

⁷² See Wang Yuanqi et al., eds., *Wangshou shengdian chujì*, 6.

his time.⁷³ His fame rested on his paintings in color, including portraits of female beauties, paintings of palaces, pavilions, and terraces carefully laid out using rulers, and blue-and-green landscapes. His style features delicate brushwork and realistic depiction of objects. Ink outlines in his work are fine and precise, his application of pigments exacting and elegant. Leng's involvement considerably enhanced the reputation of Wang Yuanqi's project team.

Painting of the Kangxi Emperor's Sixtieth Birthday Celebration depicts scenes from Beijing's inner city to its suburbs. (fig. 4-23) Song Junye's incomplete draft covered only the outer city, so Wang Yuanqi and his assistants completed the main part of the painting – from the imperial garden Jingshan north of the Forbidden City to Xizhi 西直 Gate, the northwestern gate of the capital. With the help of Leng Mei, Wang also examined Song's original draft and corrected inaccuracies in the sketches. The original scrolls of *Painting of the Kangxi Emperor's Sixtieth Birthday Celebration* are lost. The extant set is a copy made in the Qianlong or Jiaqing 嘉慶 (1797-1820) periods.⁷⁴ On the basis of the original scrolls, the painting was also made into block prints.⁷⁵

⁷³ See Yu Jianhua, ed., *Zhongguo meishujia renming cidian*, 1090.

⁷⁴ See Evelyn S. Rawski and Jessica Rawson, eds., *China: The Three Emperors 1662-1795* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2005), 391-392.

⁷⁵ See Zhao Zhihuan's memorial on the twenty-ninth day of the first lunar month in 1715, in *Wanshou shengdian chuji*, eds., Wang Yuanqi et al., 10-11.

The overall length of these prints is about 164 feet. With masterful composition, the painting presents the affluence and prosperity of Kangxi's reign. In it, the artists resort to realistic line drawing, vividly representing architecture, figures, animals, and landscapes. Some landmarks shown in the painting remain today. The painting is split into two parts. In the first, the path of the imperial procession is decorated with a total of fifty festive displays. Streets are ornamented with lanterns and streamers. Monks and priests chant sutras, praying for the emperor's longevity; day and night, propitious dramas praising the emperor are played on stages along his route. Surrounding each stage, people gather in crowds. Women wear beautiful attire; children run and play. Peddlers hawk their wares, while city guards patrol with firecrackers. Members of the eight banner military units pray in the Ciyun Monastery; other officials attend rituals at the Temple of the Warrior Sage. Because of this grand celebration, many stores are closed, though some pharmacies, wine shops, and money houses remain open. Behind the stages and on street corners, tired people rest and chat. Despite the hustle and bustle of large crowds, the scene is orderly.

The second part of the painting presents the imperial procession as it returns to the capital. Under escort by honor guards, the imperial carriage proceeds toward the northwestern gate of the capital. Thousands of officials and commoners kneel on both sides of the street, reverently waiting for the emperor. Accompanying the imperial carriage, eunuchs distribute pastries and cakes to deferential subjects.

The draft of *Painting of the Kangxi Emperor's Sixtieth Birthday Celebration* was finished in the twelfth lunar month of 1713. It greatly pleased the Kangxi emperor. In a memorial written to Wang Yuanqi, he notes: “You have done a wonderful job with the painting! There is nothing to be amended.”⁷⁶ The emperor highly commended Yuanqi's work. However, for Wang Yuanqi, this effort was more than a matter of showing off his painting skills – as he noted in one of his memorials to the emperor, the painting of the Grand Ceremony was not done in his usual style.⁷⁷ For him, this was principally an opportunity to consolidate his status as leader of the art circles of his time. By taking charge of this eulogistic project, he increased his standing with the emperor, winning his favor and trust; with the emperor's support, his reputation as the key figure in orthodox art was confirmed.

On the eighth day of the first month of 1714, a few days after presenting the draft of *Painting of the Kangxi Emperor's Sixtieth Birthday Celebration* to the emperor, Wang Yuanqi submitted another memorial in which he proposed a major project inspired by the painting. In the memorial, he presses the emperor:

I realize that, since ancient times, painting and text cannot be separated. Depicting the appearance of objects, paintings are preserved in archives and libraries and handed down to posterity; as records of significant events, texts are distributed

⁷⁶ Quoted in Wang Yuanqi's memorial on the eighth day of the first lunar month in 1714, in *Wanshou shengdian chujì*, eds., Wang Yuanqi et al., 2.

⁷⁷ See Wang Yuanqi's memorial on the third day of the leap fifth lunar month in 1715, in *Wanshou shengdian chujì*, eds., Wang Yuanqi et al., *juan* 40, 5-6.

around the world, propagating [the imperial edicts and teachings] to the subjects. In our dynasty, the grandeur of the monarch's virtue and grace is recorded in the imperial diary. However, to know more about the emperor's brilliant performance, people also expect to see special books that record examples of grand imperial events. I myself have long been a beneficiary of the emperor's kindness. After finishing *Painting of the Kangxi Emperor's Sixtieth Birthday Celebration*, I also wish to compile a book on this special event, collecting documents of the presentation ceremony, congratulatory speeches, and eulogies by officials and scholars. Through this book, this grand celebration may be known to people of future generations.⁷⁸

外臣竊惟自古有圖則必有史。圖以象形，藏策府而傳億載；史以紀實，示臣民而布萬方。在皇朝，盛典隆恩自炳於起居之注，而臣下瞻天仰聖，尤望有紀盛之書。臣受恩深重，既繪萬壽長圖，尤願恭紀萬壽盛典睿藻之輝煌，恩綸之廣大，典禮之詳明，歌頌之洋溢，俱宜修輯成書，傳佈永久。

With the emperor's permission, Wang Yuanqi assembled files and memos related to the presentation ceremony from central and local government offices and collected poetry and prose composed to eulogize the emperor. He compiled these documents into a 120-juan book entitled *Wanshou shengdian*, or *Magnificent Record of the Emperor's Birthday*.

Besides praising the emperor's great achievements, more important to Wang Yuanqi was that the compilation of *Magnificent Record* offered him a good opportunity to pave the way for his disciples and followers. In the year of its compilation, Wang Yuanqi turned seventy-two. It was time for him to consider the future of the Orthodox Painting School. To bolster the status of his followers, he recommended his relatives and

⁷⁸ Ibid., 6.

favorite pupils to the emperor, trying to promote them to ever higher positions. In a memorial presented in the first month of 1714, he reported to the emperor: “I am over seventy this year. Busy with official affairs in the Ministry of Revenue, I am still able to manage the compilation [of *Magnificent Record*]. My son Wang Mo is now serving in the Hanlin Academy as a Junior Compiler. It seems appropriate to involve him in this project as my assistant.”⁷⁹ In the same memorial, he also recommended that five other scholars become compilers of *Wanshou shengdian*, including Wang Jingming 王敬銘 (1668-1721), Zha Sili 查嗣璫 (1652-1733), Ji Luyun 嵇魯筠 (d. 1738), Chu Zaiwen 儲在文 (active, late seventeenth to early eighteenth centuries), and Wang Shichen 王世琛 (1680-1729).

Among these candidates, Wang Jingming is worthy of special mention. In 1713, he passed the civil service examination and placed first on the list of those who had passed the final examination, acquiring the title of “*Zhuangyuan*,” or “Principal Graduate.”⁸⁰ A distant relative of Yuanqi, Jingming was also known for his talent in poetry and painting. In 1707, during the Kangxi emperor’s sixth Inspection Trip in the South, a painting by him was presented to the emperor and received the emperor’s appreciation. Later the same year, he was called to court, serving the emperor in the Changchun Garden.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Wang Yuanqi’s memorial on the eighth day of the first lunar month in 1714, in *Wanshou shengdian chujì*, eds., Wang Yuanqi et al., 2.

⁸⁰ See Zhao Hong’en et al., ed., *Jiangnan tongzhi*, juan 124, 46.

⁸¹ See Yu Jianhua, ed., *Zhongguo meishujia renming cidian*, 113-114.

Because of his excellent performance in both painting and the official examination, the Kangxi emperor regarded him highly. It is possible that Wang Jingming got to know Yuanqi and become his pupil sometime in the early 1700s. It is certain that no later than 1707 Jingming began to seek advice from Yuanqi on painting technique.⁸² To provide models for this talented student's emulation, Yuanqi made him an album of ten leaves. On each leaf, besides a painting in the style of an old master, Yuanqi carefully conveyed his knowledge of the landscape in question and explained the painting techniques used in it, just as his grandfather Wang Shimin had done for Yuanqi in his youth. Together with Jin Yongxi 金永熙, Cao Peiyuan 曹培源, and Li Weixian 李為憲 (all active, late seventeenth to early eighteenth centuries), Wang Jingming was known as one of the "Four Followers of Yuanqi."

In addition to forwarding the careers of his son and favorite students, Wang Yuanqi also provided his friends and colleagues with opportunities for advancement. Zha Sili was from a famous scholarly family in Haining, Zhejiang province. His elder brother Zha Shenxing (see Chapter Two) was a good friend of Wang Yuanqi in Beijing. According to a memo by Shenxing in his anthology, *Jingyetang ji*, he and Yuanqi often met during private gatherings with other scholars and artists to discuss painting and

⁸² In the ten-leaf album which Yuanqi made for Jingming, the earliest date is the forty-sixth year of Kangxi (1707). See Xiao Yanyi 蕭燕毅, ed., *Si Wang Wu Yun huihua* 四王吳惲繪畫 (*Paintings by Wang Shimin, Wang Jian, Wang Hui, Wang Yuanqi, Wu Li, and Yun Shouping*) (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1996), 183-187.

poetry.⁸³ Shenxing enjoyed fame in poetry equal to Wu Weiye and Wang Shizhen, while his brother Sili was also known for his success in poetry.⁸⁴ Before joining the *Wanshou shengdian* project, one of Sili's assignments was to collect information on local customs and anecdotes related to imperial tours. Yuanqi's recommendation that he join the *Wangshou shengdian* staff gave him a double opportunity: both to escape his prior monotonous work and to demonstrate his literary ability to the emperor.

Wang Yuanqi was also open to forming friendships with promising young scholars. After his recommendations regarding compilers for *Wanshou shengdian* were approved, he embarked on a trip with Tang Youzeng and his superior and friend Kuixu (for both, see Chapter Two) to search for transcribers for *Magnificent Record*. After careful examination, ten scholars were selected. They were not only outstanding calligraphers but knowledgeable young scholars. All had obtained the *jinshi* degree in the most recent examination year. According to a policy of the Qing dynasty, new *jinshi* scholars, except for the top three, would not be appointed to official positions until they had finished a series of training programs. As usual, on the third day after the announcement of the examination result, the new *jinshi* scholars attended a competitive test. The winners, known as *shujishi* 庶吉士 (Hanlin Bachelor), were then sent to the

⁸³ See Zha Shenxing, *Jingye tang shiji*, *juan* 36, 385-386.

⁸⁴ For Zha Sili's literary activities, see Zhai Junlian 翟均廉, ed., *Haitang Lu* 海塘錄 (*Records of Seawalls*), in vol. 583 of *Siku quanshu* (histories), *juan* 11, 2.

Hanlin Academy to study. Only after an internship of three years were they eligible for official posts.⁸⁵ Wang Yuanqi's recommendation provided these fortunate young talents and Hanlin academicians with practical and academic training and political and social exposure well beyond that experienced by the average Hanlin academician. Through transcribing the texts for the *Wanshou shengdian*, they were put in contact with the emperor's favorite courtiers, perhaps the emperor himself. Thus, their talent in calligraphy and literature could be recognized early, and they might possibly receive exceptional promotions, as well.

Some of the transcribers were close to Yuanqi. For example, Wen Yi 溫儀 (active, late seventeenth to early eighteenth centuries), a scholar from Shaanxi province, visited Yuanqi many times after he became *jinshi* in 1712. Also skilled in painting, Wen consulted Yuanqi on brushwork and the use of ink in landscape painting. For Wen, Yuanqi carefully explained his painting theories and laid out his practical experience in painting. He also presented Wen with small copies he had made of the works of ancient masters. Under Yuanqi's instruction, Wen Yi made great progress in painting.⁸⁶

Wang Yuanqi was not only a man of the brush; he was also a successful movement leader who managed to consolidate the authority of his school of painting. In his later

⁸⁵ See Li Runqiang 李潤強, "Qing dai jinshi zhiguan qianzhuang yanjiu" 清代進士職官遷轉研究 ("A Study of the Transfer of Official Positions of the *Jinshi* Scholar in the Qing Dynasty"), *Xibei shida xuebao* 西北師大學報 (*Journal of Northwest Normal University*) (Social Sciences), vol. 43, no. 2 (March, 2006): 60-61.

⁸⁶ Zhang Geng, ed., *Guochao hua zheng lu*, *juan* 3, 14-15.

years, he wholeheartedly supported his pupils and tried to ensure a bright future for his followers. His influence on later landscape painting was probably more fundamental and far-reaching than that of any other painter after Dong Qichang. Later representatives of the Orthodox School included the “Four Lesser Wangs” and the “Four Latter Wangs,”⁸⁷ among many others. Eventually, the remnants of this school lingered on into the early twentieth century.

⁸⁷ The “Four Lesser Wangs” were mainly active in the Qianlong period, including Wang Yu 王昱, Wang Su 王愐, Wang Jiu 王玖, and Wang Chen 王宸 (1720-1797). The “Four Latter Wangs” were Wang Sanxi 王三錫 (b. 1716), Wang Tingyuan 王廷元, Wang Tingzhou 王廷周 (1736-1820), and Wang Mingshao 王鳴韶 (1732-1788).

EPILOGUE

In early 1715, the first draft of *Magnificent Record of the Emperor's Birthday* was completed. On the seventeenth of the fourth lunar month, Wang Yuanqi presented his last memorial to the Kangxi emperor, reporting progress on the project. In the first month of that year, thirty *juan* of finalized manuscripts were submitted to the emperor. By this time, fifty-eight *juan* had been reviewed and transcribed. As the project neared completion in the fall of 1715, Wang Yuanqi fell ill. Receiving this news, the Kangxi emperor showed grave concern about Yuanqi's health. Despite being far from the capital at this time, he promptly sent a group of imperial physicians to see to Yuanqi and frequently inquired after his condition.¹ However, the doctors were unable to save his life. On the twelfth day of the tenth lunar month of 1715, Wang Yuanqi died in Beijing.²

Wang Yuanqi's incomplete work was taken over by his cousin, Wang Shan's son Wang Yiqing 王奕清 (active, late seventeenth to early eighteenth centuries). In memory of the great master painter Yuanqi, and with the Kangxi emperor's permission, his name was put on the title page of the book. The finalized *Magnificent Record of the Emperor's Birthday* is composed of 120 *juan*, including a printed reproduction of *Painting of the Kangxi Emperor's Sixtieth Birthday Celebration* in *juan* 41 and 42.

¹ Cheng Muheng, ed., *Loudong qijiu zhuan*, *juan* 5, quoted from Zheng Wei, ed., "Wang Yuanqi nianbiao," 119.

² Tang Sunhua, "Wang Yuanqi muzhi," in *Guochao qixian leizheng chubian*, *juan* 56, 3460.

Representing the Kangxi emperor's great contributions and glorious achievements, this project also symbolized the dominant role of the Orthodox School in the field of painting. Originating in the Tang dynasty, the tradition of literati art developed in the Northern Song and gradually matured in the following centuries. By the early Qing, under the guidance of Wang Yuanqi, it eventually rose to an unprecedentedly high status in the field of painting.

Wang Yuanqi was the last peak of Chinese literati painting. His contributions to the orthodox landscape painting were mainly reflected in three aspects. First, he reinvestigated the works and criticisms by the Song and Yuan masters and invented new theories on composition and brushwork. His theory of the "dragon vein" was not only the brilliant summary of his compositional structure, but also provided basic principles for later artists of the Orthodox School. Second, Wang Yuanqi introduced new techniques of brushwork to the landscape painting, which feature constructive stroke and balance between ink and color. He grasped the quintessence of the landscape painting of the Song and beyond. His light color style specially reflects the literati taste – the pursuit of "blandness and naivet é" The imposing visual effect of this genre is so unique that it is never seen in the works by his ancient models; nor did his followers understand and master it. Considering his duty at court and the Kangxi emperor's enthusiasm for Western art, it was possible that the innovative texture strokes in his late works was inspired by the techniques of the oil painting from the West. Although

Yuanqi had never mentioned it in any of his writings, it is indubitable that he had numerous chances to view and study the Western paintings when he served the Kangxi emperor at court. Third, through the participation of the imperial-sponsored cultural projects, he and his like-minded colleagues formulated the canons by selecting certain styles and masters to emulate. He also used every opportunity to earn the emperor's trust and consolidate the status of his school and himself. His persistent efforts had been rewarded. Although he did not see the completion of *Magnificent Record*, his high prestige and the authority of his school of painting continued to influence artistic creation and criticism in the following three centuries.

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Fig. 1-1 Yu Zhiding, Wang Yuanqi's Portrait, dated 1707.



Fig. 1-2 Yu Zhiding, *Wang Yuanqi Cultivating Chrysanthemums*, dated early 18th century



Fig. 2-1 Wang Yuanqi, *Landscape in the Style of Huang Gongwang*, dated 1679



Fig. 2-2 Huang Gongwang, *Great Fuchun Mountain*, the first half of the 14th century



Fig. 2-3 Huang Gongwang, *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains*, 1347



Fig. 2-4 Huang Gongwang, *Clouds and Trees on Red Cliff*, first half of the 14th century



Fig. 2-5 Wang Yuanqi, *Imitating Dachi's Dwelling
in the Fuchun Mountains for Songyi*, 1688



Fig. 2-6 Wang Yuanqi, *Landscape in the Style of Dachi Made for Shubai*, 1695



Fig. 2-7 Wang Yuanqi, *Mount Xiaogu*, 1698

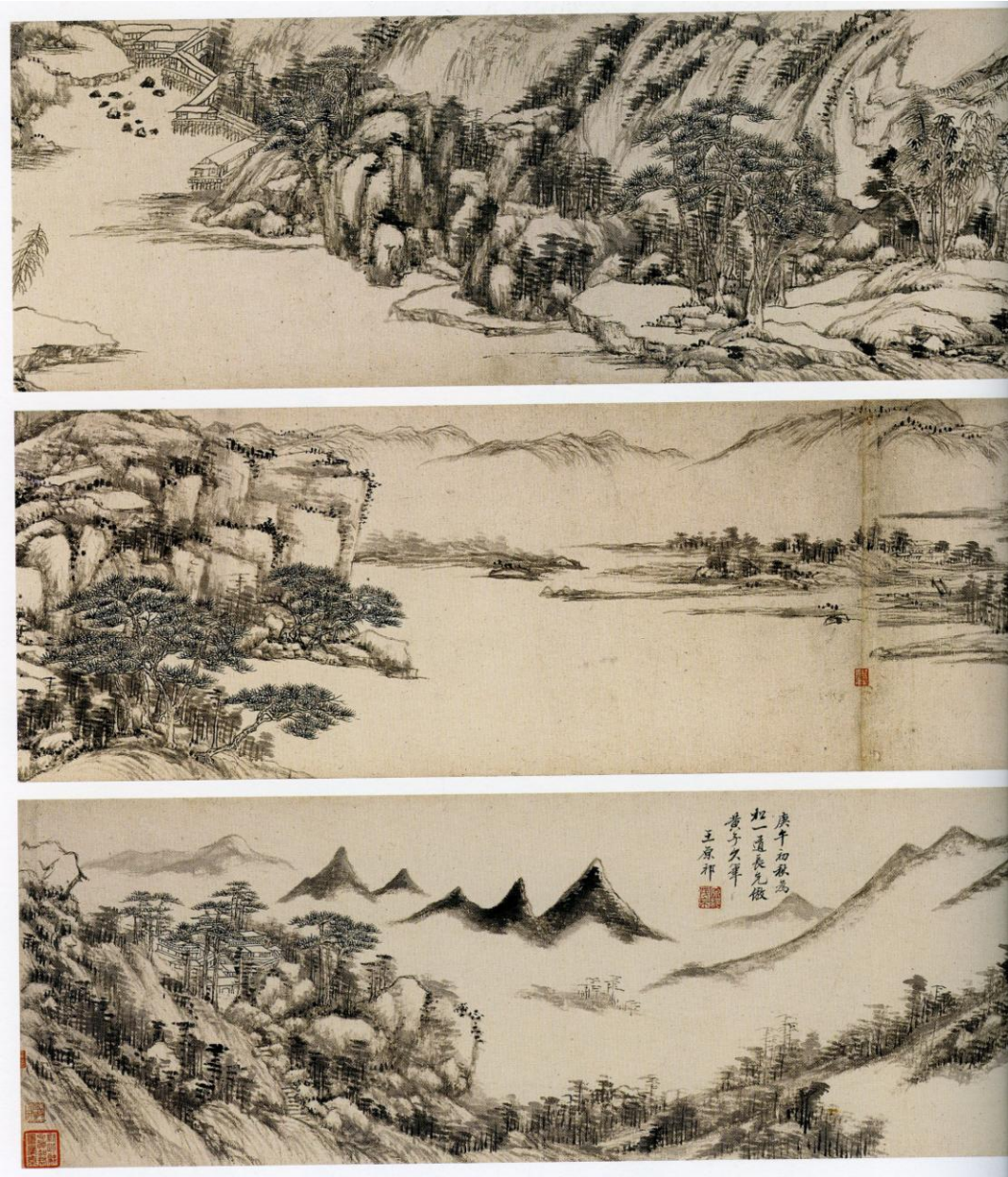


Fig. 2-8 Wang Yuanqi, *Landscape in the Style of Dachi*, dated 1690



Fig. 2-9 Wang Yuanqi, *Landscape in the Style of Huang Gongwang*, dated 1689



Fig. 2-10 Huang Gongwang, *Waterside Pavilion Quiet and Deep*



Fig. 2-11 Dong Yuan, *Wintry Groves and Layered Banks*, dated ca. 950



Fig. 2-12 Wang Yuanqi, *Imitation of Dachi's Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains for Lunxu*, dated 1693

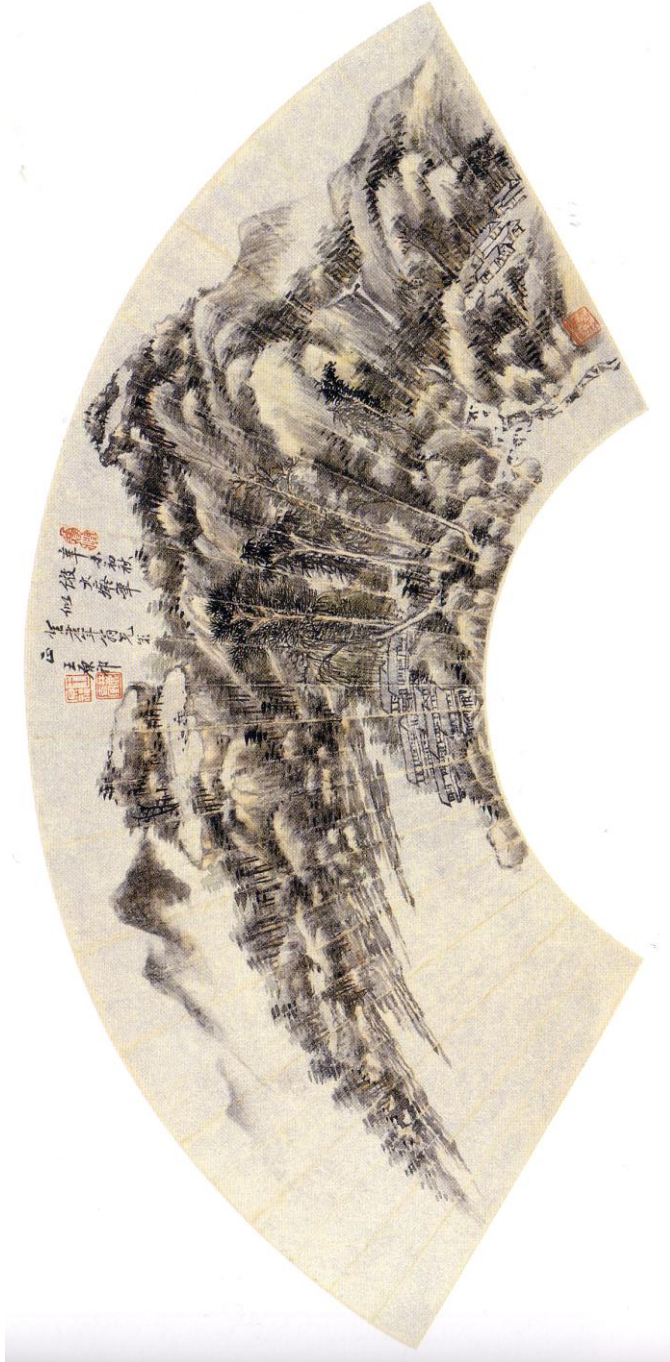


Fig. 2-13 Wang Yuanqi, *Landscape in the Style of Huang Gongwang*, dated 1691



Fig. 2-14 Huang Gongwang, *Stone Cliff at the Pond of Heaven*, dated 1341

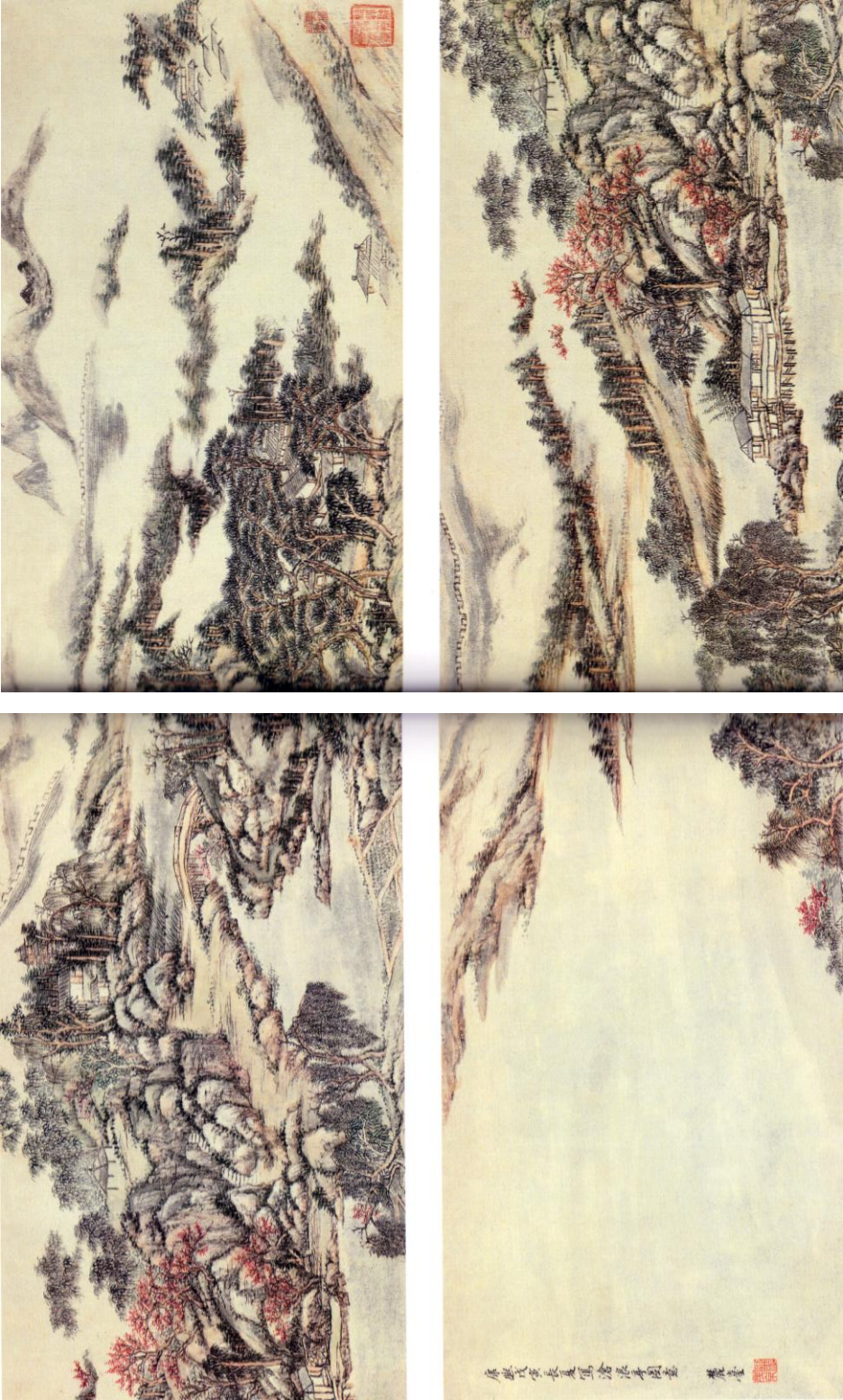


Fig. 2-15 Wang Yuanqi, *Illustration of Notes on Poetry at the Canglang Pavilion Dedicated to Qian Qianyi*, dated the sixth lunar month of 1698



Fig. 2-16 Wang Yuanqi and Shitao, *Orchid and Bamboo*, dated 1691

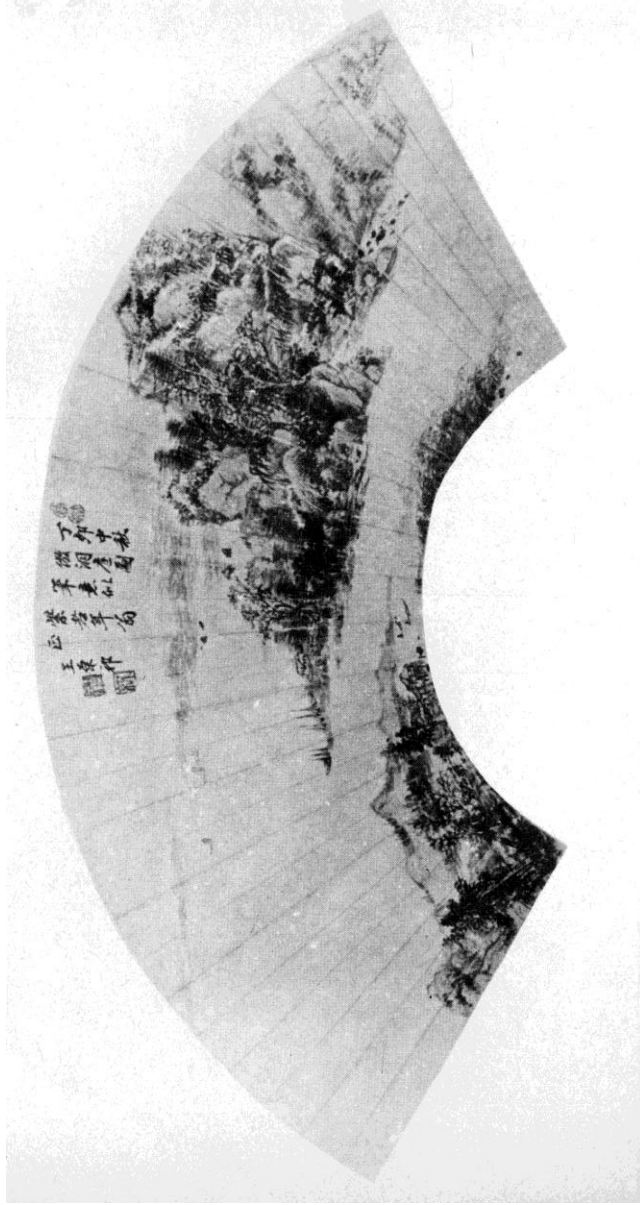


Fig. 2-17 Wang Yuanqi, *Landscape of Dongting Lake*, dated 1687



Fig. 3-1 Wang Yuanqi, *Illustrative Painting Based on Han Yu's Poem*, 1702



Fig. 3-2 Wang Yuanqi, *Illustrative Painting of a Du Fu Poem*, 1702

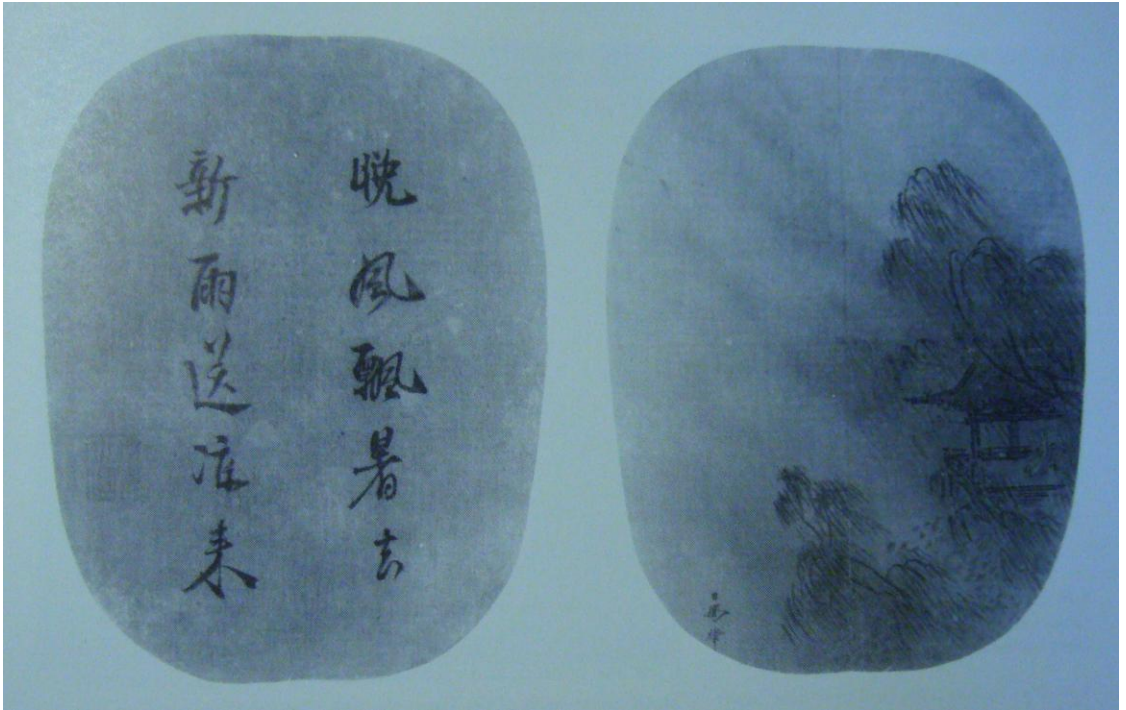


Fig. 3-3 Emperor Lizong and Ma Lin, *Landscape and Calligraphy*, double-side fan, 1255



Fig. 3-4 Zhao Kui, *Illustrative Painting of a Du Fu Poem*, mid-13th century

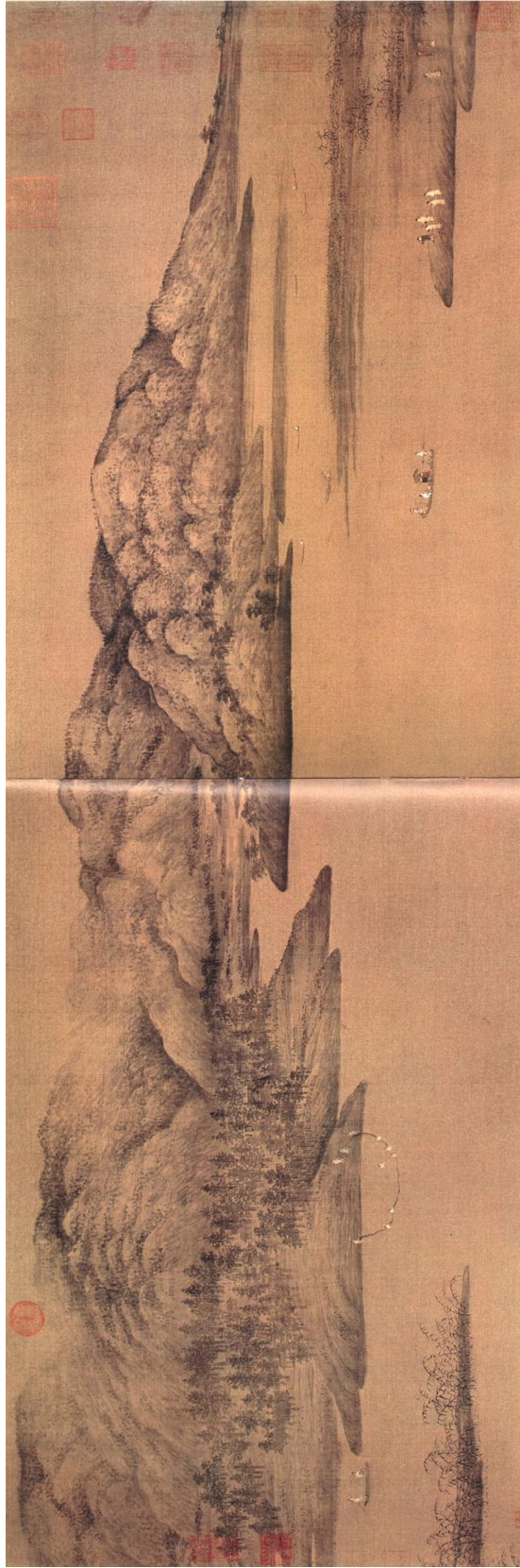


Fig. 3-5 Dong Yuan, *Xiao and Xiang Rivers*, 10th century



Fig. 3-6 Wang Shimin, *Illustrative Paintings of Du Fu's Poems*, leaf 2, 1665

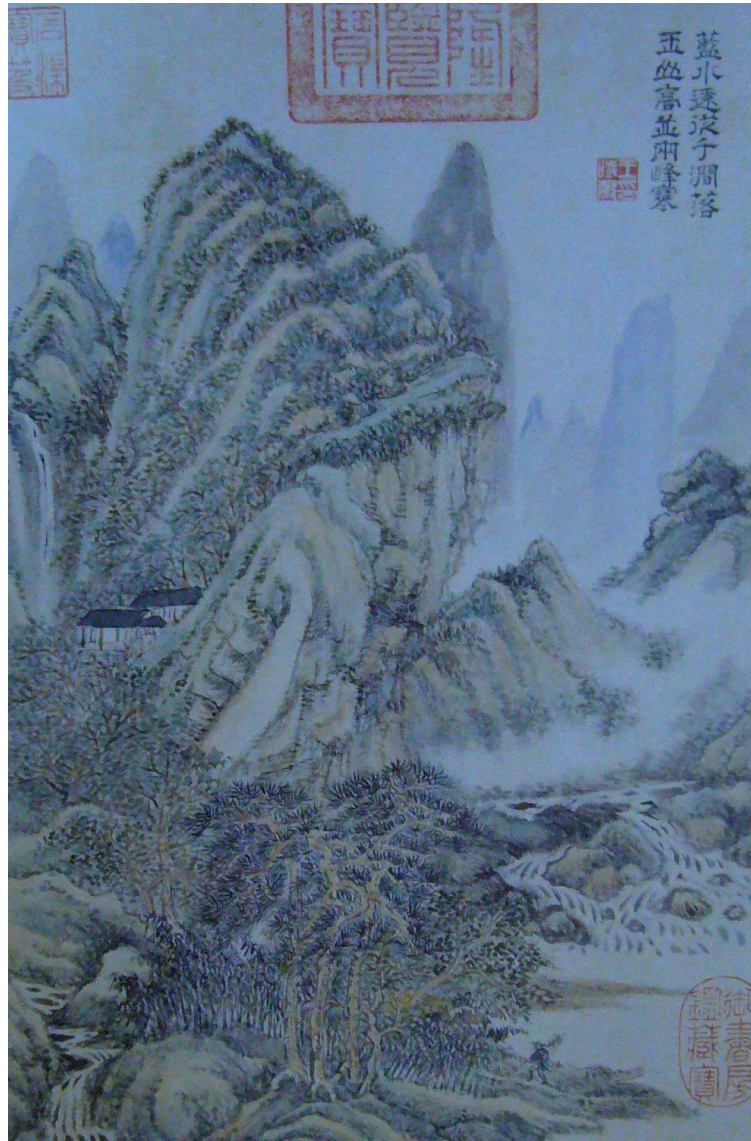


Fig. 3-7 Wang Shimin, *Illustrative Paintings of Du Fu's Poems*, leaf 1, 1665



Fig. 3-8 Rubbing of Stele Dedicated to Cao Quan, 185 CE



Fig. 3-9 Emperor Xuanzong of Tang, *Stone Classics on Filial Piety*, 745

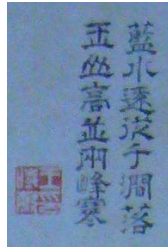


Fig. 3-10 (a) Wang Shimin, *Illustrative Paintings of Du Fu's Poems*, leaf 1, 1665

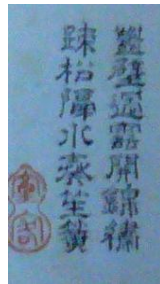


Fig. 3-10 (b) Wang Shimin, *Illustrative Paintings of Du Fu's Poems*, leaf 4, 1665

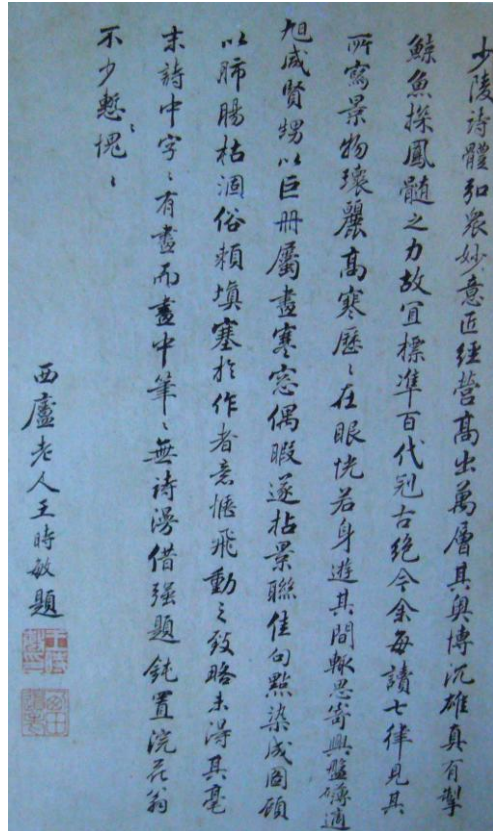


Fig. 3-11 Wang Shimin, Inscription of the *Illustrative Paintings of Du Fu's Poems*, 1665

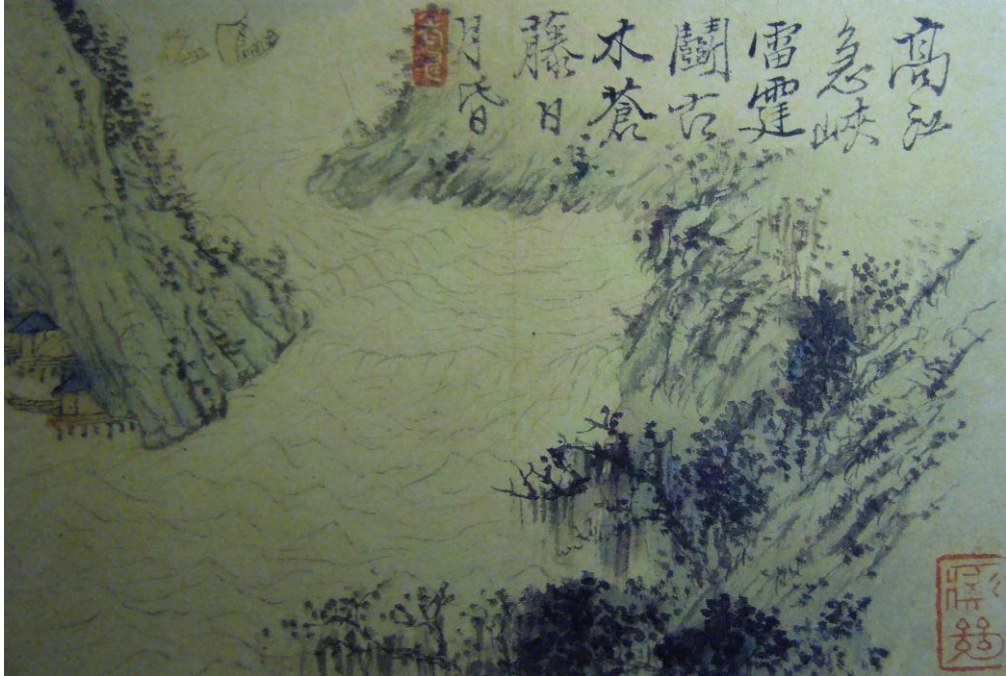


Fig. 3-12 Shitao, *Illustrative Paintings of Du Fu's Poems*, leaf 1, late 17th century



Fig. 3-13 Lü Wenying, *Wind and Rain in a Water Village*, late 15th century



Fig. 3-14 Wang Hui, *Rain on Mount Chu in the Style of Juran*, 1680



Fig. 3-15 Wen Zhengming, *Trees Thriving after Spring Rain*, 1507



Fig. 3-16 Wang Yuanqi, *Landscape in the Style of Huang Gongwang*, 1698



Fig. 3-17 Wang Yuanqi, *Summer Mountain*, 1700



Fig. 3-18 Wang Yuanqi, *Landscape in the Styles of Ni Zan and Huang Gongwang*, 1710



Fig. 3-19 Wang Yuanqi, *Dark Green Cliff*, 1709

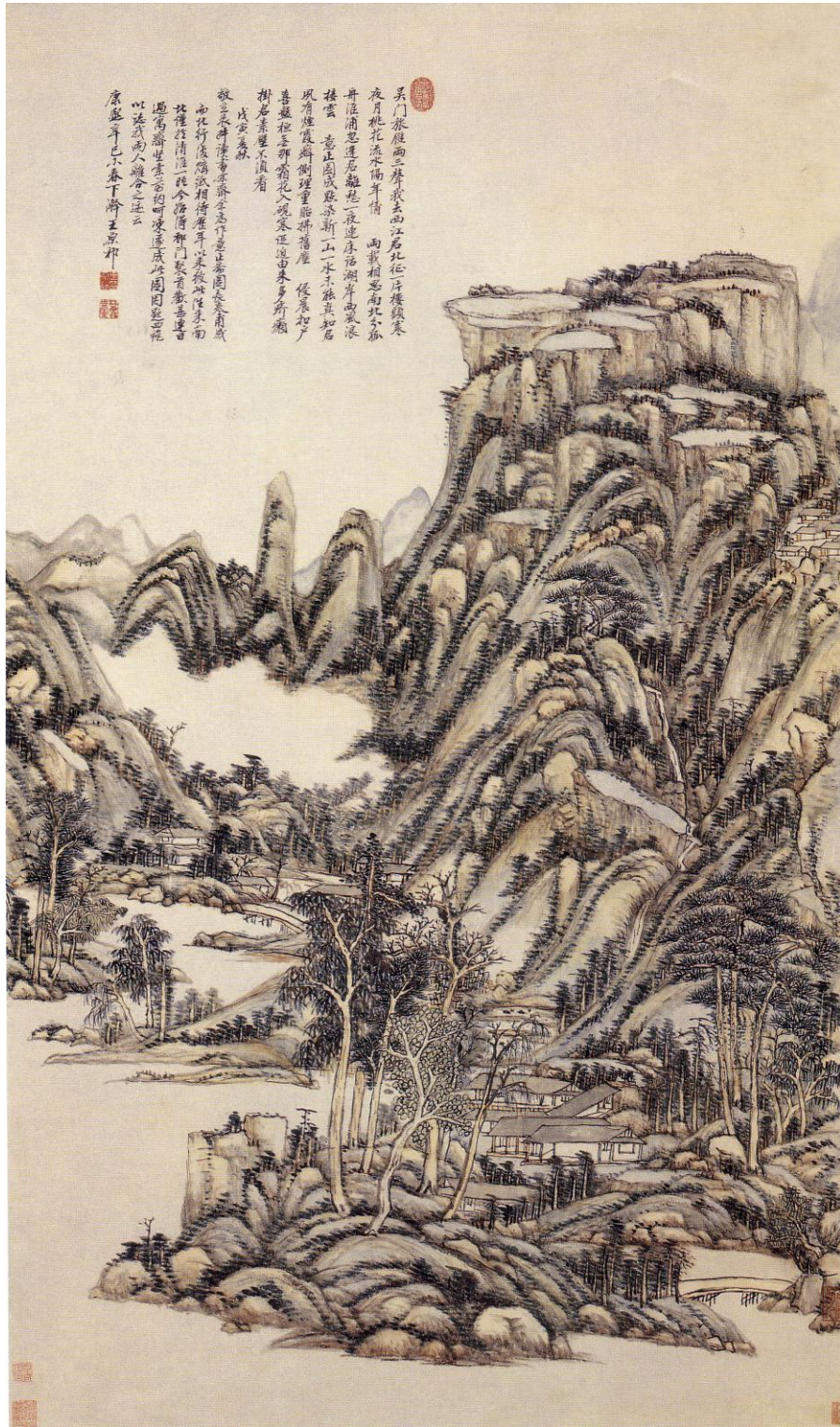


Fig. 3-20 Wang Yuanqi, *Illustrative Painting of Four Farewell Poems*, 1701



Fig. 3-21 Wang Yuanqi, *Small Skiff*, 1709



Fig. 3-22 Wang Yuanqi, *Autumn Colors of Mount Yu*, 1701



Fig. 3-23 Wang Yuanqi, *Autumn Mountain in the Style of Huang Ziji* [Huang Gongwang], dated 1702



Fig. 3-24 Wang Yuanqi, *Autumn Mountain in the Style of Dachi*, 1713

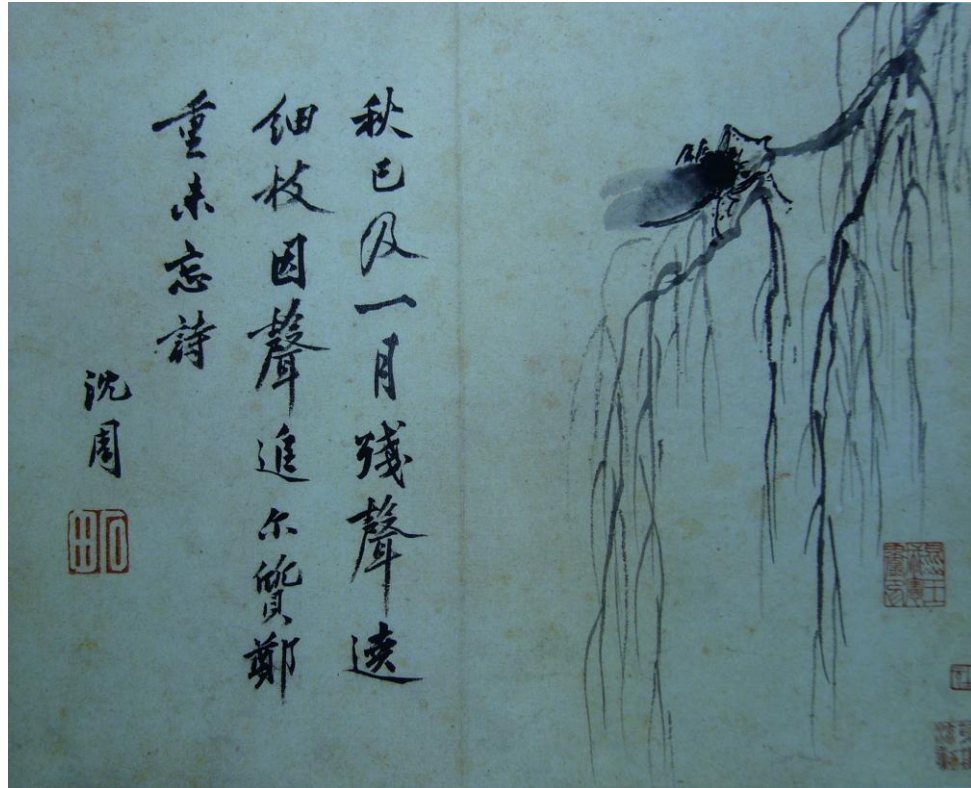


Fig. 3-25 Shen Zhou, *Cicada on the Willow Tree*, late 15th century



Fig. 3-26 Sheng Mao, *Reclusive Fisherman, Autumn Trees*, 1349

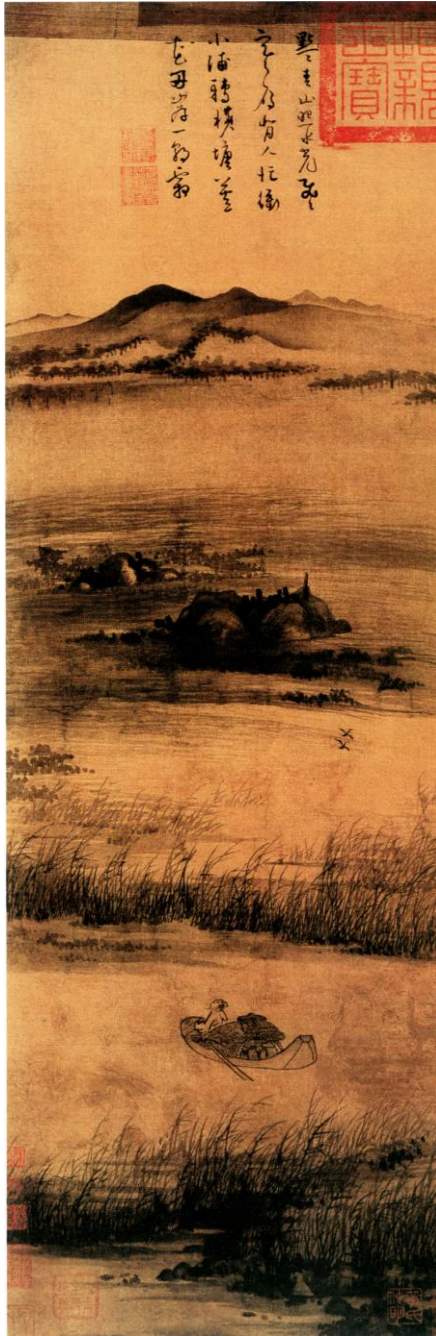


Fig. 3-27 Wu Zhen, *Reed Catkins and Geese*, 1st half of 14th century



Fig. 3-28 Wang Yuanqi, *Autumn Landscape at South Mountain*
in the Style of Zhao Mengfu, 1710



Fig. 3-29 Zhang Xuan, *Lady Guoguo's Spring Outing*, Northern Song imitation, 11th century



Fig. 3-30 *Playing Polo*, mural in Prince Zhanghuai's tomb, Qianxian,
Shaanxi Province, late 7th century



Fig. 3-31 Zhao Mengfu, Mounted Official, 1296



Fig. 3-32 Detail of Wang Yuanqi's *Wangchuan Villa*, dated 1711



Fig. 3-33 Wang Yuanqi, *Blossom and Willows in a Water Village after Zhao Lingrang*,
in *Album of Landscapes*, leaf 3, 1713



Fig. 3-34 Wang Yuanqi, *Ten Views of a Humble Cottage*, leaf 3, early 18th century

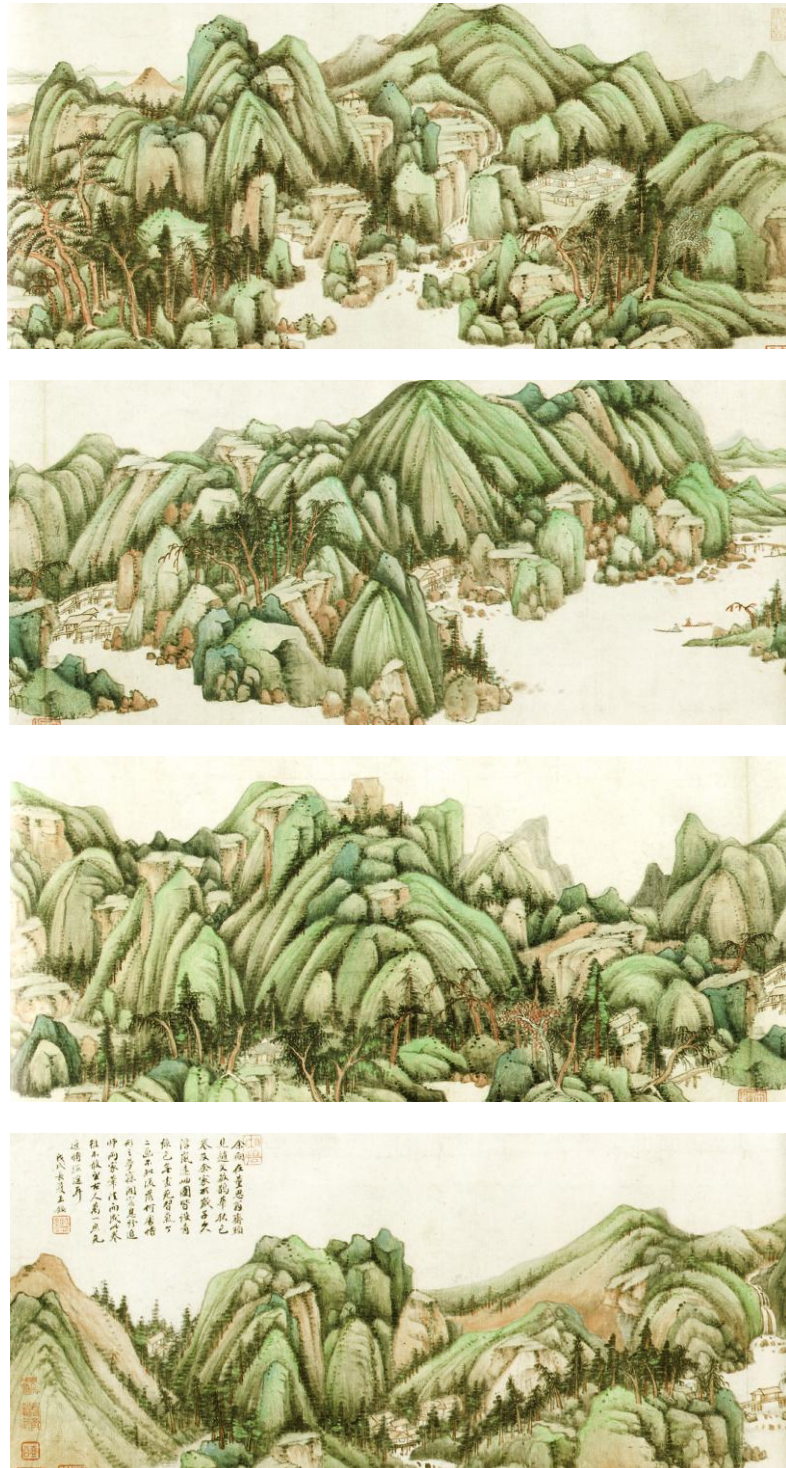


Fig. 3-35 Wang Jian, *Blue and Green Landscape*, 1658



Fig. 3-36 Wang Yuanqi, *Understanding Dachi*, 1694



Fig. 3-37 Wang Yuanqi, *Landscape in the Style of Huang Gongwang*, 1696



Fig. 3-38 Wang Yuanqi, *Autumn Mountains Dedicated to Wu Laiyi*, 1707



Fig. 3-39 Wang Yuanqi, *Landscape in the Styles of Jing Hao and Guan Tong*,
in *Album of Landscapes*, leaf 1, 1713

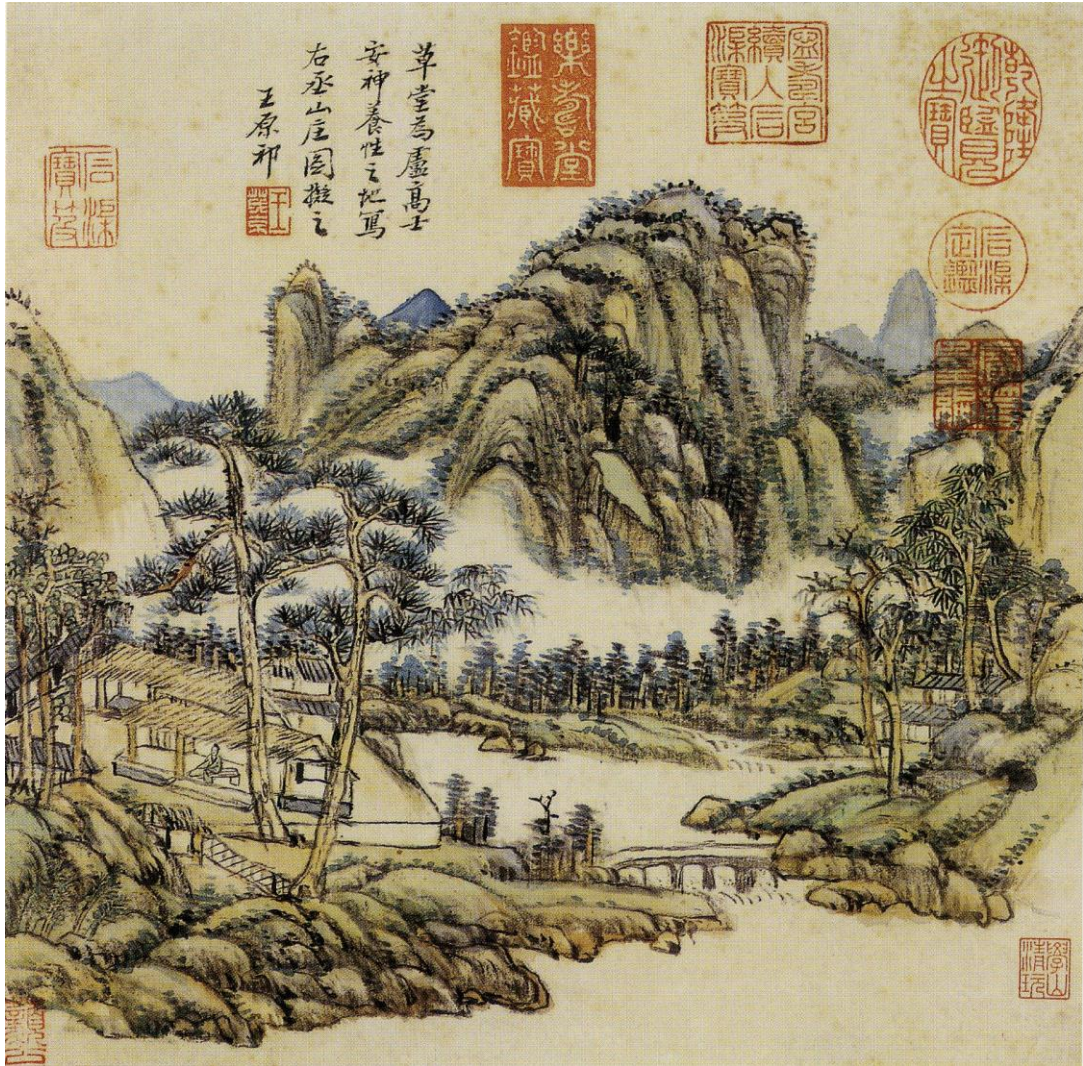


Fig. 3-40 Wang Yuanqi, *Ten Views of the Humble Cottage*, leaf 2, early 18th century



Fig. 3-41 Dong Yuan, *Summer Mountains*, ca. 950



Fig. 3-42 Wang Yuanqi, *Autumn Mountains after Dachi*, 1713



Fig. 3-43 Wang Shimin, *White Clouds among Autumn Mountains*, 1649

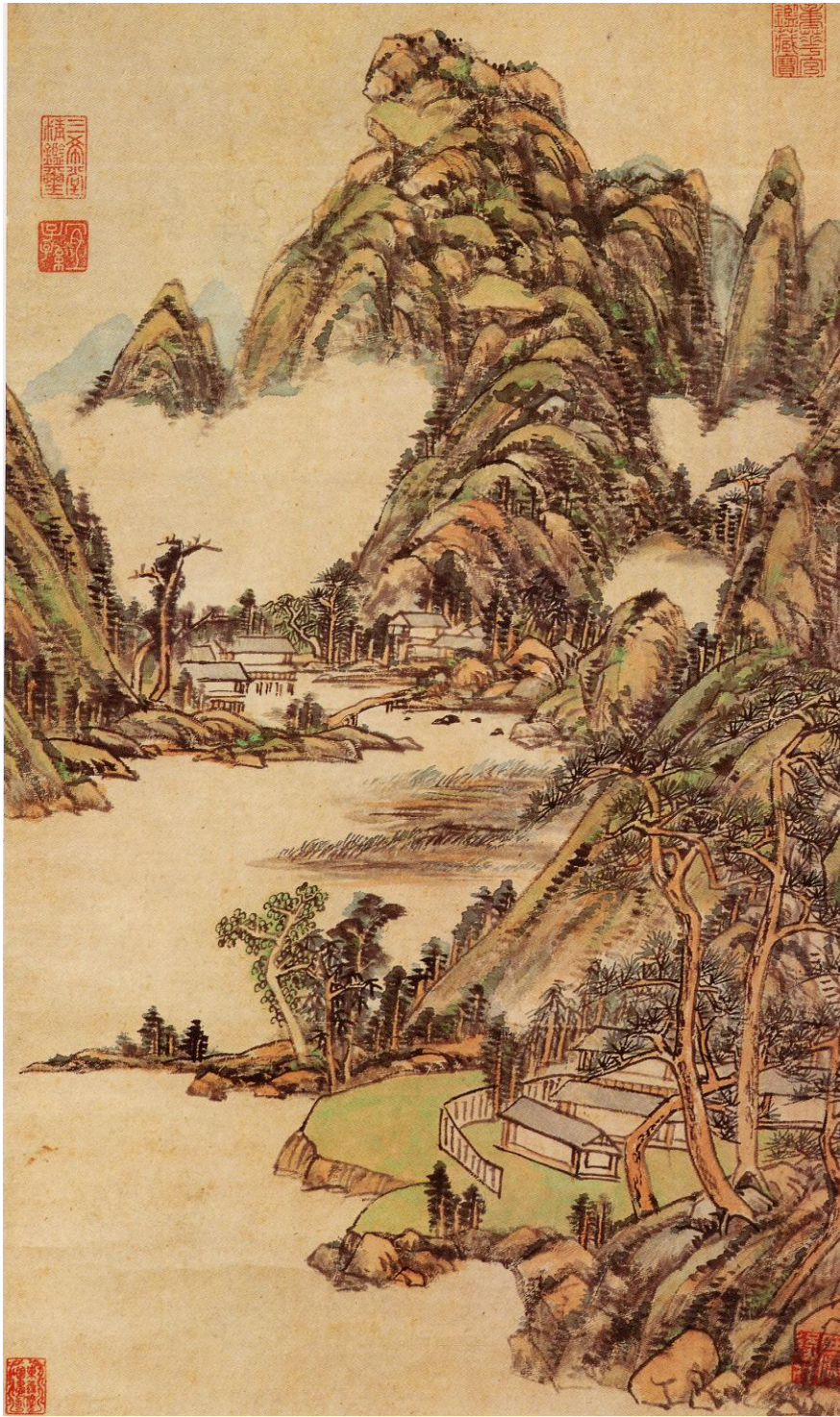


Fig. 3-44 Wang Yuanqi, *Trees in Mist before a Humble Cottage*, 1715



Fig. 3-45 Wang Yuanqi, detail of *Accumulating Green on South Mountain*, 1711



Fig. 3-46 Wang Yuanqi, *Landscape in the Style of Ni Zan*,
in *Album of Landscapes*, leaf 6, 1713



Fig. 4-1 Wang Yuanqi, *Illustration of Yunlin's Suiyou Pavilion*, 1700



Fig. 4-2 Wang Yuanqi, *Wangchuan Villa*, dated 1711

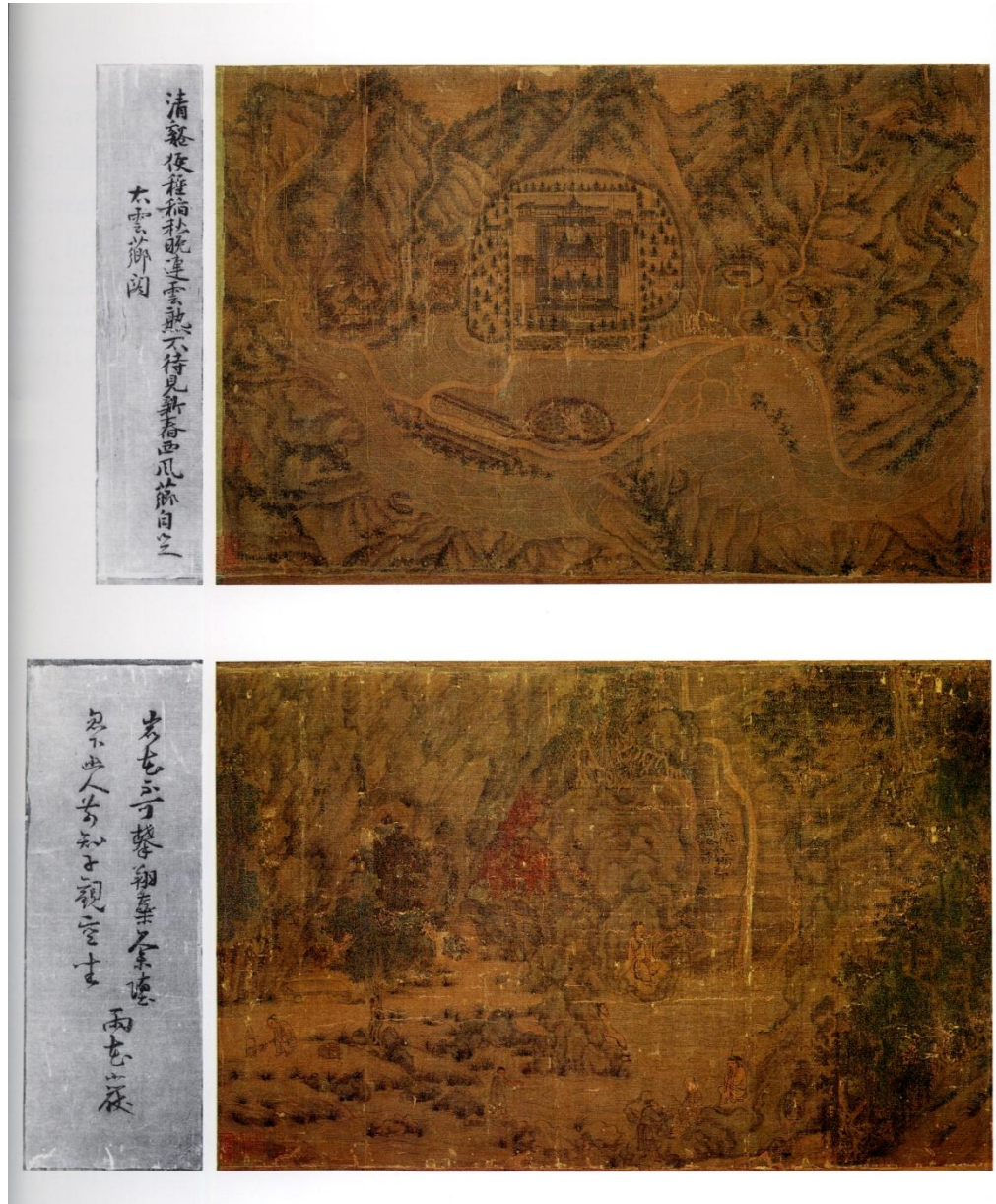


Fig. 4-3 Attributed to Li Gonglin, *Mountain Villa*, late 11th century.



Fig. 4-4 Gu Kaizhi, detail of the *Admonitions of the Palace Instructress to the Court Ladies*, dated 4th century



Fig. 4-5 Wang Yuanqi, *Bidding Farewell to Mr. Li*, 1701



Fig. 4-6 Wang Yuanqi, *Landscape in the Style of Gao Kegong*, 1696



Fig. 4-7 Wang Yuanqi, *Bidding Farewell to Mr. Li*, 1706

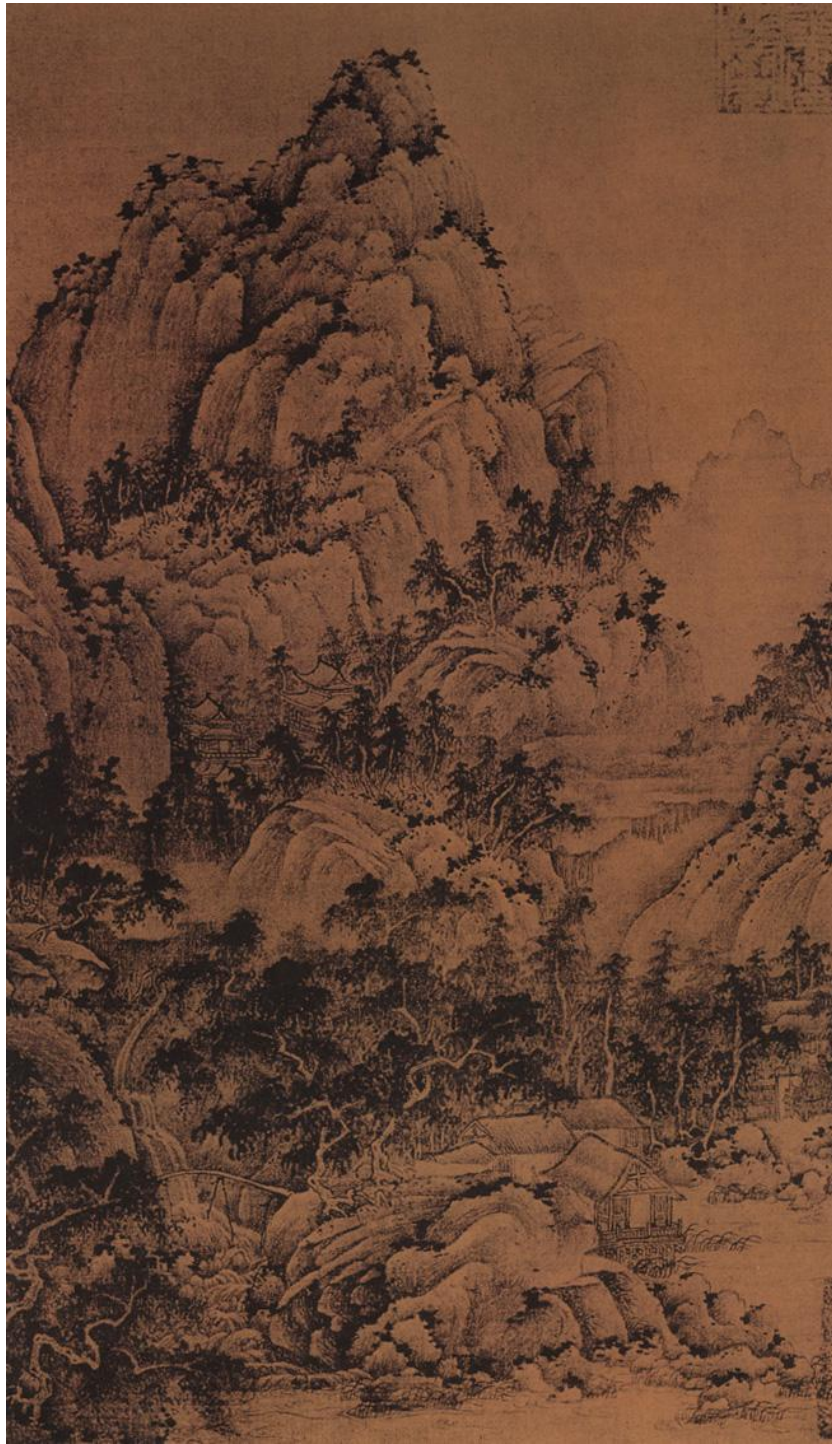


Fig. 4-8 Juran, *Living in the Mountains*, 10th century



Fig. 4-9 Wang Yuanqi, *Illustrative Painting of Wang Wei's Poem "Searching for the Temple of Mounded Fragrance,"* 1712 or 1713



Fig. 4-10 Wang Yuanqi, *Illustrative Painting Based on Wang Wei's Poem*, 1705

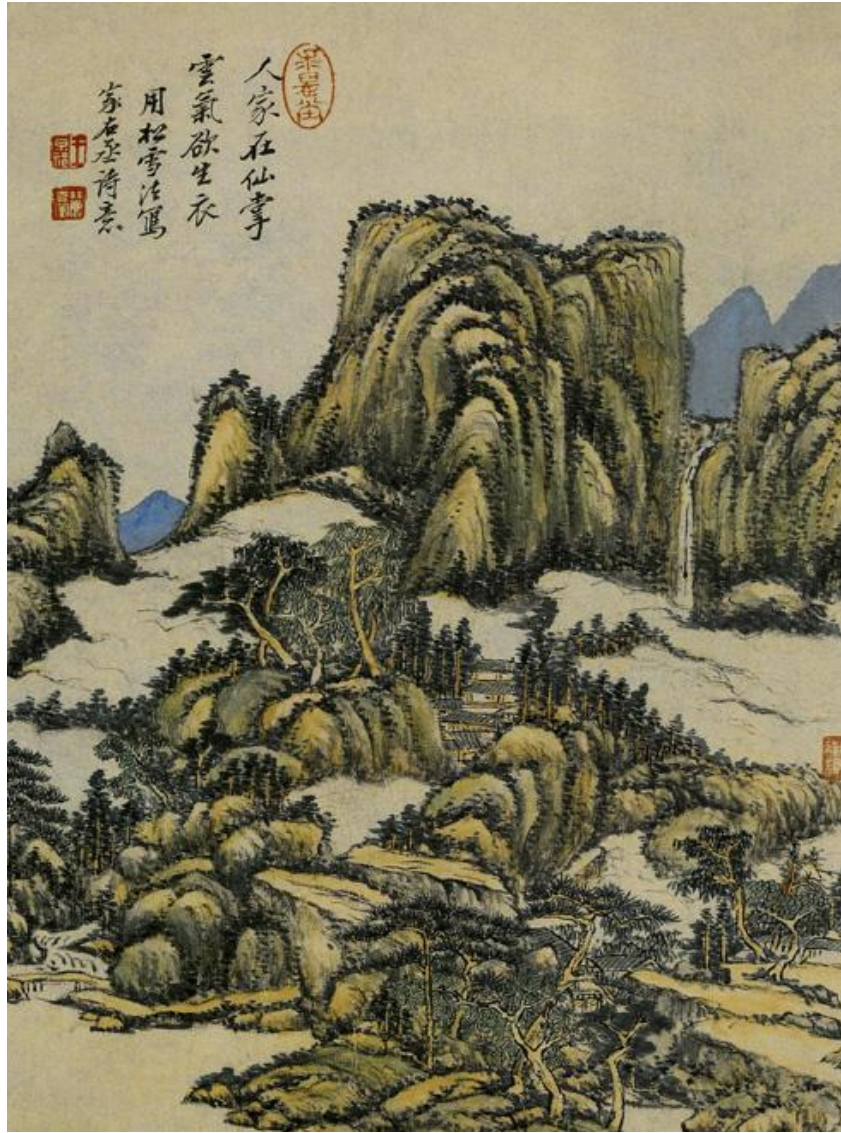


Fig. 4-11 Wang Yuanqi, *Illustrative Painting Based on Wang Wei's Poem*



Fig. 4-12 Wang Yuanqi, *Illustrative Painting Based on Wang Wei's Poem "Deer Fence."*



Fig. 4-13 Ni Zan, *Six Gentlemen*, mid-14th century



Fig. 4-14 Attributed to Guo Zhongshu, *Wangchuan Villa*, 15th to 16th centuries



Fig. 4-15 (a) Detail of *Wangchuan Villa*, attributed to Guo Zhongshu, 15th to 16th century



Fig. 4-15 (b) Detail of *Wangchuan Villa* by Wang Yuanqi, 1711



Fig. 4-16 (a) “Mengcheng Hollow,” detail of the rubbing of the stone engraving
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Fig. 4-16 (b) Wang Yuanqi, “Mengcheng Hollow,” detail of the *Wangchuan Villa*, 1711



Fig. 4-17 Wang Yuanqi, “Wangchuan Villa” and “Mengcheng Hollow,” detail of *Wangchuan Villa*, 1711

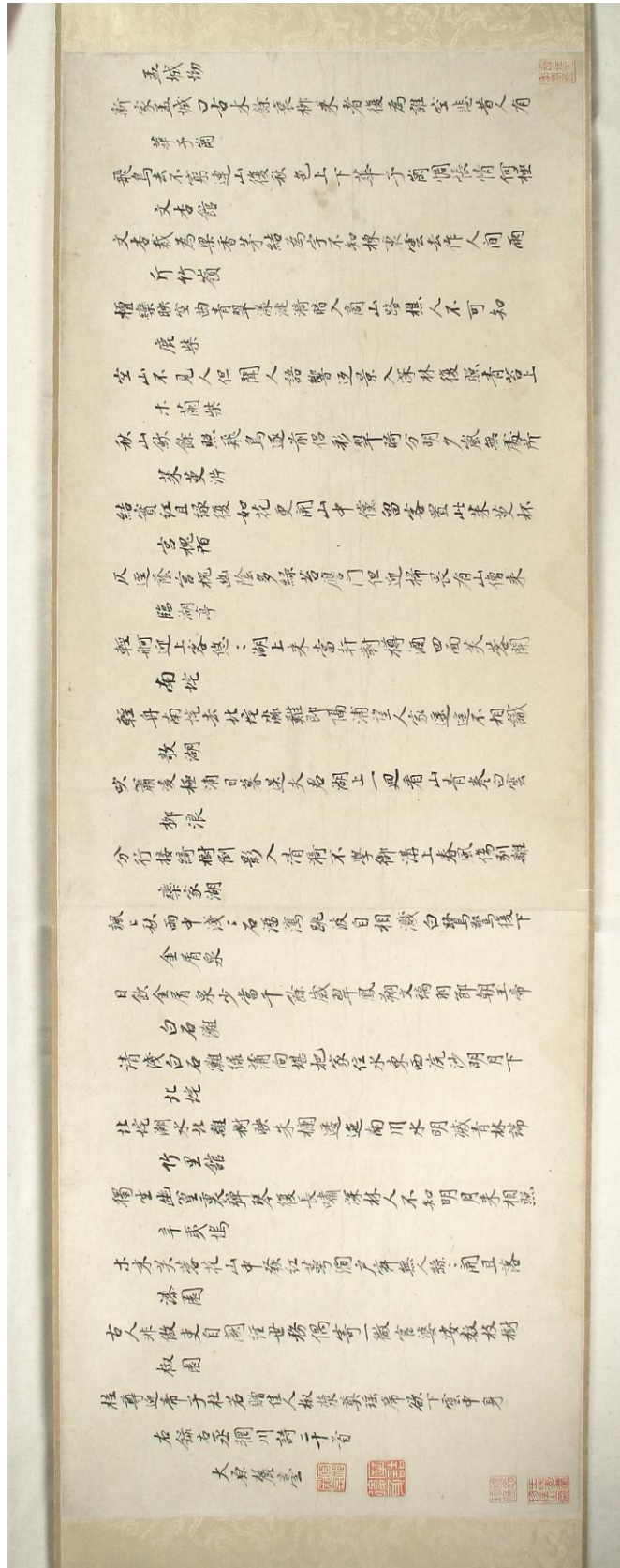


Fig. 4-18 Wang Yuanqi, the twenty poems on the Wangchuan Villa by Wang Wei, detail of Wangchuan Villa, 1711



Fig. 4-19 Wang Yuanqi, *Fishing in River Country at Blossom Time*, 1709



Fig. 4-20 Zhao Mengfu, *Qiao and Hua Mountains*, 1295



Fig. 4-21 Zhao Mengfu, *Watering Horses in the Suburbs*, 1312



Fig. 4-22 Comparison of details from *Fishing in River Country at Blossom Time* and *Wangchuan Villa*

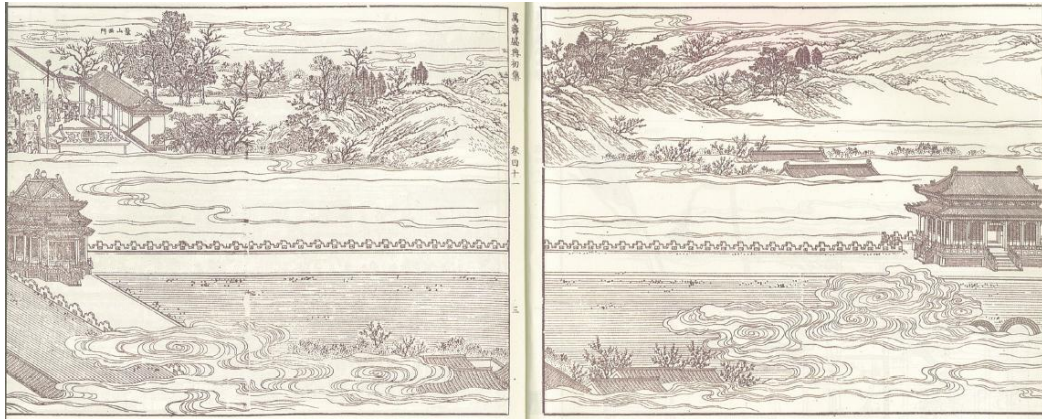


Fig. 4-23 Wang Yuanqi et al., *Painting of the Kangxi Emperor's Sixtieth Birthday Celebration* (detail), dated 1713

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