

Chen Rong and the Transformation of Nine Dragons

by

Jacqueline Chao

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

Approved November 2012 by the  
Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Claudia Brown, Chair  
Janet Baker  
Julie Codell

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

December 2012

## ABSTRACT

This dissertation is the first detailed and extensive study dedicated to the life and art of the master artist and scholar-official Chen Rong (active 13th century), and offers an expanded analysis of his most famous work, the *Nine Dragons* scroll (1244). It provides a reconstruction of Chen Rong's biography, character and political career, and discusses his significance and impact in the study of Chinese painting during the late Southern Song dynasty (1127-1279) and beyond, by highlighting the reception and interpretation of the *Nine Dragons* scroll in the past and in modern times. This is achieved by addressing writings such as eulogies, poems and commentary about Chen Rong by his contemporaries and later biographers, and also analysis of recent works by contemporary Chinese artists that reinterpret Chen Rong's *Nine Dragons* motif directly. In addition to offering an expanded reading and interpretation of Chen Rong's inscriptions on the *Nine Dragons* scroll and inscriptions by subsequent viewers of the scroll, this study sheds light on the artistic context, significance, and historical development of dragons and dragon painting in China. This dissertation also offers the first full English transcription and translation of Emperor Qianlong's inscription on the *Nine Dragons* scroll, and that of his eight officials. Furthermore, this dissertation includes two detailed appendices; one is a detailed appendix of all of Chen Rong's paintings documented to exist today, and the second

is a list of paintings attributed to Chen Rong that have been mentioned in historical documents that no longer appear extant.

This interdisciplinary study provides insight into the processes that influence how an artist's work is transformed beyond his time to that of legendary status. This clarification of Chen Rong's biography and artistic activity, particularly with respect to his most famous work the *Nine Dragons* scroll, contributes to modern scholarship by providing an expanded understanding of Chen Rong's life and art, which in turn, adjusts prevailing perceptions of his life and work.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My foremost thanks go to Dr. Claudia Brown, my advisor and dissertation committee chair at Arizona State University (ASU), for her invaluable assistance, support and guidance with this dissertation. From my first days as a Master's student, Dr. Brown has not only taught and advised me, but she has aided me with every aspect of my graduate education, from introducing me to new research methodologies, to grants and teaching applications, to providing me with access to important museum collections and significant works of art. I have the utmost respect for her research knowledge, professionalism and unparalleled work ethic. I wish to acknowledge Dr. Janet Baker, Curator of Asian Art at the Phoenix Art Museum, for her astute critical eye in regards to the writing of this dissertation. I am very appreciative of her mentorship through my curatorial internships at the Phoenix Art Museum, and for arranging so many viewings of works in the Museum's Asian art collection over the years. I am grateful to Dr. Julie Codell, who opened my eyes to art historical theories and to new standards of teaching and scholarship. I thank her for her encouragement and support of my research.

I am indebted to Dr. Ju-hsi Chou, Professor Emeritus, for providing me with a solid research foundation for the study and research of Chen Rong, and for his suggested edits and insights regarding Chen Rong's original inscriptions on the *Nine Dragons* scroll.

I would like to express my great appreciation to the artist Master Shengyao (Chan Shengyao) for his insights regarding my translations. I am inspired by his rich and extensive knowledge of Chinese art history, philosophy and culture.

I wish to specially thank Mrs. Marilyn Papp and the late Mr. Roy Papp of Phoenix, Arizona for their warmth and kind support, and for allowing me the opportunity to study and learn from their Chinese painting collection.

My graduate coursework and dissertation would not have been completed without the guidance and support of the entire faculty of the Art History department at ASU through the years, including Dr. Emily Umberger at the University of Arizona, Adriene Jenik, Director of the School of Art, and the administrative staff, especially Vicki Kelley and Carol Cox. I wish to express my appreciation for having received several dissertation research and travel grants from the ASU Graduate and Professional Student Association, the School of Art, and the Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts, which allowed me the opportunity to examine Chen Rong's *Nine Dragons* scroll and related works in Boston and New York. Finally, I wish to express my sincerest gratitude to my family, for providing me with the unwavering support, advice and encouragement I needed to see this project through to completion.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF FIGURES .....	ix
LIST OF CHINESE NAMES AND TERMS.....	xiv
CHRONOLOGY .....	xix
INTRODUCTION .....	xx
CHAPTER	
1 THE LIFE OF CHEN RONG .....	1
Literati Painting .....	1
The Life of Chen Rong .....	12
Chen Rong's Character .....	17
Chen Rong's Painting.....	28
Chen Rong's Calligraphy and Poetry .....	35
2 BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF THE CHINESE	
DRAGON .....	43
First Depictions: Early Ideas and Expressions of the Dragon	
Early Legend .....	44
Divination and Rain Rituals.....	45
Imperial Rule .....	51
The Apotropaic and the Everyday .....	54
Ritual and Philosophy: Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism	
Buddhism and the Dragon .....	60
Dragons and Naga .....	60

CHAPTER	Page
Dragon Kings.....	64
Visual Representations of the Dragon King .....	68
Daoist Immortality and the Dragon .....	73
Confucianism and the Dragon .....	78
Development of the Dragon’s Visual Form .....	80
Dragon Painters.....	84
3 THE NINE DRAGONS SCROLL .....	97
Viewing the <i>Nine Dragons</i> scroll .....	97
Technique .....	99
Calligraphy.....	101
The Artist’s First Inscription .....	103
Analysis of the Artist’s First Inscription.....	108
The Artist’s Second Inscription.....	141
4 CHEN RONG AND THE NINE DRAGONS SCROLL: IMPACT AND PERCEPTIONS IN LATER HISTORY .....	144
Provenance .....	144
Geng Zhaozhong .....	145
Qianlong Emperor.....	149
Jiaqing Emperor.....	154
Prince Gong .....	155
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston .....	157
Additional Inscriptions.....	159

CHAPTER	Page
Southern Song Dynasty	
Dong Sixue.....	159
Yuan Dynasty	
Zhang Sicheng.....	162
Wu Quanjie .....	167
Ouyang Yuan .....	171
Zhang Zhu.....	172
Ming Dynasty	
Wang Boyi.....	175
Zhu Yuanzhang.....	175
Qing Dynasty	
Inscription by the Qianlong Emperor .....	178
Inscriptions by Qianlong's Eight Officials.....	183
5 CONTEMPORARY REINTERPRETATIONS OF CHEN	
RONG'S NINE DRAGONS SCROLL .....	191
Li Huayi.....	192
Zeng Xiaojun.....	199
Chan Shengyao.....	201
6 CONCLUSION .....	218
REFERENCES .....	222
FIGURES .....	239



APPENDIX

A	LIST OF PAINTINGS BY AND ATTRIBUTED TO CHEN RONG THAT EXIST TODAY.....	271
B	LIST OF ADDITIONAL PAINTINGS ATTRIBUTED TO CHEN RONG MENTIONED IN HISTORICAL TEXTS .....	282

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Chen Rong (act. 13 <sup>th</sup> century), <i>Nine Dragons</i> (Detail of beginning of scroll and of Chen Rong’s second inscription), 1244. Handscroll, ink and touches of red on paper. 46.3 x 1096.4 cm. Francis Gardner Curtis Fund, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (17.1697) .....	239
2. Chen Rong (act. 13 <sup>th</sup> century), <i>Nine Dragons</i> (Detail of the first dragon), 1244. Handscroll, ink and touches of red on paper. 46.3 x 1096.4 cm. Francis Gardner Curtis Fund, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (17.1697).....	239
3. Chen Rong (act. 13 <sup>th</sup> century), <i>Nine Dragons</i> (Detail of the second dragon), 1244. Handscroll, ink and touches of red on paper. 46.3 x 1096.4 cm. Francis Gardner Curtis Fund, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (17.1697).....	240
4. Chen Rong (act. 13 <sup>th</sup> century), <i>Nine Dragons</i> (Detail of the third dragon and beginning of the Qianlong Emperor’s inscription), 1244. Handscroll, ink and touches of red on paper. 46.3 x 1096.4 cm. Francis Gardner Curtis Fund, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (17.1697) .....	240
5. Chen Rong (act. 13 <sup>th</sup> century), <i>Nine Dragons</i> (Detail of the fourth dragon and the rest of the Qianlong Emperor’s inscription), 1244. Handscroll, ink and touches of red on paper. 46.3 x 1096.4 cm. Francis Gardner Curtis Fund, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (17.1697) .....	241
6. Chen Rong (act. 13 <sup>th</sup> century), <i>Nine Dragons</i> (Detail of the fifth dragon), 1244. Handscroll, ink and touches of red on paper. 46.3 x 1096.4 cm. Francis Gardner Curtis Fund, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (17.1697).....	241
7. Chen Rong (act. 13 <sup>th</sup> century), <i>Nine Dragons</i> (Detail of the fifth and sixth dragons), 1244. Handscroll, ink and touches of red on paper. 46.3 x 1096.4 cm. Francis Gardner Curtis Fund, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (17.1697).....	242
8. Chen Rong (act. 13 <sup>th</sup> century), <i>Nine Dragons</i> (Detail of section of waves and rocks between the sixth and seventh dragons), 1244. Handscroll, ink and touches of red on paper. 46.3 x 1096.4	

cm. Francis Gardner Curtis Fund, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (17.1697) .....	242
9. Chen Rong (act. 13 <sup>th</sup> century), <i>Nine Dragons</i> (Detail of the seventh dragon), 1244. Handscroll, ink and touches of red on paper. 46.3 x 1096.4 cm. Francis Gardner Curtis Fund, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (17.1697).....	243
10. Chen Rong (act. 13 <sup>th</sup> century), <i>Nine Dragons</i> (Detail of the waves and vortex following the seventh dragon), 1244. Handscroll, ink and touches of red on paper. 46.3 x 1096.4 cm. Francis Gardner Curtis Fund, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (17.1697) ....	243
11. Chen Rong (act. 13 <sup>th</sup> century), <i>Nine Dragons</i> (Detail of the eighth dragon), 1244. Handscroll, ink and touches of red on paper. 46.3 x 1096.4 cm. Francis Gardner Curtis Fund, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (17.1697).....	244
12. Chen Rong (act. 13 <sup>th</sup> century), <i>Nine Dragons</i> (Detail of the ninth dragon), 1244. Handscroll, ink and touches of red on paper. 46.3 x 1096.4 cm. Francis Gardner Curtis Fund, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (17.1697).....	244
13. Chen Rong (act. 13 <sup>th</sup> century), <i>Nine Dragons</i> (Detail the first half of Chen Rong's first inscription), 1244. Handscroll, ink and touches of red on paper. 46.3 x 1096.4 cm. Francis Gardner Curtis Fund, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (17.1697) .....	245
14. Chen Rong (act. 13 <sup>th</sup> century), <i>Nine Dragons</i> (Detail of the second half of Chen Rong's first inscription), 1244. Handscroll, ink and touches of red on paper. 46.3 x 1096.4 cm. Francis Gardner Curtis Fund, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (17.1697).....	245
15. Chen Rong (act. 13 <sup>th</sup> century), <i>Nine Dragons</i> (Detail of inscriptions by Dong Sixue (active 13 <sup>th</sup> century), dated to 1306 (right) and Zhang Sicheng (active 14 <sup>th</sup> century), dated to 1331 (left)), 1244. Handscroll, ink and touches of red on paper. 46.3 x 1096.4 cm. Francis Gardner Curtis Fund, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (17.1697) .....	246
16. Chen Rong (act. 13 <sup>th</sup> century), <i>Nine Dragons</i> (Detail of inscriptions by Wu Quanjie (1269-1346), undated (right) and Ouyang Yuan (1273-1357), undated (left)), 1244. Handscroll, ink and touches of red on paper. 46.3 x 1096.4 cm. Francis Gardner Curtis Fund, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (17.1697) .....	246

17. Chen Rong (act. 13<sup>th</sup> century), *Nine Dragons* (Detail of inscriptions by Zhang Zhu (1287-1368), undated (right) and Wang Boyi (act. 14<sup>th</sup> century), dated to 1380 (left)), 1244. Handscroll, ink and touches of red on paper. 46.3 x 1096.4 cm. Francis Gardner Curtis Fund, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (17.1697)..... 247
18. Chen Rong (act. 13<sup>th</sup> century), *Nine Dragons* (Detail of inscribed eight verses by eight high officials of the Qianlong Emperor's court: Yin Jishan (1696-1771), Liu Dongxun (1700-1773), Yu Minzhong (1714-1780), Dong Bangda (1699-1769), Qiu Yuexiu (1712-1773), Wang Jihua (ca. 1720-1776), Qian Weicheng (1720-1772), and Chen Xiaoyong (1715-1779)), 1244. Handscroll, ink and touches of red on paper. 46.3 x 1096.4 cm. Francis Gardner Curtis Fund, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (17.1697) ..... 247
19. Attributed to Chen Rong (act. 13<sup>th</sup> century), Section of *Pan gong hai ye yin shu lou shi* 潘公海夜飲書樓詩 - Running Script calligraphy, undated. Ink on paper. 30.9 x 382 cm. Palace Museum, Beijing ..... 248
20. Zhang Shengwen (act. 1163-1189), *Long Handscroll of Buddhist Images* (Detail of dragon king section), ca. 1173-76. Handscroll, color and gold on paper. 30.4 x 1881.4 cm. National Palace Museum, Taiwan. .... 249
21. Zhu Yu (Zhu Junbi; 1293-1365), *Scene at the Dragon King's Palace* (Detail), Yuan dynasty. Leaf from an album, color on silk. 45.7 x 43.2 cm. Palace Museum, Beijing. .... 250
22. You Qiu (act. 1540-90), *Luohans Crossing the Sea* (Detail), 1587. Handscroll, ink on paper. 31.2 x 724 cm. The Marilyn and Roy Papp Collection, Phoenix, AZ. .... 251
23. Chen Hongshou (1598-1652), *The Dragon King Revering the Buddha*, 1368-1644. Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk. 107.9 x 51.9 cm. Gift of Charles Lang Freer, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C (F1916.604)..... 252
24. Anonymous, *A Gentleman Riding on a Dragon*, c. 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE. Ink on silk. 37.5 x 28 cm. From Zidanku, Changsha, Hunan Province. Hunan Provincial Museum ..... 253

25. Anonymous, *Painted Silk Funerary Banner of Lady Dai*, early 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE. Ink and color on silk. 205 x 92 cm (at top). From Mawangdui Tomb 1 in Changsha, Hunan Province..... 254
26. Ma Yuan (act. c. 1190 – c. 1230), *Immortal Riding a Dragon*, early 13<sup>th</sup> century. Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk. 108.1 x 52.6 cm. National Palace Museum, Taiwan ..... 255
27. Attributed to Gu Kaizhi (c. 344-406), *Nymph of the Luo River*, undated. Handscroll, ink and color on silk. 24.2 x 310.9 cm. Gift of Charles Lang Freer, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. (F1914.53) ..... 256
28. Attributed to Zhang Sengyou (act. early 6<sup>th</sup> century), *The Five Planets and the Twenty-Eight Lunar Mansions*, 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century or earlier. Handscroll, ink and colors on silk. 27.5 x 489.7 cm. Abe Collection, Osaka Municipal Museum of Art..... 257
29. Attributed to Li Gonglin (c. 1049-1106), *Knick-knack Peddler and Playing Boys*, early to mid-14<sup>th</sup> century. Album leaf, ink on silk, 21.8 x 29.4 cm. Gift of Charles Lang Freer, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. (F1911.161e.)..... 258
30. Giuseppe Gastiglione (Lang Shining; 1688-1766), and Ding Guanpeng (fl. 1738-68), *The Qianlong Emperor as a Chinese Connoisseur Viewing Paintings*, ca. 1746-50. Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper. 136.4 x 62 cm. Palace Museum, Beijing..... 259
31. John Thomson (1837-1921), *Prince Kung* [Prince Gong], 1872. Modern Albumen print from wet-collodian negative. 254 x 204 mm. National Library of Scotland / Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine. .... 260
32. Zhang Yucai (act. 1294-1316), *Beneficent Rain* (detail), late 13<sup>th</sup>-early 14<sup>th</sup> century. Handscroll, ink on paper, 27 x 271.8 cm. Gift of Douglas Dillon, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. (1985.227.2) ..... 261
33. Attributed to Chen Zhitian (act. mid-14<sup>th</sup> century), *Fourteen Portraits of the Daoist Priest Wu Quanjie*, c. 17<sup>th</sup> century copy of a 14<sup>th</sup> century original. Handscroll, ink, colors and gold on paper. 51.8 x 834.8 cm. Gift of Mrs. Richard E. Danielson, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (46.252) ..... 262

34. Emperor Qianlong (1711-1799), *Old Pine*, 1754. Handscroll, ink on paper, 27.5 x 130 cm. Gift of Mrs. Charles Ure, Stanford University Museum of Art (67.76) ..... 263
35. *Miniature Handscroll after Nine Dragons by Chen Rong*, not dated. Handscroll, ink on paper, 7.5 x 115.8 cm (painting), 7.5 x 43 cm (calligraphy). Gift of Philip Hofer, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (1971.324) ..... 264
36. Li Huayi (b. 1948), *Dragon Amidst Mountain Ridges*, 2006-2009. Set of six panels and one hanging scroll, ink and color on paper, 185.1 cm x 92.5 cm (each panel), 205.2 x 109.5 cm (hanging scroll). Collection of Akiko Yamazaki and Jerry Yang, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston ..... 265
37. Zeng Xiaojun (b. 1954), *Nine Trees (Detail)*, 2007-2010. Handscroll, ink on paper, 69 x 990 cm. Collection of the Artist.... 266
38. Zeng Xiaojun, *Dragon Screen*, 2009. *Zi tan* wood folding screen with carved lacquer decoration and painted panels of ink and color on paper, 260 x 340 x 112.8 cm. Collection of the Artist .... 267
39. Chan Shengyao (b. 1958), *Transformation of Nine Dragons to their Essence*, 2010. Ink on rice paper, 137 x 6740 cm. Collection of the Artist..... 268

## LIST OF CHINESE NAMES AND TERMS

Cang Jie 倉頡

Cao Buxing 曹不興

Chan Shengyao 詹聖堯

Chen Hongshou 陳洪綬

Chen Rong 陳容

Chen Xiaoyong 陳孝永

Chen Zhitian 陳芝田

Ding Guanpeng 丁觀鵬

Dong Bangda 董邦達

Dong Sixue 董思學

Dong Yu 董羽

Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒

Duan Zhixing 段智興

Faxian 法顯

*fei yi* 飛衣

Feng Shaozheng 馮紹正

*fu pi cun* 斧劈皴

Fu Xi 伏羲

Ge Hong 葛洪

Geng Zhaozhong 耿昭忠

*gong bi* 工筆

Gu Kaizhi 顧愷之

Guo Ruoxu 郭若虛

Guo zi jian 國子監

Han Yu 韓愈

Hong Zhongxuan 洪忠宣

Huai Su 懷素

Huang Tingjian 黃庭堅

*hui wen* 回 (蕙)文

Jia Sidao 賈似道

Jiaqing Emperor 嘉慶帝

*jue ju* 絕句

Kong Zi 孔子

Li Huayi 李華弋

Lizong Emperor 理宗

Liu Gongquan 柳公權

Liu Tongxun 劉統勛

*lu shi* 律詩

Ma Yuan 馬遠

Mi Fu 米黻

Nu Wa 女媧

Prince Gong 恭親王



Ouyang Yuan 歐陽元

*qi yun* 氣韻

Qian Weicheng 錢維城

Qianlong Emperor 乾龍帝

Qin Hui 秦檜

Qiu Ying 仇英

Qiu Yuexiu 裘曰修

Qu Boyu 蘧伯玉

Shen Nong 神農

Shen Zhuliang 沈諸梁

*shi ren hua* 士人畫

Su Hui 蘇蕙

Su Shi 蘇軾

Tang Hou 湯屋

Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors 三皇五帝

Wang Boyi 王伯易

Wang Chong 王充

Wang Fu 王符

Wang Jihua 王際華

Wang Wei 王維

Wang Xizhi 王羲之

Wang Xianzhi 王獻之

Wang Zhenpeng 王振鵬

Wen Tong 文同

*wen ren hua* 文人畫

Wu Daozi 吳道子

Wu Quanjie 吳全節

*wu xing* 五行

Xia Wenyan 夏文顏

Xie He 謝赫

Yan Zhenqing 顏真卿

Ye Gongchuo 葉恭綽

Yin Jishan 尹繼善

Yin Zhongkan 殷仲堪

You Qiu 尤求

*yu hua* 羽化

Yu Minzhong 于敏中

Yue Fei 岳飛

Zeng Xiaojun 曾小俊

Zhang Daoling 張道陵

Zhang Huaiguan 張懷瓘

Zhang Shaoshi 張少師

Zhang Shengwen 張勝溫

Zhang Sengyou 張僧繇

Zhang Sicheng 張嗣成

Zhuan Xu 顓頊

Zhang Yanyuan 張彥遠

Zhang Zhu 張翥

*zhong feng* 中鋒

Zhuanggu 傅古

Zhuang Su 莊肅

Zhang Xu 張旭

Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮

Zuo Qiuming 左丘明

## CHRONOLOGY

c. 10,000 – c. 2100 BCE	Neolithic Period
c. 2100 – c. 1600 BCE	Xia Dynasty
c. 1600 – c. 1100 BCE	Shang Dynasty
c. 1100 – 256 BCE	Zhou Dynasty
	Western Zhou c. 1100 – 771 BCE
	Eastern Zhou c. 770 – 256 BCE
	Spring and Autumn Period 770 – 476 BCE
	Warring States Period 476-221 BCE
221 - 206 BCE	Qin Dynasty
206 BCE – 220 CE	Han Dynasty
220 – 265	Three Kingdoms*
265 – 420	Jin Dynasty*
	Western Jin 265 – 317
	Eastern Jin 317 – 420
317 – 589	Southern Dynasties*
386 – 581	Northern Dynasties*
581 – 618	Sui Dynasty
618 – 907	Tang Dynasty
907 – 960	Five Dynasties (in the north)
907 – 979	Ten Kingdoms (in the south)
907 – 1125	Liao Dynasty
960 – 1279	Song Dynasty
	Northern Song 960 – 1127
	Southern Song 1127-1279
1115 – 1234	Jin Dynasty
1271 – 1368	Yuan Dynasty
1368 – 1644	Ming Dynasty
1644 – 1911	Qing Dynasty
1912 – 1949	Republic
1949 -	People's Republic

\*The Three Kingdoms, Western and Eastern Jin dynasties, together with the Southern and Northern dynasties, are frequently referred to as the Six Dynasties Period (220-589)

## INTRODUCTION

With China's rise as a global economic superpower, aspects of traditional Chinese art and culture are now enjoying rediscovery and resurgence, more so than ever before. Recent scholarship and exhibitions have demonstrated this renewed interest in traditional Chinese culture, particularly in the study and practice of traditional and contemporary Chinese art and artists. Despite such a vast history of artistic and cultural achievements, many of China's greatest artists in history still remain shrouded in mystery for a variety of reasons, including lack of textual information and extant paintings.

During the late Southern Song dynasty (1127-1279), perhaps the most prominent master dragon painter in the Chinese art historical canon was the scholar-official Chen Rong 陳容 (active 13<sup>th</sup> century), as exemplified in his *Nine Dragons* scroll 九龍圖, dated to 1244, now located in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and widely considered a masterpiece of Chinese painting (Figures 1-18). Despite the prominence of this particular scroll, which has been considered “the preeminent Chinese dragon painting in existence,” Chen Rong himself has not been a topic of thorough study.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the Chinese dragon, in

---

<sup>1</sup> I refer to Chen Rong's prominence based on the fact that his painting *Nine Dragons* has been widely reproduced in art history survey textbooks and considered a prime example of mid-thirteenth century painting. This short quote is from Joseph Scheier-Dolberg, “Qianlong in Our Eyes: A Study of Evolving Taste at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston” in Willow Hai Chang, et al., *The Last Emperor's Collection: Masterpieces of Painting and Calligraphy from the Liaoning Provincial Museum* (New York: China Institute Gallery, 2008), 327.

the manner of Chen Rong's original *Nine Dragons* scroll, has been addressed in recently created artworks by both emerging and established Chinese contemporary artists. This interest indicates a celebration of Chen Rong's original painting, but also raises the question, what do we really know about the artist himself?

This dissertation is the first detailed and extensive study dedicated to the life and art of the master artist and scholar-official Chen Rong, and offers an expanded analysis of his most famous work, the *Nine Dragons* scroll. It provides a reconstruction of Chen Rong's biography, character and political career, and discusses his significance and impact in the study of Chinese painting during the late Southern Song dynasty and beyond, by highlighting the reception and interpretation of the *Nine Dragons* scroll in the past and in modern times. This is achieved by addressing writings such as eulogies, poems and commentary about Chen Rong by his contemporaries and later biographers, and also analysis of recent works by contemporary Chinese artists that reinterpret Chen Rong's *Nine Dragons* motif directly. In addition to offering an expanded reading and interpretation of Chen Rong's inscriptions on the *Nine Dragons* scroll and inscriptions by subsequent viewers of the scroll, this study sheds light on the artistic context, significance, and historical development of dragons and dragon painting in China. This dissertation also offers the first full English transcription and translation of the Qianlong Emperor's inscription on the *Nine Dragons* scroll, and that of his eight officials. Furthermore,

this dissertation includes two detailed appendices; one is a detailed appendix of all of Chen Rong's paintings documented to exist today, and the second is a list of paintings attributed to Chen Rong that have been mentioned in historical documents that no longer appear extant. This clarification of Chen Rong's biography and artistic activity, particularly with respect to his most famous work the *Nine Dragons* scroll, contributes to modern scholarship by providing an expanded understanding of Chen Rong's life and art, which in turn, adjusts prevailing perceptions of his life and work.

#### State of the Field

This dissertation occupies an intersection between the fields of Chinese art history, history, philosophy and religious studies. Within my own discipline of art history, my work reflects the field's shift towards a globalized art history which is inclusive of artists and alternative practices outside the Euro-American canon.<sup>2</sup> While much has been published on Song dynasty history and specific monographs have been written on particular Song dynasty artists, there is yet to be a published monographic study of Chen Rong's work, and very few thirteenth century sources which

---

<sup>2</sup> See James Elkins, ed., *Is Art History Global?* (New York: Routledge, 2007), for a general discussion of some of the issues regarding the globalization of Non-Western art historical research. See also an article by Wen C. Fong, "Why Chinese Painting Is History," *The Art Bulletin*, 85, no. 2 (June 2003): 258-280. Fong argues that in order to appreciate the true value of Chinese art, one must change to a more open and universal approach to art history, but not one that acts as a form of cultural imperialism relating everything to Western art. Fong argues that because of China's unique painting tradition, style and connoisseurship are essential to deciphering the Chinese visual language.

pertain to Chen Rong have been translated from Chinese to English.<sup>3</sup> To date, research dedicated to the study of Chen Rong and his paintings have been generally limited to short biographical entries in historical artist compendia.<sup>4</sup>

The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, currently holds the best known example of Chen Rong's dragon painting, the *Nine Dragons* scroll, dated to 1244, in their collection. This scroll is the major focus of this study as it

---

<sup>3</sup> For collected studies on painting during the Song dynasty, see: James Cahill, *The Art of Southern Sung China* (New York: Asia Society, 1962). James Cahill, *The Lyric Journey: Poetic Painting in China and Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996) Maxwell K. Hearn and Judith G. Smith, eds. *Arts of the Sung and Yuan* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1996) Cary Y. Liu and Dora C. Ching, *Arts of the Sung and Yuan: Ritual, Ethnicity and Style in Painting* (New Jersey: Princeton University Art Museum, 1999) Alfreda Murck, *Poetry and Painting in Song China: The Subtle Art of Dissent* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2000)

<sup>4</sup> Short biographical entries on Chen Rong can be found in most major historical artist compendiums, such as: James Cahill, *An Index of Early Chinese Painters and Paintings: T'ang, Sung, Yuan* (Reprint: Floating World Edition, 2003). Chang Bide 昌彼得, et al., *Song Ren Chuan Ji Zi Liao Suo Yin* 宋人傳記資料索引 [Index to Biographical Materials of Song Figures] (Taipei: Ding Wen Shu Ju Yin Xing, 1986). Chen Gaohua 陳高華, *Song Liao Jin Hua Jia Shi Liao* 宋遼金畫家史料 [History of the Painters of the Song, Liao and Jin dynasties] (Beijing: Wen Wu Chu Ban She, 1984). Deng Qiaobin 鄧喬彬, *Song Dai Hui Hua Yan Jiu* 宋代繪畫研究 [Research on Song Dynasty Painting] (Henan: Henan Da Xue Chu Ban She, 2006). Fu Xinian, *Zhong Guo Meishu Quan Ji* 中國美術全集 [Catalogue of Chinese Art] (Beijing: Wen wu chu ban she, 1988). *Gu Jin Min Ren Shu Hua Da Guan, Di Yi Ji* 古今名人書畫大觀第一集結 [Ancient and Modern Famous Paintings] (Shanghai: Shanghai Hui Wen Tang Xin Ji Shu Ju, 1932). Lu Fusheng 盧輔聖, *Zhong Guo Shu Hua Quan Shu* 中國書畫全書 [Comprehensive Writings on Chinese Painting], 14 Vols (Shanghai: Shanghai Shu Hua Chu Ban She, 1992). Shen Zhihong 沈治宏 and Wang Ronggui 王蓉貴, *Song Dai Ren Wu Zi Liao Suo Yin* 宋代人物資料索引 [Index of Song dynasty figures and biographical materials] (Chengdu: Sichuan Ci Shu Chu Ban She, 1997). Osvald Siren, *Chinese Painting: Leading Masters and Principles* (New York: Ronald Press, 1956-58). Zhu Zhuyu 朱鑄禹, *Zhong Guo Li Dai Hua Jia Ren Ming Ci Dian* 中國歷代畫家名辭典 [Dictionary of Historical Chinese Artists] (Beijing: Ren Min Mei Shu Chu Ban She, 2003).



is deemed to be a rare and authentic dragon painting by Chen Rong for several reasons:

The first reason is the presence of Chen Rong's own original long poetic inscription on the scroll (Figures 13-14). The presence of a long inscription by Chen Rong on the painting is indicative proof that this scroll is most likely an authentic painting (as will be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter One of this dissertation). In addition, while the artist's first long inscription is undated, a second later inscription by him at the front of the scroll dating the scroll to 1244 is of the same calligraphic style as the artist's inscription, verifying that the original hand was likely that of the original artist's (compare Figures 1, 13-14).

Secondly, in addition to containing original inscriptions by the artist, the scroll also contains inscriptions by a contemporary of the artist, Dong Sixue 董思學 (active 13<sup>th</sup> century), and by distinguished Daoist scholars and priests active during the first half of the fourteenth century, such as Zhang Sicheng 張嗣成 (14<sup>th</sup> century), Wu Quanjie 吳全節 (1269-1346), Ouyang Yuan 歐陽元 (1273-1357), Zhang Zhu 張翥 (1287-1368), and Wang Boyi 王伯易 (14<sup>th</sup> century), as well as later inscriptions by the Qing dynasty Emperor Qianlong 乾龍帝 (Hongli 弘曆, 1711-1799; r. 1735-1796) and eight prominent officials of his court. Aside from that of Qianlong and the eight officials, each of the other inscriptions, dating as far back as the

early fourteenth century, were carefully catalogued, transcribed and copied in Qing imperial records, adding further verification of authenticity.<sup>5</sup>

Thirdly, possessors of the scroll are well documented in Qing dynasty records. The painting had belonged to Geng Zhaozhong 耿昭忠 (1644-1686), and it subsequently entered the imperial collection of Qing dynasty Emperor Qianlong, Emperor Jiaqing 嘉慶帝 (1760-1820; r. 1796-1820) and then that of the Manchu Prince Gong 恭親王 (Yixin 奕訢; 1833-1898). Each collector placed seals on the scroll to demonstrate proof of his possession, prior to the Boston Museum's acquisition of the scroll in 1917. The scroll's numerous inscriptions and collector's seals illustrate and verify the scroll's illustrious history and origins.

English scholarship on the *Nine Dragons* scroll was first published by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston in the Museum's *Bulletin* in 1917 by then curator, John Ellerton Lodge (1878-1942), the same year as the museum's acquisition of the scroll.<sup>6</sup> Lodge's original article provides a descriptive account of the scroll but did not offer any translation of the scroll's various inscriptions. It was not until 1957 that Tseng Hsien-chi (Zeng Xianqi, b. 1919) published his study and translation of the scroll's

---

<sup>5</sup> Chen Rong's *Nine Dragons* scroll and all of its inscriptions, aside from the Qianlong Emperor's inscription and that of his eight court officials, are transcribed in the *Shi Qu Bao Ji* 石渠寶笈, the imperial art catalogue of calligraphy and non-Buddhist painting in the collection of the Qianlong Emperor. See National Palace Museum 國立故宮博物院, ed. *Bi Dian Zhu Lin – Shi Qu Bao Ji* 秘殿珠林 – 石渠寶笈 (Taipei, 1971; reprint edition of Zhang Zhao and others, *Bi Dian Zhu Lin*, 1744, and *Shi Qu Bao Ji*, 1745), 982-983.

<sup>6</sup> Lodge published the article under his initials J.E.L. See J.E.L. [John Ellerton Lodge], "Ch'en Jung's Picture of Nine Dragons," *Museum of Fine Arts Bulletin*, 15 no. 92 (Dec. 1917): 67-73.

inscriptions by Chen Rong, Dong Sixue, Zhang Sicheng, Wu Quanjie, Ouyang Yuan, Zhang Zhu, and Wang Boyi.<sup>7</sup> Tseng's original journal article is the most thorough study of the scroll to date, as he translated and annotated in great detail most of the inscription content on the scroll. His article has thus served as a research foundation for later exhibitions and museum catalogue entries about the scroll by scholars such as Wu Tung (b. 1940), previously Curator of Asian Art, in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, collection catalogues.<sup>8</sup> However, Tseng did not translate and interpret Emperor Qianlong's inscription and those of his eight ministers on the *Nine Dragons* scroll. Furthermore, Tseng's study offers a limited discussion regarding Chen Rong's biography, history, other artworks and writings. In this dissertation, I offer some adjustments to Tseng's original translation, as well as an expanded transcription and interpretation of the various meanings and connections that may be found in the scroll's inscriptions. I also offer the first full transcription and translation of Emperor Qianlong's inscription and the eight poetic inscriptions by eight high officials of Emperor Qianlong's court on the *Nine Dragons* scroll.

---

<sup>7</sup> See Tseng, Hsien-chi, "A Study of the Nine Dragons Scroll," *Archives of the Chinese Art Society of America*, v. 11 (1957): 16-39.

<sup>8</sup> See *Masterpieces of Chinese Painting from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston: Tang through Yuan Dynasties*, 2 Vols. (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1996). Wu Tung's entry on the *Nine Dragons* scroll was also reproduced in *Tales from the Land of Dragons: 1,000 Years of Chinese Painting* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1997).

The Chinese dragon (*long* 龍) plays a prominent role in Chinese history, a symbol strongly associated with ancient and modern Chinese spiritual and cultural identity. While the dragon is feared in many Western cultures, it has traditionally been admired in Chinese culture by artists, writers, historians and philosophers alike as a mythical creature symbolic of infinite power, supernatural ability and divine will. Dragon painting emerged as its own independent painting genre in the Song dynasty (960-1279); previously paintings of dragons were included with other animals. The dragon, as an imaginary creature, was considered by Chinese artists historically to be one of the most difficult subjects to paint successfully because one must capture the likeness and spirit of a creature that is unseen by human eyes. Yet, the Chinese dragon is treated as an iconic symbol which has given rise to compelling beliefs in the historical narratives, mythologies and arts of East Asia. Previous art historical studies of the Chinese dragon have tended to focus on stylistic transformations of the dragon's physical form from a perspective of connoisseurship. Studies dedicated to discussing the Chinese dragon by Marinus W. Visser, Zhao Qiguang, and others, demonstrate the prevalence of the dragon motif in various aspects of Chinese religion and folklore. This dissertation contributes to the more current breadth of art historical research which analyzes the dragon's social and political significance as well as the symbol's painted and stylistic history of forms.

While contemporary artistic practice is significantly informed by current social issues and developments in the global art scene, the past remains an important source of inspiration and continues to impact the methods and perspectives of contemporary Chinese artists. The Chinese dragon is now being addressed in recently created artworks by both emerging and established Chinese contemporary artists, and Chen Rong's *Nine Dragons* scroll has been recently artistically reinterpreted directly. Therefore, a necessary understanding of the imprint of the past upon the present makes a comparative study of a master artist of the past, such as Chen Rong, and how his dragon motif and his *Nine Dragons* scroll has inspired and transformed the artists of the present, compelling and timely. This interdisciplinary study will not only provide a new perspective on a major historical Chinese artist and cultural motif, but will also provide insight into the processes that influence how an artist's work is transformed beyond his time to that of legendary status.

## Methodology

My methodology for this project included thorough research of primary historical records, literary analysis of secondary sources, and museum visitations and analysis of paintings attributed to Chen Rong. I travelled to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and visually analyzed and studied Chen Rong's *Nine Dragons* scroll in person in Fall of 2010, in order to gain greater insight into Chen Rong's painting method and style. I

also made several visits to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and studied related works from the Song and Yuan dynasty. Furthermore, Chen Rong's *Nine Dragons* scroll has recently been directly reinterpreted by contemporary Chinese painters, most notably Li Huayi 李華弋 (b. 1948), Zeng Xiaojun 曾小俊 (b. 1954) and Chan Shengyao 詹聖堯 (Master Shengyao; b. 1958). I have studied and personally viewed their recent artistic re-interpretations of Chen Rong's *Nine Dragons* scroll.

The results of my research have revealed the availability of significant sources previously not addressed in existing Western publications of Chen Rong's work. These sources include eulogies, poems and commentary about Chen Rong and his artwork by his contemporaries and later biographers. In this dissertation, I present transcription, translation and analysis of historical records and other extant documentation pertaining to Chen Rong's life and artistic activities, many of which have never before been translated into English. Literary analysis is used to compare existing records from Chen Rong's time to later written interpretations of his work by artists, curators, scholars and connoisseurs. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations and interpretations, and accompanying research of these translations, are my own.

To tell the story of Chen Rong, I begin with a chapter that outlines Chen Rong's biography. I offer new translations of eulogies and biographical commentaries regarding his life, including anecdotes by his contemporaries and by later writers regarding his character and

personality. In addition to tracing his career as a scholar-official, I discuss some existing references to his poetry and painting, and key information regarding his known specialty, dragon painting. In order to better understand the context of his dragons and their symbolic associations, the second chapter discusses the history and tradition of dragon imagery and dragon painting, and their various readings in Chinese culture, including a discussion of famed historical dragon painters. In the third chapter, I explain the content of Chen Rong's *Nine Dragons* scroll, with particular emphasis on the artist's inscriptions, and offer some new interpretations and adjustments to Tseng's original 1957 translation. The fourth chapter is a study of all of the other inscriptions on the *Nine Dragons* scroll. In addition to providing information about each subsequent writer, I offer adjustments to existing translations of these inscriptions. In this chapter, Emperor Qianlong's inscription and the eight verses by eight prominent officials of Emperor Qianlong's court are transcribed and translated for the first time. In the fifth chapter, I discuss the work of three contemporary Chinese artists, Li Huayi, Zeng Xiaojun, and Master Shengyao (Chan Shengyao) who have recently reinterpreted Chen Rong's *Nine Dragons* scroll directly. I discuss these recent artistic reinterpretations, and explore how each contemporary artist appropriates Chen Rong's original dragon motif differently within their own respective artistic philosophies, interests and creative practice. Following the conclusion, I include a detailed appendix of Chen Rong's extant paintings, with sources to image

reproductions of them and their recorded locations, in an attempt to expand upon the previous efforts of Osvald Siren and James Cahill (Appendix A: List of Paintings By and Attributed to Chen Rong that Exist Today). I have also compiled a list of paintings attributed to Chen Rong that have been mentioned in historical documents, which do not appear to be extant (Appendix B: List of Additional Paintings Attributed to Chen Rong Mentioned in Historical Texts).

This dissertation brings forward new information and interpretations regarding Chen's life, character, and his art, particularly in relation to his *Nine Dragons* scroll. It is hoped that with this research, a new understanding of the man behind the dragon may be illuminated.



## Chapter 1: The Life of Chen Rong

### Literati Painting

To begin to understand Chen Rong and his artistic contributions, a discussion of the literati painting tradition is necessary. Literati painting (*wen ren hua* 文人畫) or scholar-official painting is a term used to denote the painting that was produced by erudite Chinese officials. The development of the theory and practice of literati painting during the Song dynasty onwards was based upon earlier concepts. Literati painting cannot be easily defined by a particular style, but it has been often remarked that the art of the literati is that of an amateur, although this is debatable. While the style is indefinable, scholars have attempted to identify and distinguish what literati painting is not. Both Susan Bush's seminal study of literati writings on painting, followed by Michael Sullivan's early study of landscape painting in China, reference a definition for literati painters by the modern Chinese art historian T'eng Ku (Teng Gu) 滕固, who first defined the term in his study of Tang (618-907) and Song dynasty art published in the 1930s.<sup>9</sup> T'eng identified three characteristics which distinguished literati painters from professional painters and court academic painters:

---

<sup>9</sup> See Susan Bush, *The Chinese Literati On Painting: Su Shih (1037-1101) to Tung Ch'i-ch'ang (1555-1636)* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 1, and Michael Sullivan, *The Birth of Landscape Painting in China: The Sui and T'ang Dynasties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 44. Bush and Sullivan refer to Teng Ku, *Tang Song Hui Hua Shi* 唐宋繪畫史 [A History of Chinese Painting during the Tang and Song Dynasties] (Shenzhou Kuo Guang She, 1933).

1. artists who are scholar-officials are distinguished from artisan painters.
2. art is seen as an expressive outlet for scholars in their spare time.
3. the style of scholar-artists is different from that of academicians.<sup>10</sup>

The painting of scholar-officials was considered a separate entity and practice from professional painters and academic painters. Not only was the scholar-official status of the artist an important criterion, but even from as early as the Han dynasty, a person's character was intimately tied to the quality of one's brushwork, and therefore the quality of one's painting. The famous Tang dynasty art critic Zhang Yanyuan 張彥遠 (act. 9<sup>th</sup> century) in his *Li Dai Ming Hua Ji* 歷代名畫記 or "Record of Famous Paintings in History" expressed the view that only a superior man could be a good painter.<sup>11</sup> This idea was also strongly related to the quality of one's calligraphic brushwork. In Amy McNair's study of Tang dynasty calligrapher Yan Zhenqing 顏真卿 (*zi* 字 or courtesy name: Qing Chen 清臣; 709-785) in *The Upright Brush*, she explains that one's calligraphy is intimately tied to one's character, or what she calls "characterology," the belief that moral character can be deduced from an examination of a person's external manifestations, such as appearance, behaviour or aesthetic endeavors.<sup>12</sup> McNair reports incidences of philosophers in the

---

<sup>10</sup> Bush, *The Chinese Literati on Painting*, 1.

<sup>11</sup> See Zhang Yanyuan, *Li Dai Ming Hua Ji* 歷代名畫記 [Record of Famous Paintings in History] (Beijing: Ren Min Mei Shu Chu Ban She, 1963).

<sup>12</sup> See Amy McNair, *The Upright Brush: Yan Zhenqing's Calligraphy and Song Literati Politics* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998), 1.

Han dynasty like Wang Chong 王充 (27-97) who believed that “the greater a man’s virtue, the more refined his literary work,” and in the Tang period, the famous calligrapher named Liu Gongquan 柳公權 (zi: Cheng Xuan 誠懸; 778-865), when giving the Emperor a calligraphy lesson, said that “The use of the brush lies in the heart. If your heart is upright, then your brush will be upright.”<sup>13</sup> This is particularly applicable to McNair’s study of Yan Zhenqing, a scholar-official famous for his integrity, virtue and loyalty. Thus, Yan’s calligraphic style was seen as a model style for embodying an unbending virtuous character, where those who wished to express this virtuous aspect of their personality would emulate it. This concept has persisted through to present times; in the practice of Chinese art history, connoisseurship is not only a matter of understanding a painter’s style, but consists in believing that knowing someone’s art is “to know the man himself.”

In the sixth century, Xie He 謝赫 (act. 5<sup>th</sup> century) extolled the “Six Principles of Painting” or rather six elements that he deemed the qualifying characteristics of a successful painting. Aside from the other formal elements of a painting such as color usage and composition, the primary principle Xie describes is *qi yun* 氣韻 or “spirit resonance,” which refers to a painting’s vitality.<sup>14</sup> Scholars such as William Acker, Susan Bush,

---

<sup>13</sup> McNair, *The Upright Brush*, 2.

<sup>14</sup> Susan Bush and Hsio-yen Shih, *Early Chinese Texts on Painting* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 40. As translated by Bush and Shih, the Six Principles are “First,

Alexander Soper, James Cahill and Richard Vinograd have also translated this term as “spirit consonance.”<sup>15</sup> In this early period, great art was recognized as requiring a particular *qi* or intangible “vitality” or “spirit” in order to be successful. In the early Song period, this element of vitality of spirit was still considered a crucial quality to a painting's success. In Guo Ruoxu's 郭若虛 (c. 1020-after 1075) writing *Tu Hua Jian Wen Zhi* 圖畫見聞志 or “Experiences in Painting” (1075), as translated by Alexander Soper, Guo stated his belief that if a man's character is high, the *qi yun* must inevitably be high.<sup>16</sup> In other words, good art was founded on good character. Whereas in earlier times there had been a strong focus on representation, didacticism and formal likeness in painting, now in the Song dynasty, there was an emphasis on the role of the artist, the quality of the artist's character, and the expressive function of painting, as well as the capture of *qi yun* or “vitality of spirit.”

---

Spirit Resonance which means vitality; second, Bone Method which is [a way of] using the brush; third, Correspondence to the Object which means the depicting of forms; fourth, Suitability to Type which has to do with the laying on of colors; fifth, Division and Planning, that is placing and arrangement; and sixth, Transmission by Copying, that is to say the copying of models.”

<sup>15</sup> Scholars have translated Xie He's “Six Laws” differently. For a discussion of the differences in translation of the “Six Laws,” and in particular *qi yun* or “spirit resonance” by William Acker, Alexander Soper, and James Cahill, see Robert L. Thorp and Richard Vinograd, *Chinese Art and Culture* (New York: Harry Abrams, 2001), 177.

<sup>16</sup> According to Soper's translation of Guo Ruoxu's text, in Guo's discussion of *qi yun* or “spirit consonance,” wrote: “If one's ranking among men be lofty, it follows that his ‘spirit consonance’ cannot but be lofty. If his ‘spirit consonance’ be lofty, it follows that ‘animation’ cannot but be secured. So it has been said that ‘in the highest heights of the spiritual, he can deal with the quintessence.” See *Kuo Jo-Hsu's Experiences in Painting (T'u-hua chien-wen chih): An Eleventh Century History of Chinese Painting Together with the Chinese Text in Facsimile*, Trans. Alexander C. Soper (Washington, D.C.: American Council of Learned Societies, 1951), 15.

Literati painting theory first appeared at the end of the eleventh century during the Northern Song dynasty (960 – 1127) as presented in the writings of the famous poet, calligrapher and painter Su Shi 蘇軾, otherwise known as Su Dongpo 蘇東坡 (*zi*: Zi Zhan 子瞻, *He* Zhong 和仲; *hao* 號 or personal assumed name: Dong Po Ju Shi 東坡居士, Lao Quan Shan Ren 老泉山人, Kuang Fu Shi 狂副使, Tie Guan Dao Ren 鐵冠道人; 1037-1101).<sup>17</sup> Su Shi was the first to coin the term “scholar painting” by using the term *shi ren hua* 士人畫. With the rise of the scholarly class during the Song dynasty, a strong interest and emphasis on education and the arts developed, particularly the practice of poetry and painting. Su Shi was a high official of considerable influence, and he and his close associates such as the famous bamboo painter Wen Tong 文同 (*zi*: Yu Ke 與可; *hao*: Jinjiang Dao Ren 錦江道人, Xiao Xiao Ju Shi 笑笑居士, Shi Shi Xian Sheng 石室先生; 1019-1079), poet and calligrapher Huang Tingjian 黃庭堅 (*zi*: Lu Zhi 魯直; *hao*: Shan Gu 山谷, Fu Weng 涪翁; 1045-1105),

---

<sup>17</sup> For more information on the life, calligraphy, poetry and painting of Su Shi, see: Herbert Franke, ed., *Sung Biographies* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1976). Chen Gaohua 陳高華, *Song Liao Jin Hua Jia Shi Liao* 宋遼金畫家史料 [History of the Painters of the Song, Liao and Jin dynasties] (Beijing: Wen Wu Chu Ban She, 1984). Li Fushun 李福順, *Su Shi Lun Shu Hua Shi Liao* 蘇軾論書畫史料 [Su Shi on Painting and Calligraphy] (Shanghai: Shanghai Ren Min Mei Shu Chu Ban She, 1988). Ronald C. Egan, *Word, Image, and Deed in the Life of Su Shi* (Cambridge: Harvard Yen-ching Institute, 1994). Wen C. Fong, *Beyond Representation: Chinese Painting and Calligraphy Eighth-Fourteenth Century* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992). Alfreda Murck and Wen Fong, ed., *Words and Images: Chinese Poetry, Calligraphy and Painting* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991). Alfreda Murck, *Poetry and Painting in Song China: The Subtle Art of Dissent* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2000)

and painter and calligrapher Mi Fu 米黻 (Mi Fei 米芾; *zi*: Yuan Zhang 元章; *hao*: Nan Gong 南宮, Lu Men Ju Shi 鹿門居士, Xiang Yang Man Shi 襄陽漫士, Hai Yue Wai Shi 海岳外史; 1051-1107) set the cultural tone for the period. They often gathered together socially to engage in poetry and painting. According to Su, poetry and painting went hand in hand. In one of his most famous statements, on viewing a painting by the Tang dynasty painter Wang Wei 王維 (699-759), he wrote on the painting that “there is poetry in his painting and painting in his poetry.”<sup>18</sup> To Su, poetry was first, for he believed that a good painter was also a good poet and vice versa. Thus, to Su, a scholar-official could never be just a painter; rather, poetry and calligraphy were also fundamental skills to being a literatus, and these were skills that were particular to one’s social position.

Susan Bush’s study of *Chinese Literati on Painting* reports several incidences when Su Shi and his friends would gather at someone’s house, drink, compose poetry and paint together, where one person would compose a poem and write it on the page, while the other would add painted bamboo and rock.<sup>19</sup> At times, in their inebriation, they would even paint on the walls of the house.<sup>20</sup> As previously noted by T’eng Ku, for Su Shi and his circle, art was considered as an expressive outlet in their spare time. A distinguishing characteristic of literati painting at this time

---

<sup>18</sup> Alfreda Murck and Wen Fong, eds., *Words and Images*, xv.

<sup>19</sup> Bush, *The Chinese Literati On Painting*, 9.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

was the dismissal of formal likeness in painting, which Su Shi deemed as being an inferior quality reminiscent of professional painters. Su Shi is famous for writing “If anyone discusses painting in terms of formal likeness, his understanding is nearly that of a child.”<sup>21</sup> Su similarly lauds literati painting, also translated by Susan Bush: “Looking at scholars’ paintings is like judging the best horse of the empires, one sees how spirit has been brought out; but when it comes to artisan painters, one usually just gets whip and skin, stable and fodder, without a speck of superior achievement. After looking at a few feet or so one is tired.”<sup>22</sup> Thus, it is the capture of the “spirit” of the subject and not formal likeness that is most important. Su emphasizes the expressive function of art, where only exceptional men could achieve the spirit of things; in other words, achieve *qi yun* in painting. In the Song period, scholar painters perceived themselves as being different from professional painters and academic painters. The men of Su Shi’s circle were not guided by any particular style. They did not sell their work for money as they did not need to. Instead, painting was regarded as an elegant and refined pastime, and was appreciated as a reflection of a person’s personality and circumstances of the moment. The practice of literati painting incorporated an increased awareness of being of a certain level of education, social status and self-cultivation. From its beginnings in the

---

<sup>21</sup> Bush and Shih, *Early Chinese Texts on Painting*, 32.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 29.

Northern Song period, literati painting was perceived as an artistic practice engaged in by a particular elite social class based on their awareness of themselves and their roles; thus, their artwork was much more concerned with poetry and calligraphy than was that of professional painters.

The Northern Song dynasty was founded by Zhao Kuangyin 趙匡胤 or Emperor Taizu 太祖 (927-976; r. 960-976) who worked quickly to unify China after the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms Period (907-979). He established a strong central government in Kaifeng, today located in Henan province. In the eleventh century, under Emperor Shenzong 神宗 (1048-1085; r. 1067-1085) and Emperor Zhezong 哲宗 (1076-1100; r. 1085-1100), the central Song court began to become politically and ideologically divided, and increasingly focused on internal affairs and conflict amongst various political factions at court.<sup>23</sup> In the early twelfth century, Emperor Huizong 徽宗 (Zhao Ji 趙佶; 1082-1135; r. 1100-1126) succeeded to the throne after Zhezong's short reign and untimely death. Huizong was a great patron of the arts, and known for amassing a large imperial art collection, and for his own unique painterly and calligraphic style.<sup>24</sup> An avid painter, calligrapher, poet and collector, he was recorded

---

<sup>23</sup> One of the most prominent victims of such political rivalry at the time is Su Shi, who criticized the then Imperial Chancellor at the time, Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021-1086), and because of his criticism of Wang's reforms, was subsequently jailed and eventually exiled.

<sup>24</sup> For studies on Emperor Huizong and his art, see: Richard Barnhart, James Cahill, et al., *Three Thousand Years of Chinese Painting* (New Haven: Yale University Press; Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1997).



as being uninterested in attending to political matters and conflict at court. The fall of the Northern Song dynasty is often attributed to Huizong's neglect of his official duties in favor of his own religious and cultural pursuits.

Wanyan Aguda 完顏阿骨打 (1068-1123), leader of the Jurchen tribe (女真), a semi-nomadic people from northern Manchuria in northeast Asia, declared himself Emperor Taizu and established the Jin 金 dynasty (1115-1234), and proceeded to take over the Liao kingdom located to the north of the Song Empire. In 1125, the the Jurchen Jin declared war on the Northern Song empire, invaded China, and succeeded in capturing Kaifeng. With the fall of the Northern Song capital, Huizong first abdicated in favor of his eldest son, Emperor Qinzong 欽宗 (r. 1116-1127) and then submitted himself and most of his family as prisoners to the Jurchen Jin conquerors.<sup>25</sup> Huizong's other son, Prince Kang, escaped and fled to the south where he proclaimed himself Emperor Gaozong 高宗 (1107-1187; r. 1127-1162). The exiled court re-established itself at Hangzhou, and continued to rule as the Southern Song dynasty. China's political borders were secured south of the Yangzi River, and in exchange for peace with

---

Wen C. Fong and James C. Y. Watt. *Possessing the Past: Treasures from the National Palace Museum, Taipei* (New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc., 1996).  
Max Loehr, *The Great Painters of China* (New York: Harper and Row, 1980).  
Osvold Siren, *Chinese Painting: Leading Masters and Principles*. 7 vols. (New York: Ronald Press, 1956-58).

<sup>25</sup> Emperor Huizong and his son Emperor Qinzong remained as prisoners of the Jin until their deaths in 1135 and 1161 respectively.

the Jin, Gaozong agreed to cede large amounts of territory and pay monetary tributes. With the rise of Genghis Khan (c. 1162-1227) and his Mongol armies, peace between the Jin and the Southern Song rulers was short-lived. In 1215, the Mongols destroyed the Jin capital, forcing the remaining Jurchen Jin to move their capital from Beijing to Kaifeng, as they proceeded to move westward to conquer Turkistan in 1220. The Mongols, now having complete control over all of Central Asia, soon set their sights on the remaining neighboring Jurchen Jin Empire to their south. Viewing the Jin as a common enemy, the Song rulers allied with the Mongols against the Jin and defeated them in 1234. This alliance was again short-lived, for Kublai Khan (1215-1294), grandson of Genghis Khan, declared himself the founding emperor of the Yuan dynasty in 1271. After years of warfare, the Mongol conquest of the Southern Song ended in 1279 with a decisive Mongol naval victory at the Battle of Yamen 厓山海戰, off Guangdong province.<sup>26</sup>

As a scholar-official active at court during the tumultuous late Southern Song period, Chen Rong experienced war and political conflict firsthand. He also engaged in the cultural practice of literati painting, and was celebrated for his excellence at all three literati qualities of painting,

---

<sup>26</sup> Much research has already been done that provides understanding of the late Song and early Yuan period in its political and social context. See Jennifer Jay, *A Change in Dynasties: Loyalty in Thirteenth-century China* (Western Washington University, 1991); Richard Davis, *Wind Against the Mountain: the Crisis of Politics and Culture in thirteenth-century China* (Harvard University Press, 1996); and Robert P. Hymes and Conrad Schirokauer, ed., *Ordering the World: Approaches to State and Society in Sung Dynasty China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

poetry and calligraphy. Chen Rong's skill in dragon painting is widely recognized today, yet little is known of his biography and historical personality. While our knowledge of his life is quite incomplete, a few events are known about him and some particular personal traits were recorded. In constructing Chen Rong's biography, we may turn to the following sources:

1. Of Chen Rong's extant writings, we can turn to his inscriptions on his own paintings and poetry compositions, as they provide insights into his thoughts and opinions.
2. At least one authentic painting has survived (the *Nine Dragons* scroll), and adds great significance to what little we know about his painting style.
3. We may also turn to anecdotes by others about him, including writings about Chen Rong by his contemporaries, as well as writings composed and/or compiled after Chen Rong's own time, all of which provide useful information regarding factual biographical information as well as further insights into his personality.<sup>27</sup>

This chapter will attempt to reconstruct Chen Rong's biography. It is divided into sections to explore his life and known activities, his character,

---

<sup>27</sup> These documents include such sources as published *bi ji* 筆記 (notebooks), *za ji* 雜記 (miscellaneous writings) or *bi lu* 筆錄 (jottings, journals or memoirs). Many of these sources are recorded in later imperial records, and they not only document and confirm the existence and presence of Chen Rong's paintings, many of which no longer exist, but also contain additional anecdotes.

his art and his writings, and includes a discussion of his poetry and calligraphy.

### The Life of Chen Rong

Chen Rong 陳容 (*zi*: Gong Chu 公儲, *Si Ke* 思可; *hao*: Suo Weng 所翁) was active during the late Southern Song dynasty. His exact birth and death dates are still unconfirmed, although he is said to have died sometime after 1262.<sup>28</sup>

Chen is recorded as being a native of the city of Futang 福唐 (today known as Fuqing 福清) in Fujian 福建 province. Whether Chen Rong was actually a native of Futang (Fuqing) or of another city slightly more to the east, Changle 長樂, is debatable. Both cities are located within the prefecture of Fuzhou 福州 in the province of Fujian. Ming dynasty records list Chen as being from an area called *San shan* 三山 or the “Three Mountains,” and he is listed in more modern day Changle county records as being from *xi yu* 西域 or a Western outlying place or border of the city of Changle, located in eastern Fujian province.<sup>29</sup> In Ming dynasty records,

---

<sup>28</sup> Chen Rong's birth and death dates are inconclusive. According to Wu Tung, Chen Rong died sometime after 1262. See Wu, *Tales from the Land of Dragons*, 200. I suspect that this death date of “after 1262” was assumed in relation to Dong Sixue's inscription on the *Nine Dragons* scroll, which reports Chen Rong's presence at a garden party in 1261. See Chapter Four of this dissertation.

<sup>29</sup> See Xue Yingqi (*jin shi* 1535), *Jiajing Zhejiang Tong Zhi* (72 juan), juan 32 (Shanghai: Shanghai Shu Dian, 1990), 10; and Wang Zan 王瓚 and Cai Fang 蔡芳, *Hong Zhi Wen Zhou Fu Zhi* 弘治溫州府志 (Shanghai: Shanghai She Hui Ke Xue Yuan Chu Ban She, 2006), 169. The *Changle Xian Zhi* 長樂縣志 [Changle County records] (Fuzhou: Fujian

Chen's grave site is recorded to be located a half a *li* (a Chinese mile, approximately 1640 feet) away from the city of Changle, below Mount Longtai, a fact which serves as evidence that Chen was indeed a native of Changle.<sup>30</sup>

During the Song dynasty, the majority of officials were recruited by means of the Imperial examination system, which was designed to select the best administrative officials to serve the empire. The exams consisted of several stages: one had to pass the examinations held in the prefecture (*sheng yuan* 生員 degree), then those held in the provincial capitals (*ju ren* 舉人 degree), and finally, those held in the Imperial Palace (*jin shi* 進士 degree). The exams were held every three years, and only a very small number of candidates ever got as far as the capital. To come out first in the examination at the Imperial Palace was a major honor, and usually assured the degree holder a brilliant career. Fraud or favoritism of any kind in these examinations was discouraged owing to a policy of anonymity of candidates and by a system of triple correcting of papers.<sup>31</sup>

Preventative measures included a bureau of copyists who reproduced the

---

Ren Min Chu Ban She, 1993), 924, states:

“陳容字公儲，自號所翁，西隅人。端平二年進士，令平陽。”

“Chen Rong, sobriquet (courtesy name) Gong Chu, pseudonym Suo Weng, was a native of the west corner of Changle. In the second year of *duan ping*, he achieved the *jin shi* degree, and was assigned to Pingyang.”

<sup>30</sup> *Changle Xian Zhi* 長樂縣志 [Changle County records], 8 Vol. Ming Hong Zhi, 1503:

“陳所翁墓地在縣治上半里龍台山之下。”

<sup>31</sup> Jacques Gernet, *Daily Life in China on the Eve of the Mongol Invasion, 1250-1276*. Trans. H. M. Wright (London: Allen & Unwin, 1962), 65.

papers of the candidates, and two examiners who marked each one independently of each other, and a third examiner who gave the final decision.<sup>32</sup>

Chen Rong earned the *jin shi* or “presented scholar” degree, the highest level to be awarded to the most exceptional scholars in the Imperial civil service examinations, in the second year of *duan ping* 端平 or 1235 under Emperor Lizong 理宗 (Zhao Yun 趙昀; 1205-1264; r. 1224-1264).<sup>33</sup> From then on, Chen is recorded to have served in several administrative posts throughout his lifetime. During the *jia xi* 嘉熙 period (1237-1240), he served as an army magistrate in charge of the Linjiang area.<sup>34</sup> Chen also served as a magistrate for the *Guo zi jian* 國子監 or the Imperial College, the highest educational body in China’s traditional

---

<sup>32</sup> See Ichisada Miyazaki, *China’s Examination Hell: The Civil Service Examinations of Imperial China*, Trans. Conrad Schirokauer (New York: Weatherhill, 1976), for more information regarding each type of examination and the cheating precautions taken.

<sup>33</sup> *Changle Xian Zhi* 長樂縣志 [Changle County records] (Fuzhou: Fujian Ren Min Chu Ban She, 1993), 415. It is stated in Chang Bide 昌彼得, et al., *Song Ren Chuan Ji Zi Liao Suo Yin* 宋人傳記資料索引 [Index to Biographical Materials of Song Figures] (Taipei: Ding Wen Shu Ju Yin Xing, 1986), 2461, that Chen Rong received his *jin shi* degree in the third year of *duan ping*, however most sources agree that Chen Rong received his degree in the second year of *duan ping* or 1235.

<sup>34</sup> According to Tao Cheng 陶成 and Xie Yan 謝晏, *Jiangxi Tong Zhi* (Qing dynasty), in *Wen Yuan Ge Si Ku Quan Shu Dian Zi Ban* 文淵閣四庫全書電子版 (Complete Library of the Four Branches of Literature, Wenyuange Edition), hereafter SKQS, completed in 1782 (Hong Kong: Digital Heritage Publishing Limited), juan 61:

陳容,字公儲,長樂人,端平二年進士;嘉熙間,通判臨江軍,以才名受知理宗,人為國子監主簿。去後,人常思之 (Chen Rong, courtesy name Gong Chu, native of Changle, in the second year of *duan ping* he earned the *jin shi* degree. During the *jia xi* period, he served as a magistrate in charge of the Linjiang area army. His talent was well-known and eventually known by Emperor Lizong, who named him as a magistrate for the *Guozijian* (Imperial College of China). After he left that position, people often thought of him.) Chen Rong’s name is also listed with in the Linjiang army in the *Jiajing Linjiang Fu Zhi* 嘉靖臨江府志, (Shanghai: Shanghai Shu Dian, 1990), juan 49, 134.

educational system.<sup>35</sup> Following this he served as the district governor in Putian 莆田, a prefecture-level city located in eastern Fujian province. In addition, Chen is recorded for having built roads (辟道路), participated in high level government discussions and offered suggestions regarding disaster relief and welfare benefits for victims (議賑傘), and as having repaired places for learning and study (修學宮).<sup>36</sup> The highest official title he ever attained was *chao san dai fu* 朝散大夫 or “Grand Master for Closing Court,” which during the Song dynasty was a prestige title for fifth level cultural officials.<sup>37</sup>

While little is recorded regarding Chen Rong’s family history, brief mention is made in historical writings of Chen’s family members and associates who were more artistically inclined. Historical records indicate that Chen had a younger brother (弟) named Chen Heng 陳珩 (*zi*: Xing Yong 行用, *hao*: Ci Shan 此山), who, like his older brother, was also an

---

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Peng Yuncan 彭蘊燦 (Qianlong, Qing dynasty), *Li Dai Hua Shi Hui Chuan* 歷代畫史彙傳, in Lu Fusheng 盧輔聖, *Zhong Guo Shu Hua Quan Shu* 中國書畫全書 [Comprehensive Writings on Chinese Painting], hereafter ZSQS, (Shanghai: Shanghai shu hua chu ban she, 1992), v. 11, 173. This was originally stated in the Yuan dynasty in Xia Wenyan 夏文顏, *Tu Hui Bao Jian* 圖繪寶鑒 [The Precious Mirror of Pictorial Art] (Taipei: Taiwan Shang Wu Yin Shu Guan, Min Guo 45 (1956).

<sup>37</sup> Sun Chengze 孫承澤 (Qing dynasty), *Geng Zi Xiao Xia Ji* 庚子銷夏記, in ZSQS, v. 7, 796. For a comprehensive study of the institutional contexts of official titles and agency names in premodern China, see Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985). For the title of *chao san dai fu* 朝散大夫, see Hucker, 119.

accomplished painter.<sup>38</sup> He was similarly skilled at ink painting; his painted subjects included dragons in water, withered lotus, insects, fish, crab, magpie and bamboo, and his paintings were noted for their lifelike quality.<sup>39</sup> He served as an official in the position of *chao qing lang* 朝請朗 or “Gentleman for Court Discussion,” a sixth-level prestige title.<sup>40</sup> Later Qing dynasty historical records also make brief mention of Chen Yisuo 陳亦所 (dates unknown), who is recorded to be a fourth-generation descendent of Chen Rong and who was also good at painting dragons, having achieved Chen Rong’s brushwork style.<sup>41</sup>

In terms of known associates, Chen Rong is recorded to have been affiliated with another scholar-official named Ai Shu 艾淑 (*zi*: Jing Meng 景孟; *hao*: Zhu Po 竹坡).<sup>42</sup> Ai Shu was a native of Jianning 建寧 who is recorded to have earned the *jin shi* degree and was associated with the Imperial College in his early years. Ai was good at painting bamboo and

---

<sup>38</sup> Xia Wenyan 夏文顏 (Yuan dynasty, 14<sup>th</sup> century), *Tu Hui Bao Jian* 圖繪寶鑒 [The Precious Mirror of Pictorial Art], in ZSQS, v. 2, 876. However, according to another Yuan dynasty text by Zhuang Su 莊肅 called *Hua Ji Bu Yi* 畫繼補遺 [Supplement to ‘Painting, Continued’], Chen Heng was Chen Rong’s nephew (侄). See Zhuang Su 莊肅 (Yuan dynasty), *Hua Ji Bu Yi* 畫繼補遺 [Supplement to ‘Painting, Continued’], reproduced in in ZSQS, v. 2, 914.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* For a description of the title of *chao qing lang*, see Hucker, 188.

<sup>41</sup> Wang Chen 王宸 (Qing dynasty), *Hui Lin Fa Cai* 繪林伐材, in ZSQS, v. 9, 929.

<sup>42</sup> Texts which note Ai Shu and Chen Rong’s sharing of living / working space (同舍) include: Wu Dasu 吳大素 (Yuan dynasty), *Song Zhai Mei Pu* 松齋梅譜, in ZSQS, v. 2, 700; Zhu Mouyin 朱謀壘 (17<sup>th</sup> c., Ming dynasty), *Hua Shi Hui Yao* 畫史會要, in ZSQS, v. 4, 977; and *Shu Hua Shi* 書畫史 (Kangxi, Qing dynasty), in ZSQS, v. 7, 480.



his paintings of dragons also achieved fame. He served as a magistrate for the Jianning navy. It is noted that Ai and Chen Rong at one time shared a living or working space (同舍) together.<sup>43</sup> Historians have connected Ai Shu with that of another scholar-official named Mao Ruyuan 毛(茅)汝元 (*hao*: Jing Zhai 靜齋), also a *jin shi* degree holder, who was skilled at painting plum blossoms. In the Yuan period, Mao's plum blossoms and Ai's bamboo (毛梅艾竹) was seen by the people of Jianning as being representative of literati accomplishment (士彥).<sup>44</sup>

In the following section, I will provide an additional study of Chen Rong's character based upon early written records about Chen Rong while he was alive and after his death, which will illuminate more information regarding Chen Rong's career and personality.

### Chen Rong's Character

Chen Rong is perhaps best known as a master dragon painter, but less is known of his life and personality. With this section, I examine historical texts that illuminate aspects of Chen Rong's character. These texts have been alluded to in later compendia and writings on Chen Rong, but never fully translated into English and discussed in detail until now.

There are few texts that survive from Chen Rong's lifetime that mention his life and activities; the most extensive of these was written by

---

<sup>43</sup> Wu Dasu 吳大素 (Yuan dynasty), *Song Zhai Mei Pu* 松齋梅譜, in ZSQS, v. 2, 700.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

his contemporary, Li Maoying 李昉英 (zi: Jun Ming 俊明; hao: Wen Xi 文溪; 1201-1257) and published in the *Wen Xi Cun Gao* 文溪存稿 (“The Manuscripts of Wen Xi”), that is a eulogy of farewell to Chen Rong.<sup>45</sup> Li was a native of Guangzhou, who earned his *jin shi* degree in 1226 and was a famous poet and successful official during the Southern Song period. Li’s text is briefly mentioned but seldom discussed fully in association with existing English accounts of Chen Rong’s biography; however, it is the only text extant that appears to have been written portraying Chen Rong while he was still alive. Li’s eulogy about Chen Rong is a farewell to Chen due to Chen’s retirement from government and official-life. Li’s commentary is written as follows:

### 送陳公儲序

孟子謂：士之豪者，異於凡民。何謂“豪”？浩然之氣之充也！餒其中，而放於禮法外，若晉之人，是反中庸，無忌憚也！焉能“豪”？

陳君公儲，才氣豪一世，百家九流之說無不通；古今天下，事事物物，必究極所以然。長章巨篇，傑壯奇詭。酒酣氣張，急取墨汁，作千萬丈龍於尺素間，雲蒸雨飛，天垂海立，騰驤夭矯，幽怪潛見。疑前身豢龍氏，役風馭霆，盡護角鱗之族，故能逼真如此。能至相追隨，多可人，而學之所到，心之所存，人未必盡知之。蓋抱負偉而志未信，政屈，賈沉郁無聊時，方汗漫塵表，有軒軒自得意，胸中定力，茲可驗矣。詩焉，畫焉，論焉耳。一日，我知得與朝廷大論議，疏上累百不止，即走筆作歌，行乎也！其豪為剛，擁百萬重兵，止旗鼓分合之鑿；陰山之北，纓單於頸，凱還玉門關，即解衣盤薄，寫龍時意思也。其豪為勇，豪之裨人國，不細狂者，進取聖人所予，或以是歟！

---

<sup>45</sup> See Li Maoying 李昉英 (1201-1257), *Wen Xi Cun Gao* 文溪存稿 [The Manuscripts of Wen Xi] (Guangzhou: Jinan Da Xue Chu Ban She, 1994). *Wen Xi Cun Gao* was not published until well after Li’s death in 1294.

余於斯人，敬之深。其將如京師而來別也，語之曰：“君當蘧伯玉知非之年，而克己功夫過之。愛助何言？惟勤飯以厚氣之豪，疏飲以壽氣之豪！”

### **Eulogy for Seeing off Chen Gongzhu [Chen Rong]**

Mencius said: those who are of (senior ministerial class or scholar) and who have a heroic spirit are definitely different from ordinary people. What is the meaning of “heroic spirit”? The expanse around its vital energy is everywhere! Included among these, and yet outside beyond the rule of standard behavior, like the people of Jin (Shanxi province), where their conduct is against the Doctrine of the Mean, and without fear of consequences, how can one have “heroic spirit”?<sup>46</sup>

Mr. Chen Gongzhu has been talented and of heroic spirit his whole life, with a hundred of schools of thought<sup>47</sup> of which none were uncomprehended by him; from past to present and in this whole world, all things, surely he studied with ultimate thoroughness. Long written articles and his tremendous volume of writings are outstanding, robust, surprising, and unpredictable. Intoxicated and with an open spirit, urgently fetching ink, creating thousands and thousands of *zhang* [ten feet] in length of dragons within a few *chi* [a Chinese foot] of unadorned silk, with steaming clouds and blowing rain, as hanging down from heaven and standing in the sea, with postures of soaring upwards, prancing, gentle and vigorous, some are hidden, monstrous, concealed and visible. It is suspected that in a previous incarnation he raised dragons, with the power of charging the wind and controlling thunder, protecting the species of horns and scales of its kind to the utmost, and therefore able to paint them so realistically and lifelike in this way. To be able to achieve and portray likeness of this phenomenon has attracted many people’s appreciation; however, regarding his deep knowledge, and what is stored in his mind, many people are not

---

<sup>46</sup> I translate *Jin* 晉 to refer to Shanxi province, after the state of Jin that existed there during the Spring and Autumn Period. During the Southern Song dynasty, Shanxi became a part of the Jurchen Jin Dynasty. The character may be a specific reference to the Jurchen Jin dynasty who ruled Northern China during the Southern Song period; however, it should be noted that the Chinese character designated for the Jurchen Jin dynasty 金 is different.

<sup>47</sup> I translate *bai jia jiu liu* 百家九流 to mean the phrase 九流百家 or “the nine rivers and hundred schools of thought” a general reference for all various kinds of learning and schools of thought, such as Confucian, Daoist, yin and yang, Legalist, Logician, Mohist, and diplomatic ideas, etc.

fully aware of it. Thus with his great aspirations and ambitions not completely conceived or understood by others, in political circles, he was suppressed by Jia Chenyu [Jia Sida], and during that time [when Chen] was melancholic and bored, he showed his view of the universe beyond our human society, with high intentions and pleasing only himself, his mind with strength of concentration, from here it was proven precisely. He is an expert in poetry, painting, in doctrines and standard scholarship, et al. One day, I knew he was taking part in a major discussion of official business at court, and as a court official he presented his documents to the emperor in regards to the topic and went back and forth more than a hundred times; after his advisory was not accepted, he knew it was time for him to depart, [and] he wrote down a poetic essay to show his aspiration to his colleagues, then left his post. His “heroic spirit” was indestructible: once he was in charge of millions of military forces, [and] stopped a battlefield of banners and drums in disorder and separated by violent fighting; to the north of the Yin Mountains, he won a battle and wrapped a ribbon around his neck [symbolic of victory], and triumphantly returned to Jade Gate Frontier Pass [Yumen], he then removed his official cloth to retire with grandeur, powerful and free to his heart’s content, [and] his dragon paintings expressing this deep meaning. His “heroic spirit” was courageous, his heroic spirit benefited the people and the country, his character [was] unbothered by trifles and bold and unrestrained, furthermore his talent is given from the sage, is it or is it not already this way [like this]!<sup>48</sup>

For me regarding this person, I venerate him deeply. He is arriving at the capital to say farewell to me, and I will be saying to him: “You are around fifty years of age, the same as Qu Boyu, but your efficacy in self-discipline surpasses him. What more is there to say? Only [to wish that] by means of your daily eating to enrich your heroic spirit, by means of ordinary drinking (healthy living / moderation) [you give a] long span to your heroic spirit!

In this text, Li brings up several events which relate to Chen Rong’s character, most notably his refusal to work with Jia Sida. Jia Sida 賈似道 (*zi*: Shi Xian 師憲; *hao*: Ban Xian Lao Ren 半閒老人, Qiu He Weng 秋壑翁; 1213-1275) was a Southern Song dynasty Premier who is well

---

<sup>48</sup> I translate *sheng ren* 聖人 as “the sage,” in possible reference to Confucius.

known for both introducing reform and for exerting great power over the throne beginning in the mid-thirteenth century, but who has also been blamed by later historians for the fall of the Southern Song dynasty to the Mongols.<sup>49</sup> Jia's political career was launched by his sister who became a favorite concubine of the Emperor Lizong. As noted by the scholar Ding Chuanjing 丁傳靖 in his study of Song personalities, nearly all accounts about Jia were derogatory, accentuating his recklessness and debauchery and thus making him an enemy of the empire.<sup>50</sup> Many of these accounts found their way into his official biography in the *Song Shi* 宋史 or "History of the Song Dynasty." In historical records, Jia was noted for being particularly corrupt and cruel. Examples of his corruption include tales of his selling contraband salt for profit and of his reckless and greedy behavior when acquiring antiques for his personal collection.<sup>51</sup>

---

<sup>49</sup> *Song Ren Yi Shi Hui Pian* 宋人軼事彙編 or "a compilation of anecdotes of Song personalities" by Ding Chuanjing 丁傳靖, published in Shanghai in 1935, 70. For more on Jia Sidao, see Herbert Franke, ed., *Sung Biographies* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1976), 203-207.

<sup>50</sup> According to Ding Chuanjing, Jia, as premier, introduced an agricultural economy reform in 1263-64 as an emergency measure to meet the military need for supplies and to pay for the tribute money obligations due to invaders in the North. Big landowners, many of them military officers and government officials, were forced to sell their land over to the government over and above a certain designated amount. Strict auditing procedures were enforced in all government offices and the army. Jia thus incurred the displeasure and latent animosity of the entire wealthy elite.

<sup>51</sup> Ding lists several publications that describe Jia's corrupt behavior: *Xi Hu You Lan Zhi Yu* 西湖游覽志餘 or "Random notes on the West Lake" by Tian Rucheng 田汝成 "Jia was engaged in selling contraband salt for profit while he was a grand councillor. Hundreds of salt junks were anchored at the waterfront of Lin-an [modern Hangchow], all flying the grand councillor's household flags. A student of the imperial academy wrote a poem to ridicule his greed, which runs as follows: What did the rising tide bring last night to the shore?/ Junks loaded with the prime minister's salt, four score and more. / His honor's palate may require lots of seasoning, / But such monstrous

Regarding Chen Rong's success in officialdom, it has been alluded that despite having achieved the *jin shi* degree, Chen was unable to attain the high ranking as an official throughout his career, possibly due to having achieved the degree later in life.<sup>52</sup> It is true that while the attainment of the *jin shi* degree was no small feat, it was not always immediately followed by a brilliant appointment and career. According to Jacques Gernet's study of daily life in Hangzhou during the late Song dynasty, all the *jin shi* degree did was entitle the candidate to apply for a post in the government.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, attaining the *jin shi* degree at a middle age was not uncommon. Therefore, I propose, based on the information provided in Li's commentary, that it was not Chen's middle-

---

quantity is beyond reasoning" (724). The *Song Bai Lei Chao* 宋稗類鈔 or "Classified collections of Song anecdotes," 8 ch. (1689) by Pan Yongyin 潘永因 (active early Qing), records that "While Chia Ssu-tao was the chief councillor, he authorized his cohorts to collect curio and antique objects for him by every means. When he heard that the late General Yu Chieh (d. 1253) had a rare jade belt buried with him, Chia ordered to have the coffin opened and the belt retrieved. When an official Liu Chen-sun refused to surrender an exotic jade figurine to him, the stubborn official was dismissed from office. Many were incriminated simply for failing to offer their treasures to the chief councillor. To store his loot, Chia had a tower built in his compound which he visited once a month to view his new acquisitions. All the treasures in his collection, including ancient bronze vessels, famous paintings and calligraphy, jade carvings and rare curios were authenticated by one of his intimate advisors, Liao Chunyu (Liao Qunyu) 廖群玉 (d. 1275) who supplied the provenance for every item." (727)

<sup>52</sup> *Masterpieces of Chinese Painting from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston: Tang through Yuan Dynasties*, (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1996), 78. Wu Tung's entry on Chen Rong states, "The painter Chen Rong was a learned, ambitious but impoverished scholar from the southeast coast of China. By the time he earned the prestigious Jinshi degree in the second year of Duanping under Emperor Lizong (1235), he was already a middle-aged man. Unfortunately, it did not bring him prosperity. Instead, he ended up a district officer at Putian in his native Fujian province." (78-79)

<sup>53</sup> Jacques Gernet, *Daily Life in China*, 67.

age as previously hinted, but likely his refusal to work with Jia Sidao that stunted Chen's success in officialdom.<sup>54</sup>

Li's personal account of Chen Rong records not only Chen's achievements, but also his bright mind and high personal integrity. Li writes that Chen was exceedingly well-rounded in terms of knowledge, and was not only a talented painter of dragons but also a prolific writer. Further, Chen, believing he was right on an issue, passionately tried to advise and convince the emperor of what he believed to be the right course of action. The fact that Li says that Chen could argue his point over a hundred times, and thus in over a hundred different ways, says much of Chen's intelligence and reasoning abilities. In addition, Li alludes to Chen's military prowess in describing a battle at Yin Mountain in which he tied a ribbon around his neck, indicating his victory.<sup>55</sup> The Yin Mountains are a mountain range that forms the southern border of the eastern Gobi Desert of Inner Mongolia and the northern part of Hebei province. Following this victory, Chen is then said to have returned to Yumen (Jade Gate), the name of a pass located west of Dunhuang in today's Gansu province, one of the famous passes which connected Central Asia and China via the Silk Road.

---

<sup>54</sup> Unfortunately, it is unclear when Chen and Jia's interaction specifically took place.

<sup>55</sup> The Mongols conquered the Jin in 1215 and by 1220; they controlled all of Central Asia. The Song rulers allied with the Mongols against the Jurchen and defeated them in 1234. Once the Jurchen capital of Kaifeng was secured by the Southern Song, the alliance was broken. Chen Rong did not achieve the *jin shi* degree until 1235, which means that this battle at Yin Mountain was possibly a skirmish with Mongol forces, however this has yet to be confirmed.

Towards the end of the eulogy, Li compares Chen Rong to Qu Boyu 蘧伯玉, who was a virtuous minister in the state of Wei during the period of the Spring and Autumn Annals (770 – 476 BCE), and who was known for having left a state rather than participate in an uprising against his lord.<sup>56</sup> In the *Zuo Zhuan* 左傳 or “Zuo Commentary,” Qu is said to have resigned his post and left Wei because of the excesses of Duke Xiang, but then returned to serve under Duke Ling. Stories in the later Han dynasty text the *Huai Nan Zi* 淮南子 or “The Masters / Philosophers of Huainan” (dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE) speak of Qu’s virtue and observance of ritual which helped to both morally educate Duke Ling and dissuade other states from attempting to invade Wei. He is also mentioned in the Confucian analects as having known Confucius quite well.<sup>57</sup> In the Confucian Analects, Qu is mentioned several times, but his character as a virtuous minister is best illustrated in the following passage:

The Master said, “How upright was Historian Yu! When the state possessed the Way, he was straight as an arrow, and when the

---

<sup>56</sup> Duke Xiang of the State of Lu (r. 572-542 BCE), year 14 (558 BCE); see James Legge, *Zuo Commentary*, 1991d: 465. See James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*. 5 vols. Reprint (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960).

<sup>57</sup> In the Confucian Analects, it is said: “Qu Boyu sent a messenger to Confucius. Confucius sat down beside him and asked, “How are things with your Master?” The messenger replied, “My Master wishes to reduce his faults, but has not yet been able to do so.” After the messenger left, the Master said, “Now that is a messenger! That is a messenger!” See Edward Gilman Slingerland, *The Essential Analects: Selected Passages with Traditional Commentary* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2006), 43. According to Slingerland, this passage indicates that Confucius approved of Qu Boyu’s noble intentions through his commitment to further self-improvement, as well as Qu’s modesty. Also from this passage, Qu demonstrated that he understood the character of others and how to properly employ people, for example, the sending of the proper messenger who could accurately represent the intentions of his Master.



state lacked the Way, he was also straight as an arrow. What a gentleman was Qu Boyu! When the state possessed the Way, he served it; when the state lacked the Way, he was able to roll up his talents and hide them away.”<sup>58</sup>

Both Historian Yu 史魚 and Qu were virtuous ministers who served the state of Wei. Here, Confucius notes how Yu was famous for his unbending uprightness and Qu for his upright and more flexible nature, as more befitting a Confucian gentleman’s ideal. These passages indicate Qu’s righteous character to serve his lord and carry out his duties with modesty and integrity. Li Maoying’s equation of Chen Rong with Qu Boyu in relation to Chen’s retirement from court and Chen’s self-discipline indicates Chen’s righteous character and flexibility in understanding of himself.

Furthermore, based on his note, Li Maoying emphasizes that Chen was already close to 50 years of age at the time this text was written. Li’s birth and death dates are recorded firmly at 1201-1257 CE, and Li must still have been an official active at court to have witnessed Chen Rong’s participation in court discussion as well as to witness Chen’s departure from office. Li himself retired from court in 1255.<sup>59</sup> This indicates that

---

<sup>58</sup> Edward Slingerland, *The Essential Analects: Selected Passages with Traditional Commentary*, 177.

<sup>59</sup> Li Maoying was denounced by a palace eunuch, Dong Songchen (? – 1260), and from then on, Li retired to live in Guangzhou. The Song Emperor Lizong invited Li back to court but he refused, and subsequently the emperor bestowed upon him a *shu tang bian* 書堂匾 (large plaque) to be hung above his door inscribed with the characters “久遠,” which stands for “eternity” and “infinity.” These characters serve multiple possible messages: to honor Li’s loyal service to the court and thus to the country, to commemorate a long-lasting and positive relationship between Li and the emperor, and to send Li well wishes for a long life.

Chen Rong was in office and left office during Li's lifetime, or at least before 1255.

The next fullest biography on Chen Rong's life was published after he died, dated from the late Yuan dynasty in the *Tu Hui Bao Jian* 圖繪寶鑒 (1365) or "Precious Mirror of Painting," a compendium on painters and painting by the art historian Xia Wenyan 夏文顏 (active in the 14<sup>th</sup> century).<sup>60</sup> Xia's comments on Chen Rong are as follows:

陳容，字公儲，自號所翁，福堂人，端平二年進士，歷郡文學，倅臨江人，為國子監主簿，出守莆田。賈秋壑招致賓幙，無何；醉，輒狎侮之，賈不為忤。詩文豪壯。善畫龍，得變化之意。潑墨成雲，噴水成霧；醉餘大叫，脫巾濡墨，信手塗抹，然後以筆成之，或全體，或一臂，一首，隱約而不可名狀者，曾不經意而得，皆神妙。時為松竹云，作柳誠懸墨竹，豈即鐵鉤鎖之法歟？寶祐間，名重一時。垂老；筆力簡易精妙，絳色者；可並董羽。往往贗本，亦託以傳。

Chen Rong, courtesy name Gong Chu, personal assumed name Suo Weng, was a native of Futang, in the second year of *duan ping* he earned the *jin shi* degree, he became a local magistrate in Lijiang, served as a magistrate at the *Guo zi jian* (Imperial College), then he took up a new post as the governor of Putian. He was recruited as a guest by Jia Qiuhe [Jia Sida] to his tent. It did not take very long; [for Chen] became drunk, insulted him with disrespectful manners, and Jia did not get mad [at him]. [Chen's] poetry and literature was magnificent and heroic, [he was] good at painting dragons, [when painting dragons, he] achieved their transformations, [and] used the *po mo* ["broken ink"] method to paint the clouds, spraying water from the mouth to accomplish fog. Intoxicated and with a great shout, [he] loosened his robe, and freely spread and smeared ink with his hand, afterwards using a brush to finish it; either a whole body, or a leg or a head, vaguely and yet beyond description, almost effortlessly inconceivable and all truly miraculous and wonderful, is it possible within one's mind to achieve those of heaven? At times he would paint pine trees and

---

<sup>60</sup> For a detailed discussion of Xia Wenyan's life and his writing, see Deborah del Gais Muller's "Hsia Wen-yen and His T'u-hui-pao-chien (Precious Mirror of Painting)," *Ars Orientalis* 18 (1988): 131-148, and Chen Gaohua, "Xia Wenyan he Tuhui baojian," *Meishu Yanjiu*, no. 4 (1981): 81-83.

bamboo. He did bamboo ink painting similar to [that of] Liu Chengxuan [Liu Gongquan] - could it be the *tie gou shuo* [iron hook manner] brush stroke method? During the *bao you* period [1253-1258], he was quite famous for a period of time. As he approached old age, the strength of his brush was more simple, fine and delicate; his way of coloring could match with Dong Yu. There are a lot of fake paintings out there; some are trusted as authentic and passed down.

Xia's commentary on Chen Rong provides additional detail regarding Chen's activities, including Chen's interaction with Jia Sidao. Here, Xia describes that Chen Rong indicated his refusal to work with Jia by insulting him with disrespectful manners while drunk.<sup>61</sup> Perhaps most amazingly, despite this insult, Jia is recorded by Xia as having remained respectful of Chen. Whether or not Jia and Chen's interaction occurred in such a manner where Jia remained respectful of Chen is debatable, but Xia's noting of it concurs with Li Maoying's previous record of Chen and Jia's interaction. In addition to also celebrating Chen's painting skills, he mentions that Chen was famous for a while during the *bao you* 寶祐 period (1253-1258), an era name under the reign of Emperor Lizong (1224-1264). While Xia Wenyan does not say why Chen Rong was famous during this period, the dating of this period is particularly insightful, as it is the exact period that Li Maoying would have been active at court to witness Chen Rong's participation at court and retirement, or before Li himself retired in 1255. With this information, I speculate that it was sometime during this specific period that Chen had his advisory to the

---

<sup>61</sup> Whether Chen Rong was truly inebriated or whether he was pretending to be inebriated in order to act disrespectful on purpose is unconfirmed.

emperor rejected and whereupon he subsequently retired, and that this contributed to his fame at that time.

While few dates about Chen Rong are known for certain, a painting inscription by his contemporary indicates that Chen Rong was still alive and active in 1261. On Chen Rong's *Nine Dragons* scroll, Dong Sixue 董思學, a contemporary of the artist, wrote an inscription on the painting in 1306. Dong's inscription writes that "In the year of *xin yu* (1261), Suo Weng was in the Garden of Nine Streaked Pines. At twilight he created a painting of a pair of swords for Han Xing of Dong Shan. It was excellently done." Here, Dong's inscription records Chen Rong's attendance at a night banquet in 1261. In addition, Li Maoying's recounting of Chen Rong as being of 50 years of age at the time of Li's writing. Together, these dates indicate that Chen Rong lived to be over 60 years of age.

### Chen Rong's Painting

As stated by his contemporaries and later historians, Chen Rong is best known for the painting of dragons, and most of Chen Rong's extant paintings are of dragons in clouds and/or water. The Chinese dragon or *long* 龍, as an imaginary creature, is considered by Chinese artists historically to be one of the most difficult subjects to paint successfully, simply because one must be able to capture the likeness of a creature that has never been seen with the human eye. How does one capture the spirit of such a creature and translate that vision effectively to a wide

audience? Those who have been successful at tackling such a feat are highly recognized for their talent, as it is a unique ability. Chen Rong's skill in painting dragons is celebrated in almost all historical records that discuss his biography. As mentioned previously, his contemporary Li Maoying marveled at Chen's ability to portray dragons so well, suspecting of Chen "that in his previous incarnation he raised dragons, with the power of charging the wind and controlling thunder, protecting the species of horns and scales of its kind to the utmost, and therefore able to paint them so realistically and lifelike in this way." In the Yuan dynasty, we find direct discussion of Chen Rong's dragon painting by the art critic Tang Hou 湯垕 (c. 1250 – c. 1310) in his *Hua Jian* 畫鑒 or "The Mirror of Painting," written between the late 1280s and 1300s. Tang Hou was an official, painting collector and connoisseur. He was born before the fall of the Southern Song dynasty, and he spent most of his life in Hangzhou. His written observations in the *Hua Jian*, his most famous collection of writings, are one of the very few records available on early Yuan taste in paintings. As an official and through his association with the early Yuan elite, Tang was able to observe the artistic practices of the period. As observed in Diana Chou's comprehensive study of Tang Hou's biography and her translation of the *Hua Jian*, Tang comments upon ancient paintings and ideas pedagogically for the reader.<sup>62</sup> At this time, knowledge of painting and

---

<sup>62</sup> See Diana Yeongchau Chou, *A Study and Translation from the Chinese of Tang Hou's Huajian (Examination of Painting): Cultivating Taste in Yuan China 1279-1368* (Lewiston,

calligraphy was a specialty absolutely required by scholars. In the *Hua Jian*, Tang writes of Chen Rong:

畫龍深得變化之意……升者，降者，俯而欲噓者，怒而視者，踞而爪石者，相向者，相斗者，乘雲躍霧戰沙出水者，以珠為戲而爭者，或全體髮見，或一臂一首隱約而不可名狀者，曾不經意而皆得神妙，豈胸中自得于天者耶。

When painting dragons [Chen Rong] deeply achieved its transformations ...those elevated, those descended, bowing down and desiring to hiss, angry and watching, squatting with claws grabbing rock, facing one another, fighting with one another, traveling in the clouds, jumping in mist, battling in sand and emerging from water, playing with the pearl and competing, [one] might see the entire body, or a leg, or a head, dimly defined and beyond description, almost effortlessly inconceivable and truly divine. Is it possible within one's mind to achieve those of heaven?<sup>63</sup>

Interestingly, the art historian Xia Wenyan, when discussing Chen Rong's painting of dragons in the *Tu Hui Bao Jian* (1365) later used almost the

---

NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2005). As observed by Chou, in his writings, Tang drew on Tang dynasty and Five Dynasties models, praising and promoting Tang models and the landscape painting of Wang Wei and Dong Yuan. Tang's nostalgia for antiquity was very much in line with the artistic views of the Yuan period, where "notions of antiquity" or *gu yi* 古意, and the movement of the "return to the past" or *fu gu* 復古, were important elements of Yuan literary theory and artistic taste. In fact, during the Yuan dynasty, to reference a work of art in terms of *gu yi* was to praise it.

<sup>63</sup> See Tang Hou, *Hua Jian* 畫鑒 [The Mirror of Painting] (Beijing: Ren Min Mei Shu Chu Ban She, 1959). Diana Chou's English translation of the whole passage in the *Hua Jian* is as follows: "In recent times, Chen Rong, a peer of Confucian scholars, profoundly captured the transformations of dragons. He splashed the ink into the clouds and moistened it with water to create fog. When he was drunk he shouted, took off his hat, dipped it in ink and freely sketched on the paper, then completed the painting with a brush afterward. [His dragons were] either ascending or descending, claws down and ready to blow air, angrily staring, or squatting down on a rock. Some either face each other, or fight with each other, or ride on clouds, or jump on fog, or battle in the sand coming out from water. Or they are battling for competing for pearls, or exposing their whole bodies, or exposing one leg, or one head, or slightly suggesting their bodies without a clear picture. Although all these were done with abandon, Chen Rong captured their marvels. Did Chen Rong have [the essence of] nature in his chest?" Chou, *A Study and Translation from the Chinese of Tang Hou's Huajian*, 134.

exact same wording as Tang Hou to describe Chen Rong's skill in dragon painting:

“[He] used the *po mo* (“broken ink”) method to paint the clouds, spraying water from the mouth to accomplish fog, intoxicated and with a great shout, loosened his robe, and freely spread and smeared ink with his hand, afterwards using a brush to finish it; either a whole body, or a leg, or a head, dimly defined and beyond description, almost effortlessly inconceivable and all truly miraculous and wonderful, is it possible within one's mind to achieve those of heaven?”

The words of Tang Hou's original description of Chen Rong's dragon paintings have pervaded many subsequent writings on the subject, and were repeated in later Ming and Qing dynastic biographical entries of Chen.<sup>64</sup> As described by the writers Li, Tang and Xia, Chen Rong's portrayal of the dragon is both elegant and robust. His signature element was that he portrayed them as partially hidden in clouds and water, visually achieving a sense of their transformative nature. Their writings reveal information regarding Chen Rong's painting process, most notably that he was intoxicated and would paint energetically and in high spirits. He would engage in multiple brushwork techniques to paint dragons, including the *po mo* or “broken ink” technique, and that he would then use

---

<sup>64</sup> Later Ming and Qing biographical entries on Chen Rong frequently appropriated Tang's same descriptive phrases of “a head, a tail, dimly defined without description” (或一臂一首隱約而不可名狀者) to describe Chen Rong's dragon painting. Examples include:

*Shu Hua Shi* 書畫史 (Kangxi, Qing dynasty), in ZSQS, v. 7, 479.

Liang Zhangju 梁章鉅 (1775-1849), *Tui An Suo Cang Jin Shi Shu Hua Ba Wei* 退庵所藏金石書畫跋尾, in ZSQS, v. 9, 1071.

Feng Jin 馮津 (Qing dynasty). *Li Dai Hua Jia Xing Shi Pian Lan* 歷代畫家姓氏便覽, in ZSQS, v. 11, 21.

Lu Jun 魯駿 (Qing dynasty). *Song Yuan Yi Lai Hua Ren Xing Shi Lu* 宋元以來畫人姓氏錄, in ZSQS, v. 13, 487.

his brush to finish off the dragon forms. Chen Rong's dragons' bodily forms were almost never fully delineated, with an appendage or a head partially hidden in cloud or water in some manner. Furthermore, the writers list more unconventional painting techniques such as smearing ink with his hands and spraying ink from his mouth.

According to Xia Wenyan, Chen Rong also painted pine trees and bamboo, and he did bamboo ink paintings in a similar style to Liu Gongquan, particularly in the employment of an “iron hook” brushstroke method. As mentioned previously, Liu Gongquan 柳公權 was a famed late-Tang dynasty calligrapher. He is best known for his regular script, characterized by a strong rigid brushstroke-style, sometimes described as slim and “boney” due to its exaggerated angularity, while still powerful and bold. Chen's later coloring style is noted for being similar to that of Dong Yu 董羽 (*zi*: Zhong Xiang 仲翔; act late 10<sup>th</sup> century) of the Northern Song, who was also famous for his paintings of dragons and water. Dong's dragons were known for their lifelike air and he achieved fame for them during his own time. The Song dynasty art critic Guo Ruoxu 郭若虛 in his “Experiences in Painting” 圖畫見聞志 notes that Dong was “Good at painting dragons in water and ocean fish.....Taizong commissioned/ordered painting of water dragons on the four walls of the Duan Gong pavilion...One day [the emperor] went up the tower of the pavilion with an imperial concubine, at the time the emperor was still



young, he saw the painted walls and was frightened and shouted loudly...”

(“善畫龍水海魚. ....太宗嘗令畫端拱樓下龍水四壁... 一日上與嬪御登樓, 時皇子尚幼, 見畫壁驚畏啼呼...”), a testament to the realism of Dong’s

dragons. Emperor Huizong’s *Xuan He Hua Pu* 宣和畫譜, the imperial painting catalogue of the Xuan He era (1119-1125) during the Northern Song period, states: “Of this dynasty’s Dong Yu, his dragons in water achieved fame in this time, truly the last superb brush among the most current dynasty’s artists.” (“本朝董羽, 遂以龍水得名于時,

實近代之絕筆也。”) In the Yuan dynasty, Tang Hou commented that:

“[Dragons] was the specialty of Dong Yu, who was not limited by formal likeness. Mi Yuanzhang said ‘Dong Yu’s dragon [looks] like a fish, and Zhuanggu’s dragon [looks] like a centipede.’ This is a true saying.”<sup>65</sup>

Already by the Yuan dynasty, Chen Rong’s fame for his dragon paintings was followed by others, such as the Buddhist monk painter Wei Han 僧維翰 (*zi*: Gu Qing 古清).<sup>66</sup> In the Ming dynasty, an artist named Zhang Dehui 張德輝 (*zi*: Qiu Chan 秋蟾; *hao*: Yun Chao Lao Ren 雲巢老人) was said to have painted dragons so well that he followed in the

---

<sup>65</sup> Chou, *A Study and Translation from the Chinese of Tang Hou’s Huajian (Examination of Painting)*, 133.

<sup>66</sup> Xia Wenyan 夏文顏 (Yuan dynasty, 14<sup>th</sup> century), *Tu Hui Bao Jian* 圖繪寶鑒 [The Precious Mirror of Pictorial Art], in ZSQS, v. 2, 893. This is also mentioned in *Shu Hua Shi* 書畫史 (Kangxi, Qing dynasty), in ZSQS, v. 7, 492.

footsteps of Chen Rong.<sup>67</sup> Today, the significance of Chen Rong's dragon paintings is exemplified by the fact that numerous museums hold works attributed to Chen Rong in their collections in the United States (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Cleveland Museum of Art, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution, Princeton University Art Museum), China (Palace Museum in Beijing, Guangdong Provincial Art Museum) and Japan (Tokugawa Museum, Fujita Museum) (See Appendix A), and many paintings attributed to Chen Rong are listed in late dynastic historical records, though no longer extant (See Appendix B).

Over time, Chen's famed dragon works have produced a proliferation of possible fakes and forgeries. Xia Wenyan observes that of Chen Rong paintings in his time, "There are lots of fake paintings out there, some are trusted as authentic and passed down." (往往贗本, 亦託以傳。) Thus, the question remains as to how a Chen Rong painting can be authenticated. In the *Hua Ji Bu Yi* 畫繼補遺, a collection of painters' biographies compiled in 1298 by Zhuang Su 莊肅 (active in the early Yuan dynasty), Zhuang writes that to identify a Chen Rong painting was to see if it included an inscription by the artist. Zhuang wrote of Chen Rong:

---

<sup>67</sup> Zhu Mouyin 朱謀壘 (17<sup>th</sup> c., Ming dynasty), *Hua Shi Hui Yao* 畫史會要, in ZSQS, v. 4, 564. This information about Zhang in relation to Chen Rong's brushwork style is also mentioned in *Shu Hua Shi* 書畫史 (Kangxi, Qing dynasty), in ZSQS, v. 7, 504; and Xu Qin 徐沁 (Ming dynasty), *Ming Hua Lu* 明畫錄, in ZSQS, v. 10, 26.

善畫水龍，得變化隱顯之狀，罕作具體，多寫龍頭。每畫成，輒自題跋，他人不可假也。

[He was] good at painting water dragons, [he] achieved their various hidden and illustrious forms, [he] rarely made specific the whole body form, [and] painted in more detail the dragon's head. After every painting was completed, he would often write a postscript (inscription) himself, another person could not fake it.<sup>68</sup>

Thus, according to this early text, one of the ways to determine the authenticity of a Chen Rong painting is to identify whether a poetic inscription by the artist is included with the scroll. While at times paintings become separated from their inscriptions, it would seem that according to this criterion, only the *Nine Dragons* scroll, currently in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston can be confirmed; this painting will be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter Three of this dissertation.

### Chen Rong's Calligraphy and Poetry

As already mentioned, Chen Rong excelled at the three literati perfections of painting, poetry and calligraphy. Calligraphy has historically been held in high esteem in the Chinese fine art tradition, as an expression that is pleasing aesthetically yet not always legible in its cursive form. It is commonly believed that one's calligraphy expresses the personality of the writer, revealing one's inner character. Thus, skillful brushwork, the structure of each character, and the overall physical presence of the word is essential to its admiration. The historical

---

<sup>68</sup>See Zhuang Su 莊肅, *Hua Ji Bu Yi* 畫繼補遺 [Supplement to 'Painting, Continued'] (Beijing: Ren Min Mei Shu Chu Ban She, 1963).

development of script styles by no means indicates a sense of evolutionary development; rather, Chinese calligraphers practiced, and still practice, all five principle calligraphic styles of seal, clerical, regular, semi-cursive and cursive.

The origin and early development of the Chinese writing system is based on a mixture of traditions. According to ancient Chinese mythology, a legendary figure named Cang Jie 倉頡, a royal scribe at the court of Huang Di 黃帝 (r. 2697 – 2597 BCE), or the Yellow Emperor, invented Chinese characters and the Chinese writing system for the purposes of recording information.<sup>69</sup> The earliest Chinese script style dates back to the Shang dynasty (c. 1600-1046 BCE), when Shang kings used engraved tortoiseshell and animal bones in divination rituals in order to communicate with their deceased ancestors. Thus, this early script became known as “shell and bone script” or *jia gu wen* 甲骨文, also referred to as “oracle bone script.” Following the development of shell and bone script was the development of a calligraphic script known as “seal script” or *zhuan shu* 篆書, which was used for inscriptions on bronze ritual vessels and seal engraving. Seal script can be divided into two styles: “great seal script” or *da zhuan* (大篆), which dates to the Zhou period during the Warring States period (c. 1100 BCE – 256 BCE), and “small

---

<sup>69</sup> Cang Jie was said to have had four eyes. His writing system was described as based on his observations of birds’ claws and animal footprints left upon the ground, their images forming elementary pictographic characters. See William G. Boltz, *The Origin and Early Development of the Chinese Writing System* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1994).

seal script” or *xiao zhuan* (小篆), which was a later Qin dynasty (221 - 206 BCE) variant. “Seal script” is now so named based on its later use almost exclusively on engraved seals, and features complex pictograph-like characters of round strokes and even thickness of line. During the Qin and Han dynasties, “clerical script” or *li shu* 隸書 was gradually developed and refined from a more informal draft-like appearance to an official script for imperially sanctioned texts and records. Following the proliferation of “clerical script,” three other script styles developed and were practiced: “regular script” or *kai shu* 楷書, a semi-cursive “running script” or *xing shu* 行書, and a cursive “grass script” or *cao shu* 草書. “Regular script,” sometimes referred to also as “standard script,” was first developed during the Han dynasty by its first master Zhong Yao 鍾繇 (151-230). Its appearance is squarer and less rectilinear than clerical script, a combination of clerical script with a more rapid abbreviated style, and it gradually replaced clerical script as the primary formal script. In contrast, “grass script,” otherwise referred to as “cursive script,” is rough, abbreviated and written rapidly. As a shorthand form of writing commonly used for personal letters, it has its own stroke order and forms. Personal by nature, cursive script allows for the fullest form of free artistic and individual expression. “Running script” or “semi-cursive script” departs from the strict formality of regular script, while retaining some of the structural looseness of grass script, thus combining the legibility of regular

script with the speed and informality of cursive script.

Practice of all different scripts and the styles of ancient master calligraphers was necessary in order to create one's own individual style. As calligraphy flourished as an art form throughout the Six Dynasties Period (220-589), several critical and theoretical texts emerged.<sup>70</sup> During the Tang dynasty, writer and connoisseur Zhang Huaiguan 張懷瓘 (fl. ca. 714-760) articulated broad theories about calligraphy. Zhang distinguished components of the written language from the character or *zi* 字, and the act of writing or *shu* 書, as well as elaborated upon the development of the various scripts. In Wen Fong's study of the history of Chinese calligraphy, he quotes from the *Jiu Shi* 九勢 or "The Nine Forces," a treatise on calligraphy traditionally attributed to Han dynasty calligrapher Cai Yong 蔡邕 (132-192) concerning proper calligraphic technique:

Calligraphy began with nature. When nature was born, the principles of yin and yang were established. When yin and yang were established, forms [*xing*] and forces [*shi*] emerged. By "hiding the head" and "protecting the tail" [of each stroke], the calligrapher stores power in each character. The action of the brush and the transmitting of force through that action express the beauty of the muscle and skin [of calligraphy].<sup>71</sup>

---

<sup>70</sup> Robert E. Harrist, "Reading Chinese Calligraphy" in Robert E. Harrist, *The Embodied Image: Chinese Calligraphy from the John B. Elliott Collection* (Princeton: Princeton University with Harry N. Abrams, 1999), 3. These treatises include categorizing script types, discussions of connoisseurship, notes on techniques, and ranking of calligraphers.

<sup>71</sup> Wen Fong, "Chinese Calligraphy: Theory and History," in Harrist, *The Embodied Image*, 34. While the "Nine Forces" essay is attributed to the late Han dynasty calligrapher Cai Yong (132-192), Fong notes that it was most likely composed during the late sixth or early seventh century.

In this short passage, calligraphy is described as having an inherent metaphysical dimension in its appearance and practice, and as embodying a creative transcendental quality. One could even compare Cai's description to that of a dragon as well. Fong observes a Daoist influence in these ideas, highlighting how calligraphy is likened to constant and spontaneous creation and harmonious union with the Dao, but also how the ideas of "muscle and skin" connects the calligrapher to the written word we see.<sup>72</sup> Scholars such as Lothar Ledderose have similarly discussed Daoist elements in the development of early Chinese calligraphy, where religious Daoism played a large role in the writers' lives, and where particular calligraphic scripts were utilized in the writing of Daoist supernatural talismans or *fu* 符.<sup>73</sup> These talismans of sacred types of scripts are not intelligible to mortals. Their purpose was to draw upon the power of heavenly bodies and spirits to assist the world in regulating matters of life and death, fortune and misfortune. They were written in a state of deep sincerity and in total communion with Daoist deities. Thus, Chinese calligraphy also came to be inextricably linked to the human body

---

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. Fong writes: "In the above quote, the physical act of applying brush to paper is compared to spontaneous creation. The blank page is the undifferentiated oneness of the universe before creation; the first stroke, born of the union of brush and ink, establishes on the paper a primary relationship between yin and yang; and each additional stroke creates new yin-yang relationships, until the whole is reunited into the harmonious oneness that is Tao, the way of the universe. The introduction of the terms 'head and tail' and 'muscle and skin' in the description strengthens the physical correlation between the written character and the calligrapher who produced it." (34)

<sup>73</sup> See Lothar Ledderose, "Some Taoist Elements in the Calligraphy of the Six Dynasties," *T'oung Pao* 70 (1984): 246-278.

and was perceived as a very direct and spiritual vessel of not only individual self-expression, but of greater heavenly forces.

Aside from his calligraphy on the *Nine Dragons* scroll, other examples of Chen Rong's calligraphy are very few. There is an example of calligraphy attributed to Chen Rong currently in the collection of the Palace Museum, Beijing (Figure 19).<sup>74</sup> The scroll bears a poem in a wild cursive script or "grass script." The calligraphic style on the scroll cannot be compared to that of Chen Rong's *Nine Dragons* scroll as it is in a completely different script style. The inclusion of an inscription on the back of the scroll by Ye Gongchuo 葉恭綽 (Ye Gongzhuo; zi: Yu Fu 裕甫, Yu Hu 譽虎; hao: Xia An 遐庵; 1881-1968), a painter, collector and illustrious historical personality, has caused others say that the scroll is indeed authentic.<sup>75</sup> However, the scroll bears no other inscriptions or collector's seals, and thus it may be unreliable to say that the original hand is by Chen Rong.

By all historical accounts, Chen Rong is recorded as being a prolific writer and poet. Another example of Chen Rong's poetic writings, aside from on the *Nine Dragons* scroll (to be discussed in Chapter Three), is a postscript on the stele of Zhang Xiaoceng's 張孝曾 father, Zhang Shaoshi

---

<sup>74</sup> See Wang Naidong 王乃棟, *Zhong Guo Shu Fa Mo Ji Jian Ding Tu Dian* 中國書法墨跡堅定圖典. (Beijing: Wen Wu Chu Ban She 文物出版社, 1994).

<sup>75</sup> Ye Gongchuo organized the First National Art Exhibition in 1929 and established the Shanghai Museum in 1933, and was the first president of the Beijing Chinese Painting Institute.



張少師 that was recorded by the Southern Song dynasty poet, historian, painter and calligrapher Zhou Mi (*zi*: Gong Jin 公謹; *hao*: Cao Chuang 草窓, Ping Zhou 贛州, Si Shui Qian Fu 四水潛夫, Ping Yang Lao Ren 屏陽老人, Hua Fou Zhu Shan Ren 華否注山人; 1232-1298).<sup>76</sup> Zhang Shaoshi, with Hong Zhongxuan 洪忠宣, were captured by the Jurchen Jin state, and were both later released and returned home, but then both were captured again by Qin Hui 秦檜 (1090-1155), a Song dynasty official said to have betrayed the Military General Yue Fei 岳飛 (1103-1142). General Yue Fei is best known for leading the defense of the Southern Song against the Jurchen-ruled Jin Dynasty in northern China, before being put to death by the Southern Song government under the influence of Qin Hui. On Zhang Shaoshi's grave stele, Chen is recorded to have written the following poem:

流離區脫，視死如飴，君子有性焉，不謂命也！  
絕漠來歸，忠不見錄，君子有命焉，不謂性也！

暨檜殞，金亡，忠宣少師二公如生，故曰：知性與命，則知天矣！

Forced to live as a refuge from region to region and eventually to escape,  
To regard death as tasting something sweet [to not be afraid of death],  
A gentleman of noble character has this quality of unchanging,  
[This] cannot be deemed his fate!

Having lived under desperate conditions and neglect and then having  
returned,  
[His] loyalty was not recorded in historical documents,  
A gentleman of noble character has this kind of fate,

---

<sup>76</sup> Recorded in the Southern Song dynasty text "Elegant Conversations of the Hao-Ran Studio" 浩然齋雅談 by Zhou Mi 周密, in SKQS, Wenyuange edition. For the biography of Zhou Mi, see Herbert Franke, ed., *Sung Biographies*, 261-268.

[This] cannot be deemed his inner nature!

After Qin Hui passed away and the Jin Dynasty perished; Zhong Xuan and Shao Shi lived as immortals, thus it is stated here: to know the quality of one's inner nature and fate, then one knows heaven [the true fact of the universe]!

In this poem, Chen praises the loyalty and noble character and mourns the loss of Zhang Shaoshi, who was wrongfully betrayed by the official Qin Hui. Thus, Chen indicates his own belief in one's ability to and duty to carry oneself with honor and integrity.

#### Conclusion

Chen Rong, as a scholar-official and painter active during the late Song, has been accurately classified as a literati artist. Chen Rong's character has been portrayed as one of the utmost integrity. He was celebrated in his time as a model Confucian gentleman and praised not only for his skill in painting, but also for his deeply knowledgeable and brilliant mind. His righteous and upright character has rarely been discussed by art historians; it is hoped that with this study we can now enrich our current understanding of him with this information.

## Chapter 2: Brief Overview of the History of the Chinese Dragon

The Chinese dragon or *long* 龍 is a unique symbol in Chinese art, mythology and culture. Unlike other scaly insects or other “real-world” animals, the dragon is a supernatural beast that has been imagined, mythologized, divinized and spiritualized; a symbol strongly associated with imperial power and supernatural transformation. As such, from ancient times until now, the dragon’s painted representation has remained popular and undergone many developments in terms of its visual form. In this chapter, I offer a brief historical overview of the significance of the dragon throughout Chinese history. The chapter is divided into four sections: In the first section, I discuss the earliest appearances and representations of the dragon in ancient China and some of the early ideas, mythology and folklore surrounding it; the second section discusses the dragon’s role in relation to historical ritual and spiritual practice; the third section discusses the development and expansion of the dragon’s artistic visual representation and interpretation from its early understanding through to the Qing dynasty; and the fourth section offers a brief history of selected famous dragon painters in Chinese history. Although not a complete textual, visual and decorative history of the Chinese dragon, this chapter is intended to illustrate some of the many roles of the dragon in Chinese art, ritual, culture and history in order to provide a framework for the general representation of the dragon and

Chen Rong's contribution to the dragon's visual representation and development.

## Section 1: First Depictions: Early Ideas and Expressions of the Dragon

### 1.1. *Early Legend*

Dragons and dragon-like creatures play prominent roles in Chinese folklore and mythology, and are perhaps the most common mythical animals mentioned in ancient texts. Dragons appear in the mythological Huang Di 黃帝 or Yellow Emperor's reign (fl. 26<sup>th</sup> century BCE). The Yellow Emperor is more understood as a mythical god than a real ruler of the prehistoric Chinese nation. He is included among the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors 三皇五帝, a group of mythological rulers in ancient China who used their abilities to help create mankind and impart essential skills and knowledge. The Three Sovereigns, or "Three August Ones" 三皇 are generally referred to as Fu Xi 伏羲 (c. 29<sup>th</sup> century BCE), sometimes referred to as Bao Xi 包犧, Nu Wa 女媧 and Shen Nong 神農 (c. 28<sup>th</sup> century BCE), and the Five Emperors were referred to as the Yellow Emperor (Huang Di), Zhuan Xu 顓頊, Emperor Ku 嚳, Emperor Yao 堯 and Emperor Shun 舜.<sup>77</sup> Zuo Qiuming 左丘明, a court writer in the State of Lu and contemporary of Confucius during the Spring and Autumn

---

<sup>77</sup> Fu Xi was the mythical creator of fishing, trapping and writing; Nu Wa was the mythical creator of humans, and Shen Nong was the mythical creator of agriculture.

Period (770-476 BCE), in the *Commentary on the Spring and Autumn*

*Annals* 左氏春秋, records that:

In the old days, Huang Di took the cloud as his symbol and became the master of clouds, with Cloud as his name. Yan Di took fire as his symbol and became the master of fire, with Fire as his name, Gong Gong took water as his symbol and became the master of Water, with Water as his name. Da Hao took the dragon as his symbol and became the master of dragons, with Dragon as his name. When my [Yan Zi's] forefather Shao Hao became established, a phoenix alighted on the spot. He took the bird as his symbol and became the master of birds, with Bird as his name.<sup>78</sup>

Thus, from early mythological tales of the beginnings of Chinese civilization, the Chinese dragon served as a symbol of great creative and supernatural power.

## 1.2. *Divination and Rain Rituals*

Dragons played an important role in early divination practices. Fu Xi, who is also said to have been responsible for having devised a record keeping system of “knotted cords” or *jie sheng* 結繩, was also most famously known for creating the Eight Trigrams or *ba gua* 八卦, which were and are still used for divinatory purposes as described in the Book of Changes or *Yi Jing* 易經. In creating the *ba gua*, Fu Xi tried to bring all things in heaven and earth into a simple system of notation by developing eight combinations of trigrams to represent heaven, earth, thunder, wind, water, fire, mountains and rivers respectively. Possibly one of the earliest

---

<sup>78</sup> Yang Xin, Li Yihua and Xu Naixiang, *The Art of the Dragon* (Boston: Shambhala, 1988), 11.

written descriptions of dragons appears in the *Yi Jing* 易經 or *Book of Changes*, in describing the lines of the hexagram *qian* 乾 or “heaven”, where the appearance of the hexagram were interpreted as following the natural movements of the dragon.<sup>79</sup> In the text of the *Yi Jing*, each of the Eight Trigrams is represented as a hexagram of six horizontal lines, with some lines (*yao* 爻) undivided ----, and some lines divided -- --, referred to as *yang* 陽 and *yin* 陰 lines respectively. The *qian* hexagram consists of six undivided *yang* lines to symbolize heaven, and interpretation of the hexagram was based on the dragon's actions, where the dragon is chosen to stand as both superior man and vital breath:

潛龍勿用 *Qian long wu yong*:

“The dragon is in concealment. Not the time for active doing (rash action).”

或躍在淵 *Huo yue zai yuan*:

“The dragon in the abyss is about to leap but is not yet in action.”

見龍在田，利見大人 *Jian long zai tian, li jian da ren*:

“The dragon appears in the fields. It is advantageous to see a great man (favorable to see the great man; a person in a powerful position, a great man)”

亢龍有悔 *Kang long you hui*:

The dragon flying at extreme height results in regret.<sup>80</sup>

---

<sup>79</sup> Z. D. Sung, *The Text of Yi King (and its appendices): Chinese original, with English Translation* (Taipei: Ch'eng Wen Publishing Co., 1971), 4. Furthermore, for a compilation of classical Chinese quotes regarding the appearance and symbolic significance of Chinese dragons, see Jean-Pierre Diény, *Le Symbolisme Du Dragon Dans La Chine Antique* [The Symbolism of the Dragon in Ancient China] (Paris: Collège de France, Institut Des Hautes Études Chinoises, 1989).

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

According to legend, the mythical Emperor Fu Xi, while reading the *he tu* 河圖 or “Yellow River chart” on the back of a mythical *long ma* 龍馬, literally “dragon horse,” a fabled winged horse with dragon scales that emerged out of the Luo River (龍馬載圖), used the chart to draw out the arrangement of the Eight Trigrams: “The water of the *ho* [*he*] sent forth a dragon horse; on its back there was curly hair, like a map of starry dots. The water of the Lo [*Luo*] sent forth a divine tortoise; on its back there were riven veins, like writing of character pictures.”<sup>81</sup> The *he tu* or “Yellow River chart” is alternately named the “*long tu*” 龍圖 and “*ma tu*” 馬圖 or “dragon chart” and “horse chart” respectively; its numbers related to the original formation of heaven and earth. The *he tu* has served as the foundation for the study of astrology, combinations of yin and yang and the five elements (*wu xing*), the practice of *feng shui* and *Tai qi quan*.

A variety of early historical sources, ranging from Buddhist, Daoist, folkloric and mythological texts, have connected the appearance of Chinese dragons with rainfall, where images of the Chinese dragon were incorporated into rain invocation rituals in order to ensure good harvest.<sup>82</sup>

Alvin P. Cohen has surveyed a selection of ancient Chinese ritual and magical rainmaking methods as found in a variety of Chinese texts, dating

---

<sup>81</sup> Marinus Willem de Visser, *The Dragon in China and Japan* (Amsterdam: Johannes Muller, 1913), 57. See also Michael Saso, “What is the ‘Ho-T’u’?” *History of Religions*, 17 no.3/4 (1978): 399-416. It should also be noted that the tale alternates sometimes between a horse or a dragon.

<sup>82</sup> There was a natural overlap of ideas Buddhist, Daoist and Confucian ideas of rain and rain invocation rituals, whereupon the practice of such rituals were not considered strictly Buddhist, Daoist or Confucian.

from the Han dynasty (206 BCE – 220 CE) through to the Qing dynasty (1644-1911 CE).<sup>83</sup> According to Cohen, while rainmaking rituals were mentioned in earlier texts, the earliest in-depth description of the ritual of rainmaking was in “Luxuriant Dew of the Spring and Autumn Annals” or *Chun Qiu Fan Lou* 春秋繁露, attributed to Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (176-104 BCE), a prominent Han dynasty Confucian scholar known for his cosmological theories and performance of rainmaking rituals. In his review and identification of the most common rainmaking ritual procedural elements, Cohen notes that prayers for rain were dedicated to local cult deities, often times dragons, who controlled weather: “The supplicant would make a clay image or a painting of the rain-producing dragon deity, or a cloth or paper image on a bamboo frame, thus encapsulating the deity’s potency. Prayers for rain would then be made directly to the image or painting.”<sup>84</sup> In addition, a rain dance was performed (where the image was carried during a dance). If necessary, the supplicant or shaman was also placed naked under the sun in an effort to activate the dragon’s sympathy and therefore coerce it to create rain and alleviate the supplicant’s bodily suffering.<sup>85</sup> Michael Loewe further elaborates that altars were erected at the site, offerings of food and alcohol were made,

---

<sup>83</sup> See Alvin P. Cohen, “Coercing Rain Deities in Ancient China,” *History of Religions*, Vol. 17, no. 3 (Feb. - May 1978): 244-265.

<sup>84</sup> Cohen, “Coercing Rain Deities in Ancient China,” 246.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. Cohen further describes that if these measures were not enough to garner the dragon’s sympathies and enact rainfall, then the supplicant may choose to perform self-sacrifice by throwing himself onto a burning pyre.



and that the size, number and color of the clay dragons were arranged in a specific order based upon the five occasions of the year.<sup>86</sup> The most important sutra recited and followed in these rain ceremonies was the *Mahamegha sutra* or “Sutra of the Great Cloud” (大雲請雨經/大雲輪請雨經 “Sutra of the Great Cloud Requesting Rain”) translated first by Jnanagupta in 557 to 581 CE, and then a second time between 589 to 618 CE.<sup>87</sup>

Over time, the practice for rain invocation continued to evolve. In the Tang dynasty, paintings of dragons and temples dedicated to worship of the dragon were used as tools for prayers for rain, indicated as follows:

According to the *Miscellaneous Records of the Emperor* [Ming-Huang], a severe drought hit the central Shaanxi area around Chang’an during the Kai Yuan reign. Emperor [Xuanzong] sent his ministers to the mountains, forests, lakes, and marshes to pray for rain, but nothing happened. A hall was then built by the Dragon pond in the palace, and [Feng Shaozheng], a painter of dragons, was summoned to paint a dragon on each of the four inside walls of the hall. Before the dragons were half finished, winds and clouds rose with the painter’s brush. The scales of the dragons became wet, and one of the dragons that had not yet been colored in came down from the wall and dived into the pond. In a moment the sky

---

<sup>86</sup> Michael Loewe, “The Cult of the Dragon and the Invocation for Rain,” in *Chinese Ideas About Nature and Society: Studies in Honour of Derk Bodde*, Edited by Charles Le Blanc and Susan Blader (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1987), 208. Loewe discusses the use of clay dragons as mentioned in the “The Masters / Philosophers of Huainan” or *Huai Nan Zi* (淮南子), a Han dynasty textual compilation composed under Liu An (179-122 BCE), King of Huainan. Loewe observes that the *Huai Nan Zi* “links the use of clay dragons to procure rain with the fashioning of straw figures of dogs as a means of seeking good fortune and for fending all evil and errors. These images... were decorated in green and yellow; they were bound in figured or embroidered silk and clothed in scarlet silk. Officials and prayer readers were dressed in black garments, and counsellors of state wearing their official headdress were in attendance as an escort for the figures.” (199)

<sup>87</sup> Visser, *The Dragon in China and Japan*, 25.

became overcast and a pelting rain poured down, relieving the Chang'an area from drought.<sup>88</sup>

Ming dynasty emperors performed prayers for rain in times of drought:

"We are told, for example, that during a drought at the time of Emperor Hsien-tsung [Xianzong] (r. 1465-1487) all the Buddhist monks and Daoist priests of Sung Shan gathered in front of the Dragon King to pray for rain."<sup>89</sup> The tradition of offering imperial sacrifice and prayers for rain continued through to the end of the Qing dynasty and was fervently practiced:

The Qing emperors conducted prayers for rain within the precincts of the Altar to Heaven. The Shunzhi emperor first personally conducted these rites in 1657 and 1660 during periods of drought in North China. According to the *Collected Regulations*, prayers were performed by the Kangxi emperor in 1671, 1678, 1679, 1680, 1687, 1689, and 1717. In 1742 the prayer for rain became an annual first-rank ritual, to be performed in the fourth lunar month, the "first month of spring" (*meng chun*).<sup>90</sup>

---

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>89</sup> Bernard Faure, "Relics and Flesh Bodies: The Creation of Ch'an Pilgrimage Sites," In *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China*, ed. Susan Naquin and Chun-fang Yu (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 156.

<sup>90</sup> Evelyn Rawski, *The Last Emperors: A Social History of Qing Imperial Institutions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 222. Rawski emphasizes that in Imperial China, emperorship rested on the efficacy of Imperial sacrifices and cosmological ritual. Failure to elicit rain detracted from an emperor's charisma, or kingly virtue. During the Qing dynasty, ritual sacrifices for rain were increased: "The ritual calendar grew over the course of the dynasty. The calendar for the fifty-first year of the Qianlong reign (1786) lists sixty-two different sacrifices, as compared with eighty-three sacrifices for the thirty-first year of the Guangxu reign (1905). Of the thirty-eight altars listed in the 1905 ritual calendar, 55 percent were devoted to popular deities such as Guandi, dragon gods and river gods. And 28 percent were temples honouring meritorious generals and officials, including heroes of the conquest period such as Eidu and Tong Tulai." (214) For a thorough study of temples in Beijing from the Ming and Qing dynasties, see Susan Naquin, *Peking: Temples and City Life 1400-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

In Evelyn Rawski's study of Qing dynasty emperors and their activities "The Last Emperors," she notes the frequent occurrence of imperial mandated practice and performance of Buddhist and Daoist rain invocation rituals, at times simultaneously. For example, during a period of drought, an imperial memorial from 1783 ordered nine monks to chant the "Great Cloud Requesting Rain Sutra" for seven continuous days and sent imperial princes at the same time to pray for rain at a Daoist altar.<sup>91</sup>

### 1.3. *Imperial Rule*

The right to rule in early Chinese civilization was strongly connected to one's ability to invoke the dragon. From as far back as the Shang dynasty, Chinese rule and kingly virtue became inextricably linked with prayers for rain, as noted from the following example:

During third century BC to the first century AD, stories circulated about a seven-year drought that began after Tang, the founder of the Shang dynasty, killed the last ruler of the preceding Xia dynasty. When the gods of the mountains and rivers demanded a human sacrifice, Tang prayed to the deity that controlled the rain, [Shang Di], announcing his willingness to take the burden of wrongdoing on his own person and to become the sacrifice. Heaven responded with a great rain.<sup>92</sup>

During the Han dynasty, the appearance of the dragon became directly connected to the emperor and imperial rule from tales connecting dragons to the birth of Liu Bang 劉邦 or Emperor Gao (Gaozu 高祖; r. 202-195

---

<sup>91</sup> Rawski, *The Last Emperors*, 225.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid*, 220.

BCE), founder of the Han dynasty.<sup>93</sup> By association, visions or sightings of dragons came to be considered as auspicious omens and perceived as signs of heavenly favor.<sup>94</sup>

Clearly, the visual representation of dragons persisted through the Yuan dynasty and was widespread in Ming and Qing dynasty court art and decorative arts, coming to symbolize the emperor himself and further developed as an imperial symbol. Ordinary dress for the emperor was commonly referred to as the “dragon robe,” made of yellow satin and embroidered with dragon patterns and pheasant designs.<sup>95</sup> In terms of dress, there was a hierarchy of nine types of dragons, of which the highest, the five-clawed dragon, was prominently featured on the emperor’s court robes. The right to wear robes decorated with nine five-

---

<sup>93</sup> Yang Xin, Li Yihua and Xu Naixiang, *The Art of the Dragon* (Boston: Shambhala, 1988), 15. The authors describe the legendary birth of Emperor Gaozu as follows: “The ‘Biography of Emperor Gaozu’ in the Records of the Historian states: ‘Liu’s mother was sleeping one day on the slope of a marsh and met a god in her dream. The sky was overcast, and there was thunder and lightning. When her husband came looking for her, he saw a dragon mounting her. She subsequently became pregnant and gave birth to Emperor Gaozu. When he grew to be a man, he had the regular features of a dragon and a beautiful beard. There were seventy-two black spots on his left thigh. He was benevolent and kindhearted.’”

<sup>94</sup> In Howard J. Weschler’s study of ritual and symbolic activity during the Tang dynasty, he reports the legendary sightings of dragons in history and their auspicious implications: “The very last omens to appear before Kao-tsu [Gaozu] left T’ai-yuan were purple clouds, sighted at dawn one morning directly above the spot where he was seated. After some time they began to break into clouds of five colors, each in the shape of a dragon or some other beast. This phenomenon was repeated for three mornings in all, and everyone in Tai-yuan was said to be able to observe it. Five-colored clouds in the shape of dragons were auspicious omens associated with a Son of Heaven.” See Weschler, *Offerings of Jade and Silk* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 64. In addition, it is said that at the time of Emperor Taizong’s birth, “two dragons sported outside his dwelling, departing only after three days.” (73)

<sup>95</sup> Zhou Xun and Gao Chunming, ed., *5000 Years of Chinese Costume* (San Francisco: China Books and Periodicals, 1987), 148.

clawed dragons was restricted to the emperor, his sons, and princes in the first and second ranks. In her discussion of Qing Imperial dragon robes and Manchu court dress, Evelyn Rawski writes:

From the Song dynasty, the dragon became the symbol of the emperor and by convention to refer to the emperor's person: his body was the dragon body, his hands the claws, his capital the dragon's pool. The Song, Liao, Jin, and Yuan dynasties forbade subjects to wear robes with dragon patterns. But the dragon symbolism did not simply isolate the emperor from everyone else. There was a hierarchy of nine types of dragons, of which the highest, the five-clawed dragon (*long*), was prominently featured on the emperor's court robes. The four-clawed dragon (*mang*) appeared on the robes of his brothers who held higher princely ranks. And dragons topped the seals of rank (*bao*) presented to empresses and consorts.<sup>96</sup>

The emperor was known as the "Son of Heaven" 天子, and an alternative title for the Chinese emperor is *zhen long tian zi* 真龍天子 or "True Dragon and Son of Heaven." As the "true dragon," the emperor is considered superior to "less true" dragons such as the legendary and local dragon kings, and has the power to influence dragons and invoke rainfall.

The tradition of offering imperial sacrifice and prayers for rain in times of drought continued through to the end of the Qing dynasty and was fervently practiced in times of drought in an effort to secure Imperial authority.<sup>97</sup> Rawski recounts a particular incident in the Qianlong Emperor's reign during a famine year, 1744. Rain still did not come despite Qianlong's multiple attempts to invoke rain. The situation was so

---

<sup>96</sup> Rawski, *The Last Emperors*, 42.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, 222. Rawski emphasizes that in Imperial China, emperorship rested on the efficacy of Imperial sacrifices and cosmological ritual. Failure to elicit rain detracted from an emperor's charisma, or kingly virtue.

dire that it caused the Empress Dowager to walk from her palace to the Dragon God temple in the villa grounds to devoutly pray. Qianlong's personal writings regarding this situation record the guilt he felt for being so "unvirtuous (不德)" and being unable to "summon Heaven's harmony," particularly as the Son of Heaven.<sup>98</sup> Thus, the tradition of offering imperial sacrifice and prayers for rain in times of drought, and the persona and authority of the emperor, was greatly imbued with the ability to invoke the Chinese dragon.

#### 1.4. *The Apotropaic and the Everyday*

In addition to the dragon serving as a symbol of imperial rule, the sight of a Chinese dragon continued to bear great protective meaning, and was particularly included in all aspects of decorative design. In his study of dragon and bird motifs on Tang dynasty bronze mirrors, Eugene Wang notes the symbolic power the dragon design had to avert calamities, and how prayer to the dragon image on such objects would provoke rainfall.<sup>99</sup>

Other scholars have noted the presence of the coiling dragon motif as a

---

<sup>98</sup> Ibid, 226. According to Rawski, Qianlong reported on June 12: "Today the Empress Dowager walked from her palace to the Dragon God temple in the villa grounds to devoutly pray. As I listened reverently I was alarmed and awestruck (*huang kong, zhan piao*). This is all [due to] my being unvirtuous (*bu de*). Being unable to summon Heaven's harmony, I have dragged Mother to exertion. Having arrived at this extremity, as a son, I have no way in which to pardon myself." (226-227)

<sup>99</sup> Eugene Wang, "Mirror, Moon and Memory in Eighth Century China: From Dragon Pond to Lunar Palace," *Cleveland Studies in the History of Art*, 9 (2005): 44. This article was also published in *Clarity and Luster: New Light on Bronze Mirrors in Tang and Post-Tang Dynasty China, 600-1300*, edited by Claudia Brown and Ju-hsi Chou (Cleveland: The Cleveland Museum of Art in Association with Brepols Publishers, 2005), 42-67.

dominant design on ceilings of traditional Chinese architectural interiors and exterior roofs. These other dragon-like creatures are representative of not only the dragon itself, but also of the dragon's kin. According to legend, the dragon is said to have nine sons. The dragon's nine sons each display typical dragon-like features, however, each of them are distinguished by different attributes, functions and manifestations.

Designs of the nine sons were often used to decorate the eaves, ridges, balustrades, and terrace bases of ancient Chinese buildings, weapons and vessels. Generally, based upon the Ming dynasty scholar Li Dongyang's 李東陽 (1447-1516 CE) and his text the *Huai Lu Tang Ji* 懷麓堂集, published in 1504, the nine sons are differentiated as follows:

The first son is named *Qiu Niu* 囚牛 and is said to be a small yellow dragon that loves music and likes to crouch on the head of instruments and listen. Therefore, his figure is a common decoration on stringed musical instruments, such as the zither. The second son is named *Ya Zi* 睚眦, who is said to be fierce, bad-tempered and vengeful. His image is often engraved onto the handle design of ancient weapons, or his mouth is shown gripping the blade or swallowing the sword's hilt. The third son is named *Chao Feng* 嘲風 and he is recognized for his fearlessness; therefore, his image often decorates the corners of palace roofs. The fourth son is named *Pu Lao* 蒲牢, who is fond of roaring and roars when frightened or under attack. His figure is often placed on bell handles.

Legend states that he is afraid of whales. Therefore, often found in conjunction with a design of *Pu Lao* is a bell hammer with an image of a whale to use when striking the bell, so that the bell's sound will be more resonant. The fifth son is named *Suan Ni* 狻猊, who is said to be shaped like a lion and is fond of smoke and fire. Therefore, his image commonly appears as the legs of incense burners. The sixth son is named *Bi Xi* 赑屭 and his figure is like a tortoise. He possesses great strength and his likeness is used as a pedestal for stele. Stone tortoise-mounted steles have been traditionally used in the funerary complexes of Chinese emperors and notable dignitaries, as well as erected in the commemoration of important historical events. The seventh son is named *Bi An* 狻猊 and his figure is similar to that of a tiger. Legend states that he is fond of litigation and possesses the ability to distinguish between good and evil, therefore his image is commonly seen on prison gates standing guard, or on the sides of government buildings. The eighth son *Fu Xi* 夔 is said to be gentle, elegant and a lover of literature. Therefore, his dragon body is commonly seen coiled on top of or carved onto the sides of inscribed stone stele. The ninth son is named *Ze Wen* 螭吻 who has a dragon head but the body of a fish. With his moist mouth and strong ability to swallow, he is often shown sitting and swallowing the ridges of buildings. The purpose of such a design was to guard the building against fire.



The names of the nine sons of the dragon have been reinterpreted and disputed over time. Other interpretations of the nine sons include other dragon characters, such as *Jiao Tu* 椒圖, a tight-lipped dragon shaped like a spiral-shelled mussel or snail who is fond of leisure and dislikes outsiders entering his nest. He is commonly portrayed with his head as a door knob guarding gate entrances.

Many temples dedicated to the worship of dragons were built throughout history. Susan Naquin's study of temples in Beijing from 1400-1900 lists at least 64 different temples dedicated to dragon kings during this period in Beijing alone.<sup>100</sup> One such temple is the Black Dragon Pool Temple (*hei long tan si*), erected in 1681 at a site on Gold Mountain (*jin shan*) over 30 *li* to the northwest of the capital city, because the dragon god there was said to be particularly efficacious.

As an auspicious symbol for supernatural and imperial powers, it is not surprising that we find additional tales of the dragon's appearance within everyday society. With the dragon's association with the emperor, the dragon also came to be generally associated with great individuals. In Beverly J. Bossler's study of power relationships, kinship, transformations of social status and their formations during the Song dynasty, she relates two historical anecdotes of how high-ranking officials informally selected aspiring officials for patronage or sponsorship, similar to a mentor / mentee relationship, that were not subject to standard government

---

<sup>100</sup> Naquin, *Peking: Temples and City Life 1400-1900*, 37, Table 2.2: Common Gods in Peking Temples (Ming and Qing)

regulation.<sup>101</sup> Recipients of sponsorship tended to advance more rapidly than those who were not so favored, and needless to say that sons and grandsons of high-ranking officials were often more connected and able to establish relationships to their advantage. In Bossler's recounting of the following two tales, the sighting of a dragon is interpreted as being an indicator of someone of true raw talent:

“Hsieh Shen-fu [Xie Shenfu; 謝深甫] came from a humble background (his parents pounded millet for a living). Someone hired Shen-fu as a tutor for his children, and one night employer and employee drank together. In the middle of the night, Shen-fu became thirsty from the alcohol, but there was nowhere to get water. Seeing a dead-ripe pear hanging from a tree in the courtyard, Shen-fu climbed up to get it. Suddenly he was surrounded by yelping dogs, so that he dared not come down. In the meantime, his employer had dreamed that a black dragon was coiled in the tree. Awakened by dogs, he opened the door and saw a black shadow in the tree. On discovering that the “dragon” was Shen-fu, the employer was amazed and subsequently married his daughter to him.”<sup>102</sup>

Bossler shares another story of a similar tone and line of events:

“...the ancestor of Ch'en I-chung [Chen Yizhong 陳宜中] was once jailed for owing the government money. In desperation, the young I-chung was sent to Ko Hsuan-I [Ge Xuanyi 葛宣義], an extremely wealthy man of the area, to try to borrow the required amount. Ko Hsuan-I, meanwhile, dreamed that a black dragon had wrapped itself around a pillar in his main hall. Upon awakening, he marveled at the image; then presently Ch'en I-chung arrived. After ascertaining the purpose of the visit, Ko provided the requested amount – 100,000 – in full.<sup>103</sup> When the elder Ch'en was

---

<sup>101</sup> See Beverly J. Bossler, *Powerful Relations: Kinship, Status and the State in Sung China (960-1279)* (Cambridge: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, Harvard University Press, 1998).

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, 58.

<sup>103</sup> Bossler notes that the source of this anecdote, like many others, specifies an amount without indicating what unit (e.g. cash, strings of cash, taels, etc.) was involved. Rather than impose an arbitrary unit, Bossler has followed the original source by simply

subsequently released and came to offer his thanks, Ko asked him if he would be willing to betroth his eldest son (I-chung) to Ko's elder daughter. The startled Ch'en protested his unworthiness, but Ko prevailed. He sent Ch'en I-chung to school and ultimately married a daughter to him."<sup>104</sup>

Bossler describes a "poor scholar-prescient patron" theme, speculating that this theme likely owed its appeal to the uncertainty of political success during the Song period. In any case, from these tales one may note a connection between the dragon and the everyday man. The dragon's association with greatness was not limited in reference to only mythological figures, emperors and sages.

## Section 2: Ritual and Philosophy: Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism

In different periods of Chinese history, the classical philosophies of Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism coexisted peacefully and harmoniously. Buddhist, Daoist and Confucian associations with the Chinese dragon have further contributed to the dragon's auspicious interpretation and visualization. The following sub-sections highlight some particular ideas regarding the dragon that emerged from each philosophical school. In Buddhism, we find the presence of dragons, originally nagas, at the Buddha's birth, and the development of the concept of the Buddhist Dragon King; in Daoism we see the dragon as the vehicle of the immortals; and in Confucianism we find the dragon equated

---

indicating the recorded amount.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, 58-59.

with that of the ideal gentleman. The primary intention of this section of this study is to demonstrate how the Chinese dragon was incorporated into, served many different roles, and held many meanings within each philosophical school. It is not to argue that the Chinese dragon is representative or exclusive to one particular philosophical school or religious cultural practice over another; rather it is intended to illustrate the symbol's fluidity within Chinese history and culture.

## 2.1. Buddhism and the Dragon

### 2.1.1 *Dragons and Naga*

Scholars have observed that the Chinese word for dragons (*long*) was used to translate the Sanskrit term *nagas*, or serpent-like creatures in early Indian mythology, in Chinese Buddhist ritual literature as early as the Han period (206 BCE – 220 CE); this resulted in a conflation of the Chinese dragon and Indian *naga*.<sup>105</sup> A cursory review of a selection of encyclopaedias and dictionaries of Buddhist terminology also show the

---

<sup>105</sup> Joshua Capitanio, *Dragon Kings and Thunder Gods* (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2008), 76. Capitanio argues that the Sanskrit term *naga* and Chinese word dragon was translated into the Chinese word *long*, or dragon, based on the work of Michel Strickmann. Capitanio quotes Strickmann's work as follows: "The naga exemplify the fusion of Indian figures with native Chinese otherworldly personnel, since the word always used for the naga in Chinese sources is lung (dragon). The entire gamut of ophidian forms and functions, from tiny snake to giant rain-dragon, and from the benign and godly to the demonic and virulent, is found in ritual texts as well as in legends and art. Invocation of the dragon-kings for raid was practiced by members of all the principal lineages, Taoist as well as Buddhist, and was frequently a matter of state... It would be pointless to disentangle native Chinese elements in the ubiquitous dragon-cult from Indian naga-cult contributions; from the early Middle Ages on, Indian and Chinese components harmoniously coalesced." See Michel Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine*, ed. Bernard Faure (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 64.

Sanskrit term *naga* as being defined as a “dragon.”<sup>106</sup> Yet, the Chinese idea of “dragon” and Indian Buddhist idea of *naga* have traditionally differed visually in form.

In the Indian folkloric and mythological tradition, *nagas* had many meanings and wielded many powers. In Buddhism, *nagas* were perceived as semi-divine serpents. In Akira Sadakata’s encyclopedic handbook on Buddhist Cosmology, *nagas* are listed as one form of many demigods, writing that the naga “is a personified snake, in particular the cobra...Throughout the world, the snake is linked with the bringing forth of water, perhaps because snakes are found near water or because their movements resemble a twisting river.”<sup>107</sup> Earlier, Marinus Willem de Visser wrote that Indian *nagas* resided with their retinues in luxurious palaces at the bottom of the sea or in rivers and lakes.<sup>108</sup> When leaving their palaces, *nagas* are constantly in danger of being killed by large semi-divine birds or Garuda. In Hinduism, Garuda serves as the *vahana* or animal vehicle for the god Vishnu. Visual representations of *nagarajas* are

---

<sup>106</sup> See *The Encyclopedia of Eastern Philosophy and Religion* (Boston: Shambhala, 1989), 236. Under the entry for “naga,” the authors write that one of its definitions is “the ‘dragon,’ a beneficent half-divine being which in spring climbs into the heavens and in the winter lives deep in the Earth. *Naga* or *mahanaga* (‘great dragon’) is often used as a synonym for the Buddha or for the sages who have matured beyond rebirth. *Nagaraja* (‘dragon king’ or ‘dragon queen’) are water deities who govern springs, rivers, lakes, and seas. In many Buddhist traditions (for example, Tibetan Buddhism) the *nagas* are water deities who in their sea palaces guard Buddhist scriptures that have been placed in their care because humanity is not ripe for their reception.” (236)

<sup>107</sup> Akira Sadakata, *Buddhist Cosmology: Philosophy and Origins* (Tokyo: Kosei Publishing, 1997), 137.

<sup>108</sup> Marinus Willem de Visser, *The Dragon in China and Japan* (Amsterdam: Johannes Muller, 1913), 7.

frequently found at Indian Buddhist temples. At Ajanta, *nagarajas* or naga-kings are portrayed sculpturally as part human but with a hood of cobra heads.<sup>109</sup>

In many Indian Buddhist legends, *nagas* served as guardians of the Buddha. According to the *Lalitavistara* sutra, a Sanskrit Buddhist sutra dated to sometime in the third century, shortly after Shakyamuni Buddha achieved enlightenment, he visited Lake Mucilinda, a lake inhabited by a *nagaraja* of the same name. According to Lowell W. Bloss' interpretation of the same event in the same sutra:

The Buddha wandered to various places for meditation. One week of meditation is spent beneath the tree of the nagaraja Mucilinda... while the Buddha was sitting under this tree, wind and rain arose. At this, the *nagaraja* came from his abode and coiled himself around the Buddha seven times, spreading his hood over the blessed one's head.<sup>110</sup>

In Chinese records of travels to India written by Chinese Buddhist monks, the *naga* was conveniently translated with dragon. In James Legge's translation of the Chinese monk Faxian's 法顯 (c. 227-c. 422 CE) narrative of his travels to India and Ceylon from 399-414 CE, Faxian relates the legend of the Shakyamuni Buddha's birth when describing

---

<sup>109</sup> In Richard Cohen's study of localized Buddhism at the Ajanta caves, he includes a discussion of the adoption of *nagarajas* within the Buddhist pantheon. See Cohen, "Naga, Yaksini, Buddha: Local Deities and Local Buddhism at Ajanta," *History of Religions* 37, no. 4 (May 1998): 360-400.

<sup>110</sup> Lowell W. Bloss, "The Buddha and the Naga: A Study in Buddhist Folk Religiosity," *History of Religions* 13 (Aug. 1973): 49. For Bloss, this legend reinforces the message of conversion, where the Buddha's superiority is asserted over the naga, thus legitimizing and authorizing the Buddha as a divine ruler.

famous sites around the city of Kapilavastu. Legge translates Faxian's text as follows:

Fifty *le* east from the city was a garden, named Lumbini, where the queen entered the pond and bathed. Having come forth from the pond on the northern bank, after (walking) twenty paces, she lifted up her hand, laid hold of a branch of a tree, and, with her face to the east, gave birth to the heir-apparent. When he fell to the ground, he (immediately) walked seven paces. Two dragon-kings (appeared) and washed his body. At the place where they did so, there was immediately formed a well, and from it, as well as from the above pond, where (the queen) bathed, the monks (even) now constantly take the water, and drink it.<sup>111</sup>

In his translation, Legge equates the *naga* with dragon, thus in this case, the "dragon-kings" that appear are in fact two naga-kings (Nanda and Upananda). Furthermore, *nagas* were also understood as protectors of Buddhist relics. In Legge's translation of Faxian's account of his travels to India, Faxian describes the kingdom of Rama (Ramagrama), located between Kapilavastu and Kusanagara:

The king of this country, having obtained one portion of the relics of the Buddha's body, returned with it and built over it a tope, named the Rama tope. By the side of it there was a pool, and in the pool a dragon, which constantly kept watch over (the tope), and presented offerings to it day and night. When King Asoka came forth into the world, he wished to destroy the eight topes (over the relics), and to build (instead of them) 84,000 topes. After he had thrown down the seven (others), he wished next to destroy this tope. But then the dragon showed itself, took the king into its palace; and when he had seen all the things provided for offerings, it said to him, 'If you

---

<sup>111</sup> James Legge, *A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms* (New York: Paragon, 1965), 67; Reprint, first published by Clarendon Press, Oxford, in 1886. In this particular 1965 edition, Legge includes images of the Buddha's birth alongside his translation to illustrate the narrative, however he does not indicate where the images came from. Based on the style of the images, I suspect they are Ming dynasty woodblock prints. Interestingly, in the image Legge included for this scene of the Buddha's birth, the image shows nine dragons hovering in a cloud showering water down upon the Buddha. However, in Legge's translation, only two dragon kings are indicated as being present to wash the Buddha's body.

are able with your offerings to exceed these, you can destroy the tope and take it all away. I will not contend with you.' The king, however, knew that such appliances for offerings were not to be had anywhere in the world, and thereupon returned (without carrying out his purpose).<sup>112</sup>

In this passage, King Ashoka's (304-232 BCE) riches and offerings for the Buddha's relics could not compare with the naga king's luxurious palace and rich offerings, thus Ashoka acquiesces.<sup>113</sup>

### 2.1.2. *Dragon Kings*

Numerous "dragon king" or *long wang* 龍王 folktales have emerged from Chinese Buddhist, Daoist, and folk religions, in which it was believed that every water source was reigned over by different dragon kings with various powers, ranks and abilities. Dragon kings were worshiped as important deities. It should be noted that while there appears to be much overlap in terms of roles, the mythological Chinese dragon is distinct from the dragon king. Dragon kings are a development influenced by Buddhist and Hindu beliefs disseminated from India and associated with local folk religions, which differ from the Chinese dragon as found in classical Chinese mythology. This section will discuss the development of Buddhist dragon kings and their distinctions, as well as briefly discuss the visual

---

<sup>112</sup> Legge, *A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms*, 69. James Legge also notes in his footnotes that the bones of the human body are supposed to consist of 84,000 atoms, thus he interprets Ashoka's desire to build 84,000 topes or stupas to mean building a stupa "over each atom of Sakyamuni's skeleton" (69).

<sup>113</sup> King Ashoka or Ashoka (304-232 BCE) was emperor of the Maurya dynasty, and later converted to Buddhism after a long period of bloody war and conquest. Following his conversion to Buddhism, he pursued an official policy of nonviolence and was patron to the building of thousands of Buddhist stupas and monasteries.



representation of Chinese dragon kings and their historical and symbolic significance.

The *Dragon King Sutra* (海龍王經; Sāgaranāgarājaparipṛcchā; Taisho no. 598), translated by Dharmarakṣa or Zhu Fahu (竺法護), dated to the Western Jin dynasty, describes an event in which the Buddha travels to the luxurious underwater palace of the dragon king.<sup>114</sup> The most crucial element in the *Dragon King Sutra* is the dialogue between the Dragon king and the Buddha and the Buddha's answers to the Dragon king's questions. The following translated passage illustrates an event in the sutra when the Dragon king invites the Buddha to visit his underwater palace, where, after having feasted, all the multitudes gathered to listen to the Buddha preach.<sup>115</sup>

---

<sup>114</sup> There does not appear to be a Western-language translation of the sutra extant. According to William Soothill, Dharmarakṣa was "a native of Tukhara [Tochara], who knew thirty-six languages and translated some 175 works." Soothill's statement does not fully explain Dharmarakṣa's biographical details when compared to other sources, notably Daniel Boucher's translation. In Boucher's analysis of the life and times and Dharmarakṣa, he writes that Dharmarakṣa was a Yue-shi Buddhist monk who was born in ca. 233 at Dunhuang, and he studied there under an Indian teacher before embarking on a career as a Buddhist textual translator, translating over 150 texts from Indian languages to Chinese. For a thorough discussion of Dharmarakṣa's life and translation work, see Daniel Boucher, *Buddhist Translation Procedures in Third-Century China: A Study of Dharmarakṣa and His Translation Idiom* (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1996). According to Boucher's research, Dharmarakṣa translated the *Dragon King Sutra* while residing in Chang'an between November of 284 and spring of 286. The sutra appears to be centered mainly upon a dialogue between a dragon king and the Buddha.

115

於是佛見眾會坐定，從身放光，光名善度脫法柔和，悉照大海。諸居之類上、中、下品，普自見佛，歡喜踊躍，願樂聞法，各以恭敬遙稽首佛。爾時世尊告海龍王：「猗世間者，作若干緣，心行不同，罪福各異，以是之故所生殊別。龍王！且觀眾會及大海若干種類形貌不同，是諸形貌皆心所畫。又心無色而不可見，一切諸法誑詐如是，因或興相都無有主，隨其所作各各自受。譬如畫師本無造像，諸法如是而不可議，自然如幻化相，皆心所作。...龍王！具觀如來之身，以百千福而得合成，超於眾會普現巍巍，其百千德由得自在，而使梵、釋覆蔽不現。觀如來身，目不敢視，當其威光察諸大士，色身相好，莊嚴具足，

Thereupon the Buddha saw the crowd gathered and settled in their places, and from his body sent out an illuminating ray,<sup>116</sup> the light was virtuous paramita, dharma of liberation and forbearance, and illuminated all over the great sea. All the residents, of upper, middle, lower classes, universally saw the Buddha with their eyes, joyfully leapt, very happy to hear the Dharma teaching, each bowing respectfully to the head Buddha from afar. At this time the world-honored one<sup>117</sup> declared to the sea dragon king: “Thereinafter, being of the finite impermanent world, those who have generated many different predestined conditions, the intention of the heart are not alike, which have generated each of their different sins and blessings, and because of this reason each of them are with different outwardly appearances. Dragon King! Observe the participants at this gathering in the great sea, the many different types of creatures and all with different outwardly appearances, all which are drawn by their minds. Moreover, the mind is not a material thing and without form (*rupa*) and cannot see, all phenomena are illusions and are deceptive and misleading as such, and because of this state produces hallucinations they have no control over, so they follow the karma of what one has made, and each receiving their own consequences.<sup>118</sup> For example, it is like a painter, who originally did not create any image, but activated the mind with arising thought, creating all the phenomena of the universe, becoming this way is incredible and beyond comprehension, so all phenomena is naturally illusion and illusionary image, all is done by one’s activation of the mind. ...Dragon King! You should observe the outlook of Tathagata’s body and cultivation to possess the same outlook of Tathagata’s

---

皆以善德校飾其體。

This excerpt is from *Taishō shinshū dai zōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經 [Revised version of the canon, compiled during the Taishō era]. Ed. Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 (1866–1945), Watanabe Kaikyoku 渡辺海旭 (1872–1932) et al. 100 vols (Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924–1932 [–1935]), CBETA Digital Edition, T598. This English translation is by this dissertation author and is based upon definitions of Chinese Buddhist terms as defined by William Soothill and Lewis Hodous, in the digitized version of *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*, originally published in London in 1937 and reprinted in Delhi in 1977. Soothill and Hodous’ original dictionary is also now available online. See URL: <http://www.acmuller.net/soothill/soothill-hodous.html>.

<sup>116</sup> 放光 Light-emitting; to send out an illuminating ray.

<sup>117</sup> 一切世尊最尊特身 The most honoured of all the world-honoured; a title of Vairocana; v. 毘.

<sup>118</sup> 自作自受 As one does one receives, every man receives the reward of his deeds, creating his own karma, 自業自得.

body,<sup>119</sup> whereby it is composed of hundreds and thousands of blessings arising from good deeds, exceeding the gathering attendance of all manifestations of Buddha (or bodhisattvas) majestically standing, his hundred thousand meritorious virtues allowing him to be free and unrestrained, and cause the bright illumination of those of Brahman heaven and Trayastrimsas heaven to be covered under his meritorious virtuous illumination. To observe the body of Tathagatha, the bright illumination is hard to see by eye directly, when his mighty light shines on Mahasattvas,<sup>120</sup> they all have thirty-two marks as the Buddha, are endowed with majesty and are of inspiring deportment, their bodies are decorated by their good and virtuous moral power.”

In this descriptive passage of the Dragon King sutra, all of the dragon kings, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas bear witness to the Buddha’s bright light, and the Buddha shares the concept where all things in this world are illusory and created from one’s mind. Here the Dragon Kings are understood to be protectors and followers of the Buddha.

In addition to serving as staunch protectors of the Buddha and the Buddha’s relics, naga were also famously understood to have the ability to bestow rain. In Visser’s studies of dragons in China and Japan and its Indian antecedents, he noted that there is a strong absence of passages which indicate the Indian naga as a beneficent bringer of rain. Visser attributes the original connection of *nagas* as bringers of rain with the

---

<sup>119</sup> The Taishō canon indicates the following footnote: 具 = 且. 如來 *tathāgata*, 多陀阿伽陀 q. v.; 怛他揭多 defined as he who comes as do all other Buddhas; or as he who took the 眞如 *zhenru* or absolute way of cause and effect, and attained perfect wisdom; or as the absolute come; one of the highest titles of a Buddha. It is the Buddha in his *nirmāṇakāya*, i. e. his 'transformation' or corporeal manifestation descended on earth. The two kinds of Tathāgata are (1) 在纏 the Tathāgata in bonds, i. e. limited and subject to the delusions and sufferings of life, and (2) 出纏 unlimited and free from them. There are numerous sutras and śāstras bearing this title of 如來 *ru lai*.

<sup>120</sup> 大士 Mahasattva. 關士 A great being, noble, a leader of men, a bodhisattva; also a *śrāvaka*, a Buddha; especially one who 自利利他 benefits himself to help others.

Mahayana Buddhist School, where they become fearful of the Buddha's law and therefore beneficent to mankind.<sup>121</sup> As mentioned previously, in the Chinese tradition, similarly to this Indian tradition, many pre-Buddhist historical sources have connected the appearance of Chinese dragons with rainfall.

### 2.1.3. *Visual Representations of the Dragon King*

Sources that focus specifically on the visual representation of dragon kings and their various transformations within the Chinese artistic tradition are limited. The dragon king has not been a traditional subject category for Chinese painting.<sup>122</sup> While painted representations of the Chinese dragon extend as far back as Neolithic times, existing examples of artistic representations specifically of dragon kings found so far in the course of this study do not date before the Song dynasty.

---

<sup>121</sup> Visser observes that there were four classes which Mahayanists divided the nagas: "Heavenly Nagas (天龍), who guard the Heavenly Palace and carry it so that it does not fall; Divine Nagas (神龍), who benefit mankind by causing the clouds and rainfall; Earthly Nagas (地龍), who drain off rivers (remove obstructions) and open sluices (outlets); and Nagas who are lying hidden (伏藏龍), guarding the treasures of the 'Kings of the Wheel' (輪王; Cakravarti-rajās) and blessing mankind." See Visser, *The Dragon in China and Japan*, 21. Furthermore, Visser finds numerous passages which describe *nagas* as gods of clouds and rain in the *Buddhavatamsaka mahavaipulya sutra* (大方廣佛華嚴經) translated by Buddhābhadra (覺賢; c. 298-421 CE), which tells stories of the rain-bringing powers of Sagara and other great naga kings (23).

<sup>122</sup> The subject of dragon kings is not listed as a painting category in any imperial art collection catalogue. Emperor Huizong's *Xuan He Hua Pu* does not list dragon kings in either category of 'Buddhist and Daoist images,' that lists painting themes of the Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism, Zhong Kui and spirits, or 'dragons and fish,' which lists paintings of dragons, fish and other aquatic species such as crabs and shrimp.

An example of early visual depiction specifically of a dragon king is found in the painting *Long Handscroll of Buddhist Images* by Zhang Shengwen 張勝溫 (active 1163-1189), a painter from the Song kingdom of Dali 大理國 (now present day Yunnan province) (Figure 20). The scroll was painted during the *li chen* reign (1173-1176) for Duan Zhixing 段智興 (r. 1172-1200), a ruler of the Dali kingdom, and measures up to fifty-three feet long. The handscroll begins with an imperial procession followed by numerous Buddhist images that include dragon kings and arhats, twenty Avalokiteshvaras of different types, the six patriarchs of the Chan school of Buddhism, as well as depictions of several Dali monks and laymen.<sup>123</sup> In his study of this scroll, Li Lin-ts'an compared Zhang's original scroll to a later Qing dynasty copy of it by court painter Ding Guanpeng 丁觀鵬 (act. 1708-1771) as commissioned by the Qianlong Emperor.<sup>124</sup> Zhang's rendering of the dragon kings Upananda and Sagara bears striking resemblance to existing Indian representations of *nagaraja* with its depiction of a hood of cobras, a reflection of the established Indian artistic convention. At the same time, not all of the dragon kings are rendered in

---

<sup>123</sup> Li Lin-ts'an, *A Study of the Nan-Chao and the Ta-li Kingdoms in the Light of Art Materials Found in Various Museums* (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1982), 156. For a pioneering study of Zhang's scroll, see Helen Chapin, *A Long Roll of Buddhist Images* (Ascona: Artibus Asiae, 1970). This scroll and the Qianlong Emperor's practice of recopying ancient works is further elaborated in Patricia Berger's study *Empire of Emptiness: Buddhist Art and Political Authority in Qing China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003).

<sup>124</sup> Li Lin-ts'an's comparative study highlights significant differences between the two scrolls, most notably Ding's addition of two additional dragon kings Utpala and Manasa, which are not present in Zhang's original, possibly indicating that these two dragon kings could be missing from Zhang's original painting. See Li, *A Study of the Nan-Chao and the Ta-li Kingdoms in the Light of Art Materials Found in Various Museums*, 166.

the same manner, as seen in Zhang's depiction of the dragon king Vasuki, who is rendered completely in human form but flanked by dragons and attendants with serpent-like features. Zhang continues to follow the Indian artistic convention later in the scroll in his representation of a three-headed cobra-hooded female, who Li identifies as a dragon princess.<sup>125</sup>

Zhu Yu (Zhu Junbi; 1293-1365), a skilled Yuan dynasty figure painter, painted a representation of a dragon king, as seen in his scroll *Scene at the Dragon King's Palace* (Figure 21). Very little is known about Zhu Yu, and few paintings have been attributed to him. Zhu was a student of the Yuan figure painter Wang Zhenpeng 王振鹏 (active 1280-1329), and worked at the Imperial court in Beijing from 1312 to 1320.<sup>126</sup> In this painting, a regally dressed man with long white hair is shown greeting visitors at a palace gate. The man's royal status is indicated by the parasol which hovers over him, as well as his large group of attendant figures. Here, the dragon king is portrayed in human form, dressed appropriately as a Chinese ruler. The only visual indication of his divine dragon status are the representation of two of his attendants, who appear to be rendered with dragon-like features, and the fact that this palace is clearly shown beneath rolling waves.

---

<sup>125</sup> For more information on snake queens, river goddesses and dragon ladies in Tang dynasty literature and Chinese mythology, see Edward H. Schafer, *The Divine Woman: Dragon Ladies and Rain Maidens in T'ang Literature* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1973).

<sup>126</sup> Stephen Little, "Early Chinese Paintings in the Art Institute of Chicago," *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies*, v. 22, no. 1 (1996): 46.

Painted representations of dragon kings are found or alluded to in greater numbers dated to the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), in connection with representations of lohans. The worship of lohans (*luohan* 羅漢), known as *arhats* in Sanskrit, originated in India. Lohans are said to embody faculties of wisdom and knowledge far superior to common mortals, with the power to perform impossible feats. While paintings of arhats effortlessly crossing the sea are common, less common are painted representations of their destinations when traveling, particularly to the palace of the dragon king. Dated to 1587, You Qiu's painted monochromatic handscroll *Lohans Crossing the Sea*, in the Marilyn and Roy Papp collection in Phoenix, AZ, is an example of such a display, where lohans and mythical creatures travel across water to pay a visit to the Dragon King. You Qiu 尤求 (*zi*: Zi Qiu 子求; active 1540-90) was born and trained in Suzhou, and was the student and son-in-law of Qiu Ying 仇英 (*zi*: Shi Fu 實父; *hao*: Shi Zhou 十洲; c. 1494-1552), a noted professional painter also recognized for his depictions of Buddhist subjects.<sup>127</sup> While versed in various styles, You Qiu is particularly known for his treatment of figures in landscape and his depictions of ancient legends, in addition to Buddhist motifs. Towards the end of the scroll, four courtly ladies stand before the gates of the Dragon king's palace, and we see a depiction of the Dragon King emerging from the sea in order to greet

---

<sup>127</sup> Chou, Ju-hsi and Claudia Brown, *The Heritage of the Brush: The Roy and Marilyn Papp Collection of Chinese Painting* (Phoenix: Phoenix Art Museum, 1989), 30.

the travelling lohans, dressed in a Chinese robe covered in scales (Figure 22).

Chen Hongshou 陳洪綬 (*zi*: Zhang Hou 章候; *hao*: Lao Lian 老蓮, Fu Chi 弗遲, Yun Men Seng 雲門僧, Hui Chi 悔遲, Chi He Shang 遲和尚, Hui Seng 悔僧; 1598-1652) was a famous painter, calligrapher and designer of woodblock prints active during the Late Ming period. He is perhaps best known and admired for his whimsically distorted representations of figures, and for his attention to minute details. In his painted hanging scroll *The Dragon King Revering the Buddha*, in the Freer Gallery of Art, hieratic scale is used to portray the Buddha's prominence over the dragon king (Figure 23). The dragon king is depicted with a dragon face and a human silhouette, arms clasped upward as a form of respect, fully clothed in contemporary Ming period dress. When comparing You Qiu's and Chen Hongshou's depictions of dragon kings to earlier ones, no longer are we reminded of previous Indian representations, and it would seem that the image of the dragon king has transformed from previous representations. The dragon king is now depicted with a dragon face, similar to the facial features made famous by Chen Rong in the Song dynasty, with flying whiskers, flaring nostrils, and bulging eyes, in visual contrast to his conservative regal costume.

This brief overview of dragon kings is only a beginning, as ancient sculptural representations of dragon kings have not been addressed, nor dragon king altar images, dragon king temple architecture, as well as the



contemporary worship of local dragon kings within Chinese culture today. Clearly, representations of dragon kings appear to have transformed over time from an Indian artistic tradition into a distinctly Chinese style of visual representation. It is hoped that with this brief exploration, new interest will be formed, and further in-depth study of all these aspects will be pursued.

## 2.2. Daoism and the Dragon

### 2.2.1. *Daoist Immortality and the Dragon*

Unlike Buddhism, Daoism is indigenous to China. The *Dao* 道 (Tao) means “a road or a path,” and is often translated as “the way.” The Dao is symbolically defined and expressed in the *Dao De Jing* 道德經 or “Classic of the Way and its Power,” which is attributed to the sage Lao Zi 老子 who lived in the sixth century BCE. The *Dao De Jing* and the *Zhuang Zi* 莊子, written by the Daoist philosopher of the same name, are the two key texts of philosophical Daoism, and cover a wide variety of subjects. In the first chapter of the *Dao De Jing*, the Dao is defined, or rather undefined, as follows:

A [dao] that can be spoken about  
Is not the constant [Dao];  
A name that can be named  
Is not the constant name.  
Nonbeing names  
The ten thousand things’ beginning;  
Being names  
The ten thousand things’ mother.<sup>128</sup>

---

<sup>128</sup> Huang Chichung, *Tao Te Ching: A Literal Translation* (Fremont: Asian Humanities Press, 2003), 31.

The Dao cannot be named or described and is beyond space and time, yet it is the void out of which all reality emerges. The Dao is understood as being the deep and remote structure that underlies the universe. It is the Dao that underlies and permeates all reality, thus everything we see is illusory.<sup>129</sup> Thus, Daoism emphasizes a return to the harmonious connection between mankind and the Dao, otherwise understood as the primordial force of the universe.

Lao Zi identifies that Daoism has no supreme being, yet religious Daoism consists of many gods. From the late Zhou to the Tang dynasties, Daoism developed a rich pantheon of deities and immortals and complex sacred texts. Over time, the sage Lao Zi was deified and worshipped by emperors and the common people. The Yellow Emperor, who is considered to be the inventor of human civilization, is named along with Lao Zi as one of the founders of the Dao. Another god included in the Daoist pantheon is Xi Wang Mu 西王母 or “Queen Mother of the West.” Zhuang Zi describes the heavenly land of the immortals, with the dragon considered the symbol of the Yang force and of the Dao, serving as the vehicle of the Gods:

In the far away mountains of Gu she live divine humans. Their skin is cool as frost and snow, they are shy and delicate as virgins. They do not eat grains, but breathe wind and drink dew. They

---

<sup>129</sup> Jeaneane Fowler offers a general definition of the Dao: “[Dao] is the undifferentiated Void and potentiality that underpins all creation, immutable, unchanging, without form. It is indescribable Reality, eternally nameless, but experience of it, and of its profound emptiness, is the goal of the [Daoist].” See Jeaneane Fowler, *Chinese Religions: Beliefs and Practices* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2008), 101.

mount on clouds and ride winged dragons to wander beyond the four oceans. By the concentration of their spirit, they can protect people from the plague and make crops ripen.<sup>130</sup>

Furthermore, the ascension of Huang Di, or the Yellow Emperor, is described in Sima Qian's *Records of the Historian* (*Shi Ji* 史記, compiled in 104 BCE):

...a dragon with whiskers hanging from its chin came down from the sky to fetch him. The Yellow Emperor mounted on the dragon's back, followed by his ministers and palace ladies, making a company of over seventy persons. When they had all mounted, the dragon rose from the ground and departed.<sup>131</sup>

This concept of immortality in relation to riding dragons was visually portrayed very early on. The earliest surviving example of a painted dragon on a silk funerary banner was excavated from a tomb in Changsha, Hunan dated to the Warring States period (476-221 BCE) (Figure 24). The banner portrays a male figure dressed in official robes riding a dragon. To the viewer's left-hand corner is the painting of a fish, to indicate that the dragon is possibly sailing through water. As a funerary banner, this image is possibly of the deceased soul's journey into the afterlife, as well as a painted portrait of the dead.

Additional examples of a *fei yi* 飛衣 "flying garment" or funerary banner painting reveal many representations of dragons, most famously the excavated banner from the tomb of Lady Dai at Mawangdui in

---

<sup>130</sup> Kristoffer Schipper "Taoism: The Story of the Way" in Stephen Little, *Taoism and the Arts of China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 34.

<sup>131</sup> Sima Qian (ca. 145- ca. 86 BCE), *Records of the Grand Historian of China* (*Shi Ji*). Trans. Burton Watson. Vol. 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 52.

Changsha dated to the Han dynasty (Figure 25). The tomb was found in 1972 at Mawangdui and has yielded more than a thousand burial objects, including the well-preserved body of Lady Dai herself nested within four lacquer painted wood coffins, one enclosed within the other. Each coffin was lacquer painted with cloud and fantastical animal motifs. It is also at this same site that we find the earliest version of Lao Zi's *Dao De Jing*.<sup>132</sup> The painted funerary banner was found on top of the fourth and innermost coffin and is two meters in length. The banner's motif is divided vertically into four parts, where the top portion portrays heaven and the bottom portion portrays the underworld. Two coiling dragons are prominently represented within the top portion of the banner, possibly representing heaven and the afterlife. The middle scenes portray Lady Dai's body in the present world, notably being ritually worshipped and surrounded by bronze vessels. In the center also appears a serpent-like creature coiled around a female figure, perhaps Lady Dai herself, as she is carried on her journey to Heaven, in a similar manner as the previously discussed funerary banner also from Changsha.

Painted examples of Daoist immortals riding dragons are found in the Song dynasty, as seen in Ma Yuan's 馬遠 (*hao*: Qin Shan 欽山; act. before 1189-after 1225) painted portrayal of an *Immortal Riding a Dragon* (Figure 26). Of this particular painting, Stephen Little comments that by

---

<sup>132</sup> See the last chapter of Huang Chichung, *Tao Te Ching: A Literal Translation* (Fremont: Asian Humanities Press, 2003), which discusses the Mawangdui copy of the *Dao de jing*.

“riding the dragon the adept demonstrated the transcendence of his earth-bound existence. In this painting, an immortal is shown flying through the air on the back on a dragon amongst a background of clouds, from which a dragon has just emerged. Concurrently, the dragon became a symbol of the Dao itself, as well as the rejuvenating *yang* force, as it rose out of the ocean in spring, bringing water to the earth.”<sup>133</sup>

Daoists adopted the theory of *yin* and *yang*, as two opposing forces or cosmic influences and fluctuations, as well as adopted the theory of the Five Elements (*wu xing* 五行), of wood, metal, fire, water, and earth. Understanding of the Eight Trigrams, forces of *yin* and *yang* and the Five Elements played a key role in chemical alchemy, for it was believed that successful manipulation of these forces would result in a pill or elixir for immortality. The dragon (*long*) and tiger (*hu* 虎) together signified a balance of *yin* and *yang*, where the tiger represented the dragon’s opposite, and where together the motifs signified an alchemical balance of the two forces. This is related to the tale of the first Daoist celestial master, Zhang Daoling 張道陵 (Zhang Ling 張陵; *zi*: Fu Han 輔漢; 34-156 CE) who is said to have created the first elixir of immortality at Mount Longhu (Dragon Tiger Mountain), after which a dragon and tiger appeared.<sup>134</sup> Ge Hong 葛洪 (*zi*: Zhi Chuan 稚川; 283 – 340 CE), a

---

<sup>133</sup> Stephen Little, *Realm of the Immortals: Daoism in the Arts of China* (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1988), 6.

<sup>134</sup> James C. Y. Watt, *The World of Khubilai Khan: Chinese Art of the Yuan Dynasty*

prominent Daoist philosopher and alchemist during the Six Dynasties period, wrote out extensive recipes for elixirs for immortality in the *Bao Pu Zi* 抱樸子 ([Book of the] master who praises simplicity). When commenting on the necessity for the mixing and taking of elixirs to become immortal, Ge wrote that “Taking the divine elixir, however, will produce an interminable longevity and make one coeval with sky and earth; it lets one travel up and down in Paradise, riding clouds and driving dragons.”<sup>135</sup> Thus, depending on the context, paintings of dragons as vehicles of Daoist immortals, or as flying in the clouds on their own, can be considered as symbols of *yang*, and by extension Daoist immortality.

### 2.3. Confucianism and the Dragon

Confucianism is an ancient Chinese ethical and philosophical system based on the teachings of Confucius or Kong Zi 孔子 (孔夫子; *zi*: Kong Qiu 孔丘; *hao*: Zhong Ni 仲尼; c. 551–479 BCE). Confucian philosophy centered on concepts of morality, righteousness, duty, and the ordering of correct relationships among all members of society, the

---

(New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art), 150.

<sup>135</sup> Stephen Little, *Realm of Immortals*, 6.

practice of which was largely based on self-cultivation. Respect for Confucius once again prevails in contemporary China today.<sup>136</sup>

In the history of Confucianism, the dragon motif has served as a metaphor for a great man. Lao Zi is said to have been at one time the scholar in charge of the calendar and archives at the court of the Zhou dynasty (1050-256 BCE). The Grand Historian Sima Qian records that it was during this time that Confucius once visited Lao Zi and requested to learn more about ritual, to which Lao Zi declined. Confucius' opinion of Lao Zi however, is reportedly one of admiration, as implied from this comment of their meeting:

Birds – I know they can fly; fish – I know they can swim; wild beasts – I know they can run. For those that run, I can make traps; for those that swim, I can weave silk threads; for those that fly, I can make arrows with a silk string attached to them. As for dragons, they are quite beyond me. By riding the wind and clouds, they soar to the skies. Today, I had an interview with Lao Tzu [Lao Zi]. He is indeed like a dragon!<sup>137</sup>

Furthermore, according to later legend, the birth of the Great Sage was preceded by the appearance of dragons. Marinus Visser recounts that on

---

<sup>136</sup> For more on the historical development of the cult of Confucius see Thomas A. Wilson, ed., *On Sacred Grounds: Culture, Society, Politics, and the Formation of the Cult of Confucius* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002); for the historical development of Confucius' portrait tradition, see Julia K. Murray, "The Temple of Confucius and Pictorial Biographies of the Sage," *Journal of Asian Studies* 55 no. 2 (May 1996): 269-300.

<sup>137</sup> Huang, *Tao Te Ching: A Literal Translation with Notes and Commentary*, 3. The mention of silk threads is in reference to making fishing lines, and short arrows attached with a silk string were used by the ancients to shoot and catch flying birds. Yang Xin also says that Confucius, upon meeting Laozi, recorded: "I saw a dragon today. It condenses into an entity and disperses into nothing. It rides on cloud, appears and disappears." See also Yang Xin, Li Yihua and Xu Naixiang, *The Art of the Dragon* (Boston: Shambhala, 1988).

the night of Confucius' birth in 551 BCE, two azure dragons descended from the sky and came to his mother's house. After seeing them in her dream, she gave birth to Confucius.<sup>138</sup>

### Section 3: Development of the Dragon's Visual Form

As an imaginary creature, the dragon's early morphology lacked specificity. K. C. Chang has noted that in the early second century Chinese dictionary *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* 說文解字, or "Explaining and Analyzing Characters" compiled by the Han dynasty scholar Xu Shen 許慎 (c. 58 – c. 147 CE), the dragon is described as "the chief of all scaled reptiles. It is sometimes dark, sometimes bright; sometimes small, sometimes big; sometimes short, sometimes long. It ascends to heaven at the spring equinox, and dives into the water at the autumn equinox."<sup>139</sup> Thus, the physical form of the dragon varied widely, and could not be identified as being an animal of the real-world. Therefore, antiquarians have likewise applied the term very flexibly to a variety of animal motifs.

The range of scholarly literature that focuses on the Chinese dragon and dragon imagery is overwhelming, and in depth study of examples of the dragon's early visual manifestations lies outside the

---

<sup>138</sup> Visser, 43. Visser notes this event was recorded in the *Shi Yi Ji* 拾遺記 or "Forgotten Tales," a compilation of early legendary Chinese history by Wang Jia 王嘉 (? – 390 CE) dated to the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE.

<sup>139</sup> K. C. Chang, *Art, Myth and Ritual: The Path to Political Authority in Ancient China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 59. The *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* is the first Chinese dictionary with character analysis and the first to organize characters by shared components (or radicals).



scope of this dissertation.<sup>140</sup> Scholars have noted dragon motifs and designs found on jade relics from the archaeological sites Yangshao (Henan province), Hongshan (Inner Mongolia, Liaoning and Hebei provinces) and Majiayao (Gansu and Qinghai provinces).<sup>141</sup> Chinese representations of dragons were also motifs on early ritual bronze wares used for food and wine offerings in the worship of ancestors. The primary motifs on many Shang dynasty (c. 1600-1046 BCE) bronze wares are the well-known *tao tie* 饕餮 or animal face and the *kui* 夔 or one-legged dragon.<sup>142</sup> The *taotie* and *kui* designs are often referred to as “quasi-dragons.”<sup>143</sup> Shang kings practiced a form of divination through the heating and cracking of ox shoulder blade and turtle plastron or underside inscribed with oracle bone script 甲骨文. In the late Shang dynasty (13<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> Century BCE) and Western Zhou dynasty (ca. 1100-771 BCE), we find small nephrite pendants with metamorphosing dragon motifs, notably where a dragon's tail ends in a bird's head, or where a fowl turns into a

---

<sup>140</sup> For discussion of early representations of dragons in art, see Chen Shouxiang's *Zhong Guo De Long* 中國的龍[Chinese Dragons] (Guangxi Guilin 廣西桂林市: Lijiang Chu Ban She 麗江出版社, 1988); Hugo Munsterberg, *Dragons in Chinese Art* (New York: China Institute in America, 1972); Jessica Rawson, *Chinese Ornament: The Lotus and the Dragon* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1984); Yang Xin, Li Yihua and Xu Naixiang, *The Art of the Dragon* (Boston: Shambhala, 1988).

<sup>141</sup> Zhao, *A Study of Dragons, East and West*, 17.

<sup>142</sup> Sarah Allan, *The Shape of the Turtle: Myth, Art, and Cosmos in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 128.

<sup>143</sup> Zhao, *A Study of Dragons, East and West*, 19.

fish, a dragon, a human, or vice versa.<sup>144</sup> This again further emphasizes the dragon's early flexible morphology. In such an early period in time, the visual physical transformation of the dragon was possibly intrinsic to its representation and recognition.

By the Han dynasty, if not earlier, animal symbolism of the four cardinal directions was codified, and included the dragon. The ancient Chinese conceived of five directions (east, south, west, north, and center), to which directly correlated to the Five Elements (*wu xing* 五行).<sup>145</sup> The animal symbols are as follows:

East	Wood	Dragon
South	Fire	Bird (Phoenix)
West	Metal	Tiger
North	Water	Dark Warrior / Black Tortoise
Center	Earth	(no symbol)

The East was represented by the Azure Dragon (*Qing long* 青龍 or *Cang long* 蒼龍), the south by the Vermilion Bird (*Zhu que* 朱雀), the West by the White Tiger (*Bai hu* 白虎), and the north by the Dark Warrior (*Xuan wu* 玄武), sometimes referred to as the Black Tortoise, and usually depicted as comprising an entwined turtle and snake. These four animals were known as the Four Divinities or *si shen* 四神. The dragon was considered

---

<sup>144</sup> Wen C. Fong and James C. Y. Watt, *Possessing the Past: Treasures from the National Palace Museum, Taipei* (New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc., 1996), 46-47.

<sup>145</sup> For more on the historical theories of *yin* and *yang* and the five elements, see William Theodore De Bary, et al., *Sources of Chinese Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), 96-99.

a symbol of *yang*, and the white tiger a symbol of *yin*, and are sometimes represented together in representation both forces.

The visual appearance of dragons was described in text in the Han dynasty. At this time, Wang Fu 王符 (ca. 85-162 CE) described all the physical features of a Chinese dragon and standardized these features as the “three joints and nine resemblances”:

Wang Fu says: The people paint the dragon’s shape with a horse’s head and a snake’s tail. Further, there are expressions as ‘three joints’ and ‘nine resemblances’ (of the dragon), to wit: from head to shoulder, from shoulder to breast, from breast to tail. These are the joints; as to the nine resemblances, they are the following: his horns resemble those of a stag, his head that of a camel, his eyes those of a demon, his neck that of a snake, his belly that of a clam, his scales those of a carp, his claws those of an eagle, his soles those of a tiger, his ears those of a cow. Upon his head he has a thing like a broad eminence (a big bump), called a *ch’ih mu* (*chi mu*; 尺木). If a dragon has no *ch’ih mu*, he cannot ascend to the sky.<sup>146</sup>

Wang Fu’s passage appears in the *Er Ya* 爾雅 (“Approaching Refinement”), a compilation of diverse commentaries and various pre-Qin dynasty texts considered the oldest Chinese dictionary encyclopedia

---

<sup>146</sup> Visser, 70. According to Guo Ruoxu in the Song dynasty, as translated by Alexander Soper, the painting of dragons should follow a particular model: “In painting dragons, [one should] bring out the distinction between the ‘three basic sections’; and differentiate between the ‘nine likenesses’; i.e., (the horns being like those of a deer; the head like a camel’s the eyes like a demon’s; the neck like a serpent’s; the belly like a sea-serpent’s; the scales like a fish’s; the talons like an eagle’s; the feet like a tiger’s; and the ears like a cow’s). One should fully express the wonders of their swimming and diving and wriggling, and catch aright the way they turn and coil and soar and descend. A further requisite of high quality is that the bristles of the mane and the hair on their hocks can be drawn with a strong, lively brush, so that they [will seem] to grow right out of the flesh.” See *Kuo Jo-Hsu’s Experiences in Painting (T’u-hua chien-wen chih): An Eleventh Century History of Chinese Painting Together with the Chinese Text in Facsimile*, Trans. Alexander C. Soper, 11.

extant.<sup>147</sup> According to Zhao Qiguang, dragons that differed in appearance from the “three joints and nine resemblances” were later further categorized into “quasi-dragons”: *ying long* (dragons with wings), *li long* (dragons without horns), *pan long* (dragons before ascending to the sky), *fei she* (flying snake-dragons), *long yu* (fish dragons), and *zhu long* (candle or fire dragons).<sup>148</sup> Marinus De Visser has noted from other sources that dragons were described as having exactly 81 scales, and quoting Wang Fu, the scales were like that of a carp. The idea of these scales follow closely to the legend that carp can transform into dragons if they are able to jump over the “dragon gate” located in the Yellow River, forming the later popular Chinese idiom “a carp jumping over the dragon gate” 鯉躍龍門 used to acclaim a scholar who earned first place in the Imperial examination, or any sort of rise in social status.

#### Section 4: Dragon Painters

The history of dragon painters and painting in China is long and illustrious. The origin of dragon painting was regarded to have begun with Fu Xi’s drawing of the Eight Trigrams. Regarding Fu Xi’s discovery of the *he tu* 河圖 or “Yellow River chart” to draw out the arrangement of the Eight Trigrams, Emperor Huizong’s *Xuan He Hua Pu* 宣和畫譜, the imperial

---

<sup>147</sup> The author of the *Er Ya* is unknown. The *Er Ya Yi* 爾雅翼 is a textual annotation of the *Er Ya* by Luo Yuan in the Song dynasty.

<sup>148</sup> See Zhao, *A Study of Dragons, East and West*, 18. For an early discussion of quasi-dragons, see *Chu Xue Ji* 初學記, a large Tang dynasty compilation by Xu Jian 徐堅 (659-729 CE).

painting catalogue of the Xuan He era (1119-1125 CE), states simply: “the chart emerged from the river, the characters out of Luo River, and tortoise and dragon painting started to be seen in this time” (河出圖, 洛出書, 而龜龍之畫始著見于時。)

In the early Song dynasty, successful dragon paintings demonstrated Wang Fu’s “three joints and nine resemblances.” To be skilled as a painter, and at painting dragons no less, was considered very difficult, for the dragon was an imaginary creature unseen by the human eye. As the Yuan dynasty art critic Tang Hou observed in the *Hua Jian* or “Mirror of Painting” regarding the difficulty of painting dragons in general:

One has to distinguish the spirit of horses in viewing horse paintings, and one has to recognize the transformations [of dragons] in dragon paintings. Therefore, dragon and horse paintings are most difficult. However, if one mainly focuses on the transformations [of dragons’ emergence], the brushwork would become reckless ink play and lack painting discipline; if [one] was restricted by the painting method, then the idea of transformation is lost. Therefore, painting dragons is especially difficult.<sup>149</sup>

Thus, according to Tang Hou, what is most difficult when speaking of dragon painting is the ability to strike a balance between proper brushwork while still capturing the dragon’s transformative and divine spirit.

The following section is a chronological discussion of some famous Chinese painters who were skilled at painting dragons, based on historical textual accounts. Some of the painters discussed are better known for their talents in other painting subjects, such as landscapes or figures. The

---

<sup>149</sup> Chou, *A Study and Translation from the Chinese of Tang Hou’s Huajian (Examination of Painting)*, 133.

purpose of this section is to highlight their accomplishments in dragon painting in order to better understand their individual stylistic contributions to the dragon's painted development.

The famous Tang dynasty art connoisseur Zhang Yanyuan 張彥遠, in his *Li Dai Ming Hua Ji* or “Record of Famous Paintings in History,” identifies Cao Buxing 曹不興 (sometimes known as Cao Fuxing 曹弗興; act. early third century CE) of the Wu Kingdom (222-280 CE) of the Three Kingdoms period as the first master of dragon painting. The art critic Xie He, in his *Gu Hua Pin Lu* 古畫品錄 or “Old Record of the Classifications of Painters,” writes that while examples of Cao's dragon painting rarely exist, one cannot deny their excellent quality: “The works of [Buxing] are scarcely any of them preserved. Only in the secret pavilion [private chamber in the Imperial Palace] a single dragon [or dragon head] and that is all. Considering its noble character, how can one say that his fame was built upon nothing.”<sup>150</sup> (“不興之跡，殆不復傳。唯秘閣之內，一龍而已。觀其風骨。名豈虛成。”) Xie He is known for particularly appreciating and treasuring Cao's dragon paintings, for when he saw a dragon head painted by Cao in a private chamber of the imperial palace, he exclaimed “This is just like looking at a real dragon.”

---

<sup>150</sup> Xie He, *Gu Hua Pin Lu* 古畫品錄, translated from William R. B. Acker, *Some T'ang and Pre-T'ang Texts on Chinese Painting* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1954), 7-8. Zhang Yanyuan identified “one dragon” as “one dragon head.” The “secret pavilion” refers to a private chamber in the Imperial Palace.

(謝赫閱秘府所藏畫, 獨愛曹不興畫龍, 以謂龍首若見真龍。) <sup>151</sup> It is also recorded that during a month of drought in the time of Song Wendi (407-453 CE), prayers to rain were performed with no result, until Cao's painting of dragons was arranged upon the water, resulting in 10 days of heavy rain (至宋文帝時, 累月亢旱, 祈禱無應, 乃取弗興畫龍置于水上, 應時蓄水霧, 經旬霽霽。) <sup>152</sup> In addition to his skill in dragon painting, Cao is also recognized for his figure painting. As noted in Tang Hou's *Hua Jian* or "Examination of Painting," Tang relates: "In ancient times Cao Fuxing [or Buxing] was praised for his skill in painting. He did figure painting [in which] the folds of the drapery were wrinkled. Masters in painting say "Cao's drapery [looks as if it] has been taken out of the water; Wu's [Daozi] drapery [looks as if it] was just [blown by] the wind." <sup>153</sup> While none of Cao's paintings exist today, Tang's observation suggests that Cao modelled human forms using a "wet drapery" style, where clothing clung closely to the body, thus emphasizing the figure's shape, in contrast to Wu's painting style, whose lines famously wavered and fluttered, with alternating thicknesses, to create movement.

---

<sup>151</sup> *Huang Chuan Hua Ba* 廣川畫跋. Chinese quote is taken from Liu Zhigui 劉治貴. *Zhong Guo Hui Hua Yuan Liu* 中國繪畫源流 [Studies on Chinese Painting] (Henan: Henan Mei Shu Chu Ban She, 2003).

<sup>152</sup> From Liu Zhigui 劉治貴, *Zhong Guo Hui Hua Yuan Liu* 中國繪畫源流 [Studies on Chinese Painting] (Henan: Henan Mei Shu Chu Ban She, 2003) 425. The arrangement of Cao's dragon paintings upon water could be a reference to a particular rain invocation ritual practice, although this is not confirmed.

<sup>153</sup> Chou, *A Study and Translation from the Chinese of Tang Hou's Huajian (Examination of Painting)*, 107.

During the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern dynasties (420-581 CE) or Six Kingdoms period, artists noted as great dragon painters include famous figures such as Gu Kaizhi 顧愷之 and Zhang Sengyou 張僧繇. Gu Kaizhi (zi: Chang Kang 長康; hao: Hu Tou 虎頭; ca. 345-406 CE) is well known as a master painter and writer, and is particularly noted for excelling at painting figures and portraits, and for his ability to capture a person's true likeness. Gu's paintings today are known mainly through later copies, such as *Wise and Benevolent Women* (Palace Museum, Beijing) and *Admonitions of the Court Instructress to the Palace Ladies* (British Museum). Gu's painting of individual dragons apparently do not survive, however we can gather a sense of his fine painted lines from other scrolls attributed to him, such as in the long handscroll *Nymph of the Luo River* (Figure 27).<sup>154</sup> The scroll illustrates a poem written by Cao Zhi (192-232) which tells the tale of a love story between the poet and a nymph. The opening scene illustrates the poet standing on the riverbank, meeting the nymph on the waves. She is later shown accompanied by several divine animals, and seated in a chariot drawn by six dragons. The dragons are elongated and delineated with fine even lines as they soar and leap within the sky, reminiscent of the manner in which Gu famously portrayed female figures. Gu is well known for his particular employment

---

<sup>154</sup> This painting is attributed to Gu Kaizhi (Jin dynasty), undated, handscroll, ink and color on silk, 27.1 cm x 572.7 cm. Three copies survive of this scroll *Nymph of the Luo River* and are located at the National Palace Museum in Taiwan, the Liaoning Provincial Museum, and the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. The copy that I focus on is a Southern Song dynasty copy is the one at the Freer Gallery of Art.



of a “silkworm” line (絲線白描), a thin, unmodulated, tensile line like the gossamer thread spun by a silkworm, for defining individual figures in his paintings. When considering the Song dynasty copy of the the *Nymph of the Luo River* above, the copyist similarly employed a thin even line to illustrate the Nymph and to outline each of the six dragons that pull her chariot. Thus, we are able to gain a sense of what Gu’s original dragon painting style might have looked like.

Zhang Sengyou’s talent for painting dragons is highlighted in the idiom *hua long dian jing* 畫龍點睛 or “to bring the painted dragon to life by adding vitality to its eyes,” which is based on the legend of when Zhang once painted four dragons on the walls of An Le temple 安樂寺 in Jing Ling 金陵 :

Onlookers were puzzled when they saw that he had not painted the eyes. He explained that if he painted the eyes, the dragons would fly away. People did not believe him and urged him to paint the eyes. When he added the eyes to two of the dragons, the two dragons suddenly flew to a sky filled with thunder and lightning. The two dragons without eyes remained on the wall.<sup>155</sup>

Zhang’s actual dragon painted style is not known. One long handscroll attributed to Zhang, *The Five Planets and the Twenty-Eight Constellations*, does not show any representations of dragons specifically, however it does show examples of painted figures and animals. In the representation of the planet Saturn, a man is seated atop an ox (Figure

---

<sup>155</sup> Zhao, *A Study of Dragons, East and West*, 24. This legendary event was originally recorded in the Tang dynasty by Zhang Yanyuan in *Li Dai Ming Hua Ji* (Record of Famous Paintings in History).

28). Both figures are rendered using a particular shading technique, which emphasizes the musculature of each. This is in sharp contrast to Gu Kaizhi's famed technique of thin line and flat color. It is possible that Zhang's painting technique, when painting dragons, emphasized the dragon's full, bodily form and musculature through the use of shading brushwork techniques.

Aside from Cao Buxing, Gu Kaizhi and Zhang Sengyou, from the Six Dynasties period through to the Song dynasty, there were many painters who were known for their representation of dragons, yet of their dragon painting styles we know very little of; the artists are briefly listed here. Painters who excelled at dragon painting active during the Six Dynasties Period according to the *Li Dai Ming Hua Ji* were Wang Yi 王廙, Yuan Qian 袁倩, Mao Huiyuan 毛惠遠, Zhang Caoyao 張僧繇, and Yang Zhihua 楊子華. During the Tang dynasty, there were many great painters such as Li Yuanjia 李元嘉, Wu Daozi 吳道子 and Feng Shaozheng 馮紹正 who were recognized for their skill in painting dragons. Of Li Yuanjia, *Li Dai Ming Hua Shi* 歷代名畫史 notes that he was “Good at painting dragons, horses, tigers and leopards” (善畫龍馬虎豹). Regarding Wu Daozi, the *Tang Chao Ming Hua Lu* 唐朝名畫錄 or “Record of Famous Painters of the Tang dynasty” states that he “painted five dragons in the inner palace, their scaly armor as though flying in movement, on the day that it is going to rain, they produce smoke and fog/mist” (又畫內殿五龍,

其鱗甲飛動，每天欲雨，即生煙霧。 ). Feng Shaozheng 馮紹正 (sometimes with the character 政) also painted dragons for the imperial court. The *Li Dai Ming Hua Ji* 歷代名畫記 states that Feng “painted five dragons in service to the Imperial Court, and he also received a reputation for being good at dragon paintings. [The painting of five dragons] has given the feeling of ocean cloud and stored rain” (曾于禁中畫五龍堂，亦稱其善，有洋雲蓄雨之感。 ). The *Tang Chao Ming Hua Lu* 唐朝名畫錄 comments that during the Kaiyuan period (開元; 713-741 CE) there was a great drought, and the emperor ordered Feng to paint dragons on the walls of a newly constructed pavilion by a dragon pool: “Shaozheng first painted the four walls with uncoloured dragons, their forms winding, vibrating and rushing forth. The painting was not yet half way done, and as though wind and cloud were awakened by the brush and born. The emperor and many officials were watching this from below the wall, [their] scaly armour all moist. Before he finished adding color, white dragons from the eaves were going in and out of the pool. The wind and waves surged up violently, with clouds and lightning followed” (紹政乃先于四壁畫素龍，其狀蜿蜒，如欲振涌。繪事未半，若風雲隨筆而生。上與眾官于壁下觀之，鱗甲皆濕。設色未終，有白龍自檐間，風波洶涌，雲電隨起。 ) Other good dragon painters were artists such as Wei Jian 韋鑿, Sun Wei 孫位, Diao Guangyin 刁光胤, Jing Huan 景煥 and Miao Long 苗龍. We find short excerpts that briefly mention their skill of dragon painting as well as the

painting of other subjects. The *Xuan He Hua Pu* states that Wei Jian was “good at painting dragons and horses... those moving in the sky, none of them like dragons, those moving on the ground, none of them like horses, only Jian’s dragons and horses have achieved both in fame.”

(善畫龍馬……且行天者莫如龍，行地者莫如馬，而鑿獨以龍馬得名。) Of

Sun Wei, his painted dragons also achieved fame; therefore the *Tu Hui*

*Bao Jian* 圖繪寶鑒 states that: “Of generations that painted dragons in

water, only Wei was good at it” (世稱龍水，尤位所長。). Of Diao

Guangyin, the Song dynasty art critic Guo Ruoxu in his “Experiences in

Painting” 圖畫見聞志 tells us that Diao was “skilled at painting dragons in

water, bamboo and rock, bird and flower, cat and rabbit”

(工畫龍水竹石花鳥貓兔。). Artists active during the Five Dynasties period

(907-960 CE) who were recorded as skilled dragon painters include

Huang Quan 黃荃 and Kong Song 孔嵩. Guo Ruoxu’s *Experiences in*

*Painting* 圖畫見聞志 notes that Huang was skilled at painting dragons in

water, and that Kong Song was “Good at painting dragons” (善畫龍). It is

hoped that more study will be undertaken in the future so that their

individual dragon styles may be further elaborated on.

During the Song dynasty, the tradition of dragon painting was expanded to include new themes. Hong-Mei Sung has argued that representations of dragons during the Song dynasty were influenced by changing aesthetic concerns and concepts of nature in development

during this period, writing that Song dynasty dragon painters “spent more time contemplating the dragons’ interactions with their surroundings (clouds, mists, rain, thunder, and wind), and their changing moods and activities.”<sup>156</sup> Furthermore, it was during the Northern Song dynasty (960-1127 CE) that dragon painting emerged as its own independent genre of painting, according to Emperor Huizong’s *Xuan He Hua Pu* 宣和畫譜, the imperial painting catalogue of the Xuan He era (1119-1125 CE), when previously paintings of dragons were included with all other animals.<sup>157</sup>

In the Northern Song dynasty period, artists such as Dong Yu 董羽, the Buddhist monk Zhuanggu 僧傳古 were famous for their depictions of dragons. As discussed in the previous chapter, Dong Yu’s dragon paintings were known for their lifelike quality and he achieved fame for them during his own time.<sup>158</sup> Monk Zhuanggu (active ca. 960s) is sometimes classified as a Five Dynasties artist as well as a Song dynasty artist. The Yuan dynasty writer Tang Hou expressed his admiration as well as criticism for Zhuanggu’s dragons: “Monk Zhuanggu made dragons whose shapes and strength surpassed (those of) Dong Yu.... Throughout my life, I have paid close attention to observe dragon paintings. It is impossible now to see dragons done by the Duke of Ye. ... [For] dragons

---

<sup>156</sup> Hou-Mei Sung, *Decoded Messages: The Symbolic Language of Chinese Animal Painting* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 122.

<sup>157</sup> See *Xuan He Hua Pu* 宣和畫譜, particularly the “dragon and fish” *long yu xu lun* section.

<sup>158</sup> See Chapter One of this dissertation, under Chen Rong’s Painting.

done by [Monk] Zhuanggu of the Five dynasties, I have also seen approximately fifteen or sixteen copies and have collected three copies. The dragons are painted mainly in the posture of sinuous ascension, and Zhuanggu was somehow restricted by the painting method.”<sup>159</sup> Interestingly, Dong Yu’s and Zhuanggu’s dragons were often compared to one another. In the Song dynasty text *Hua Ji* 畫鑿 or “Painting, Continued”, the author Deng Chun 鄧椿 notes that the “Buddhist monk Zhuanggu’s dragon style surpassed Dong Yu. However, his skill in composing water was less than Dong Yu” ( 僧傳古龍體勢勝董羽，作水甚不逮。 ”).

Other artists noted for their skill in painting dragons during the Northern Song period include Xun Xing 荀信, Wang Xiandao 王顯道, Qi Huayuan 戚化元, and Ren Congyi 任從一.<sup>160</sup> In fact, many Northern Song artists who are famous for their paintings of other subjects, such as figures, landscapes and bird and flower, were also skilled at painting dragons. Such artists include Sun Zhiwei 孫知微, Dong Yuan 董源 and Li

---

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Liu Zhigui 劉治貴, *Zhong Guo Hui Hua Yuan Liu* 中國繪畫源流 [Studies on Chinese Painting] (Henan: Henan Mei Shu Chu Ban She, 2003), 429-30, notes the following sources regarding the artists Xun Xing, Wang Xiandao, Qi Huayuan and Ren Congyi: 荀信, 《圖畫見聞志》云：“工畫龍水...” (Of Xun Xing, the *Tu Hua Jian Wen Zhi* says: “skilled at painting dragons in water...”); 王顯道, 《畫繼》云：“本餅師, 后學道, 專心畫龍, ...” (Of Wang Xiandao, the *Hua Ji* (Yuan Dynasty) says: “Originally a master of pastry (?), later studied Daoism, focused on painting dragons...”); 戚化元, 《圖繪寶鑿》云：“家世畫水, 化元兼工魚龍。” (Of Qi Huayuan, the *Tu Hui Bao Jian* says: “paints water, variations originally skilled at fish and dragon.”); 任從一, 《圖畫見聞志》云：“工畫龍水海魚, 為時稱賞。” (Of Ren Congyi, *Tu Hua Jian Wen Zhi* says: “good at painting dragons in water and ocean fish, served the taste of the time...”).

Cheng 李成. According to the *Hua Shi* 畫史, Sun Zhiwei's "painted dragons had spirit, and are not common" (畫龍有神采, 不俗也。).

According to the *Xuan He Hua Pu*, Dong Yuan 董源 (also character Yuan 元), best known for his landscape paintings, was "good at painting, a lot of works of mountain rock and dragons in water" (善畫, 多作山石水龍。).

Furthermore, Xia Wenyan's *Tu Hui Bao Jian* comments that Dong was "skilled at dragons in water, none of which have not achieved the finest quality" (兼工龍水, 無不臻妙。). In the *Xuan He Hua Pu*, Li Cheng 李成 is noted for being "good at painting dragons in water, which is another rarity" (或云又兼善畫龍水, 亦奇絕也。).

During the Southern Song dynasty, of painters who achieved fame painting dragons there was of course Chen Rong. In addition to Chen Rong, there are also two other artists mentioned in historical texts as being skilled at painting dragons, including Yi Shu 艾淑 and the Monk Fachang 僧法常. The *Tu Hui Bao Jian* notes that Yi Shu was "with and in the same class as Chen Suo Weng [Chen Rong], his paintings of dragon forms are famous" (與陳所翁同舍, 畫龍俱得名。), and also that Monk Fachang was skilled at painting dragons and tigers. Through the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties, we find stories of other artists famed for their depictions of dragons.

This brief overview of dragon painters in Chinese art history is only a beginning; examples of their dragon paintings have not been identified

among extant paintings, and reconstruction of their dragon painting style is beyond the focus of this dissertation. Clearly, the practice of dragon painting began from a very early period; it was engaged by many illustrious painters and continues to be practiced by Chinese artists even today.



### Chapter 3: The Nine Dragons Scroll

This chapter will discuss Chen Rong's *Nine Dragons* scroll 九龍圖 and explore its interplay of historic Buddhist, Daoist, Confucian, mythological, and folkloric ideas through an analysis of the painting and its inscriptions. In addition to visual analysis, I examine and discuss Chen Rong's original inscriptions. I then compare them with existing inscription translations, specifically by Tseng Hsien-chi, and offer an expanded interpretation.

#### Viewing the *Nine Dragons* scroll

Chen Rong's *Nine Dragons* scroll is dated to 1244. The scroll measures over a thousand centimeters in length and is currently the longest surviving painted dragon scroll. Upon opening the scroll and starting from right to left, Chen Rong's *Nine Dragons* scroll begins with a partial view of mountain rock hidden by cloud. Suddenly, we see the curve of a scaly leg and tail of the first dragon stretched by two rocky formations across a rushing waterfall. The dragon is perched, his claws clinging to rock, his gaze and whiskers flying upwards. The dragon's body is coiled, as though about to spring forwards. The second dragon is shown in mid-flight, his body fully extended, emerging from a bank of clouds out of shadow. The dragon's eyes direct backwards to the first dragon, his four-talon claws outstretched. Amidst a swirl of clouds, the third dragon is hunched over and upon rock, claws open. The fourth

dragon plays within crashing waves. The dragon's claws grasp a pearl, his mouth open in celebration. The dragon appears to be rushing towards a swirling vortex within the water. The fifth and sixth dragons appear to be in contention, with the fifth dragon's body appearing to jump up as though pulled backwards while the sixth dragon's mouth is open as though in mid-scold. These two dragons' physical appearances are quite different; unlike the fifth dragon, the sixth dragon lacks horns and his scales appear to be smaller, tighter, and rendered with lighter touches of ink. Furthermore, the sixth dragon's mane appears more lengthy and grayed, in contrast to the fifth dragon. Following the pair is a rushing waterfall and rolling waves. Within the foam and powerful rushing torrential waves, the seventh dragon rolls playfully in and out. The eighth dragon appears to burst out and soar above the waves, mouth and claws open, with eyes aimed upwards and feet and arms climbing high above the limits of the scroll itself. The ninth dragon is landed and sprawled upon a rock, his body coiled, his head facing back towards the scroll's beginning.

The nine dragons, whether soaring above or resting below, whether happy or angry, exude many different states of transformation. While the dragons appear similar to one another, each is quite individual upon closer inspection. The scales on each dragon are unique in pattern and thickness, giving each dragon its own individual appearance. Spread open, the *Nine Dragons* scroll creates its own atmosphere, where its empty areas and filled areas reflect one another. With the addition of

Chen Rong's inscriptions, the scroll combines the same person's painting of dragons with poetry and calligraphy all in one scroll. The "vitality of spirit" within Chen Rong's *Nine Dragons* scroll is undeniable. While each dragon possesses individual characteristics, the question remains: is each dragon separate, or are they all images of the same dragon? Each animal is separately conceived and yet possibly part of an interconnected whole. With the dragon's initial entrance perched readily to jump, to his rise and fall, to finally coming to a rest, looking back to indicate from where it came. The dragons themselves, amongst the water and clouds, are visual representations of water and cloud, and of nature's undeniable power. Although the painting overall shows different groupings of dragons in episodic intervals, the work as a whole is suggestive of an integrated composition that embraces the continuity of an implied narrative.

### Technique

The *Nine Dragons* scroll was painted on paper primarily in monochromatic black ink with faint touches of red ink throughout. The surfaces of the rocks and mountains are represented through the use of *fu pi cun* 斧劈皴 or axe-cut strokes, a texture stroke in which the brush is obliquely laid to the surface and quickly pulled away in a chopping manner. He alternates larger and smaller axe-cut strokes; these rock surfaces appear akin to the mountain rock landscape styles of famed Northern Song monumental landscape painters Fan Kuan and Li Tang.

To delineate each dragon, Chen Rong used the technique of *gong bi* 工筆, a highly detailed and careful brushstroke technique that requires that one draw with fine lines first and then add layers of washes of ink and color on top. He used a lighter ink first as the base and then used a thicker ink on top, running his brush over and over it again in order to create even more detail. Scholars have noted the presence of cloth marks from where Chen Rong likely splashed and smeared ink with his hands and wiped ink away with a piece of cloth, as well as multiple areas where he splashed and sprayed ink by whipping the handle of his brush.<sup>161</sup> Chen created a shadow effect through the use of dry brushwork and wet black ink slowly wiped away. The warp and weft of the original cloth he used to wipe away ink has left distinctive markings upon the surface. The dragons' horns are touched with the slightest of color, providing varied tone and depth.

With his detailed rendering of the dragons, Chen Rong attempted to create a realistic illusion. However, the subject of the Chinese dragon, as an imaginary creature that is not seen by the human eye, allows for a certain degree of freedom of expression. A professional artist would have created a much more polished appearance, and possibly evened out the tone, however Chen Rong's application of color in certain areas of the dragon is more haphazard and casual, resulting in areas that are flat and non-realistic. Chen Rong's ink lines are not consistently even. This

---

<sup>161</sup> Tseng, "A Study of the Nine Dragons Scroll," 26.

suggests that Chen Rong was somewhat of a follower of expressive literati principles, as he does not place heavy importance on perfecting such details. In this way, there is a suggestion of spontaneity and freedom of expression, evocative of a literati spirit.

### Calligraphy

On the *Nine Dragons* scroll, Chen Rong's calligraphy style is in a semi-cursive or "running" script reminiscent of the simplified style of Tang dynasty calligrapher Yan Zhenqing 顏真卿 (709-785). Born in the Tang capital of Chang'an, Yan was a famous statesman who served many high-ranking positions including Minister of Justice. His loyalty to the Imperial house was unflinching, and he is famously known for organizing a resistance behind rebel lines during the An Lu Shan 安祿山 rebellion. As a result of his actions, Yan was hanged and died as a martyr for refusing to collaborate with the rebels. Yan was a prolific calligrapher and produced many stele inscriptions. His style of calligraphic script came to be conflated with his legendary virtues; in the eyes of later critics, Yan's calligraphy was seen to embody the upright morality, loyalty, integrity and heroism of the Tang age.<sup>162</sup> Yan was a master of regular script, like his contemporary Liu Gongquan 柳公權 (778-865), who was also a great calligrapher, and the two are often associated together. Like Yan's regular

---

<sup>162</sup> For a thorough study of Yan Zhenqing's history and calligraphy and Yan's influence during Song dynasty, see Amy McNair, *The Upright Brush*.

script, Chen's style of writing is also vigorous, and his strokes are broader in structure, while at the same time Chen adopts the sharp angularity and strength of Liu Gongquan's calligraphy style.

Chen Rong's utilizes short and bold chopped strokes in creating his characters, thus creating strong diagonal lines throughout, reminiscent of the calligraphy style of the master Mi Fu. Northern Song artist Mi Fu 米芾 (1052-1107) was born in Taiyuan, Shangxi province. Mi was a literatus who served in official positions for the Imperial court but was also well known for his painting and calligraphy.<sup>163</sup> Known for his eccentric behaviour, he garnered the nickname of "Mi the Crazy" or "Madman Mi." He devoted his free time to the study and collection of ancient calligraphy, paintings and garden rocks, wrote books on calligraphy, and was associated with the greatest literati of his day. A contemporary of Mi, the famed writer and poet Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101) described Mi's cursive calligraphy as "a sailboat in a gust of wind, or a warhorse charging into battle."<sup>164</sup> Mi's calligraphy was sometimes severe and angular, while at other times completely abstract and unbridled.

---

<sup>163</sup> For a study of Mi Fu's biography and calligraphy style, see Peter Sturman, *Mi Fu: Style and the Art of Calligraphy in Northern Song China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

<sup>164</sup> Wen C. Fong, "Chinese Calligraphy: Theory and History," in Robert Harrist and Wen C. Fong, *The Embodied Image*, 51. Fong notes that Mi characterized his own brushwork as "'scrubbing' with a brush."

## The Artist's First Inscription

The *Nine Dragons* scroll contains two inscriptions by the artist: a long inscription at the end of the scroll, and a short inscription at the beginning. The short inscription, while located at the beginning of the scroll, was actually written at a later date. Below is a discussion of Chen Rong's lengthier or main inscription, located at the end of the painting. This inscription was most likely written shortly after the scroll was painted. To better understand and explain the various meanings and associations regarding the interpretation of each line, the poem has been numerically identified in paired lines. The inscription is in the form of a classical Chinese poetry verse form *lu shi* 律詩, with eight lines of five, six or seven characters (in this case seven characters) and even lines of rhyming. In addition, Chen Rong's inscription also employs a type of *jue ju* 絕句, a poetry form consisting of four lines that may be interpreted together. The following transcription of Chen Rong's inscription is based upon the scroll's entry in Emperor Qianlong's Imperial art catalogue *Shi Qu Bao Ji* 石渠寶笈 or "Treasured Boxes of the Stone Channel," which recorded all of the scroll's inscriptions up to Emperor Qianlong's acquisition of the scroll. Unless otherwise stated, the English translations are my own.

1. 楚中寫鑿真龍窺  
金陵點眼雙龍飛,
2. 諸梁羽化張亦去  
雌雄笑殺劉洞微
3. 八軸吳龍不堪掛  
醉余吐出胸中畫
4. 龍門三峽浪如山  
從與漲天聲大價
5. 飛龍出峽駕春江  
九河之勢不敢降
6. 一龍天池戴赤木  
菌蠢猛省雲霧邦
- In the state of Chu, a real dragon peeped at dragon art engravings.  
In Jinling, a pair of dragons flew away after the pupils of their eyes were dotted [with vitality of spirit].
- Zhu Liang ascended to heaven and became an immortal, Zhang [Sengyou] is also gone.  
The dragon couple laughs dismissively at Liu Dongwei.
- The eight scrolls of Wu's dragons could not be hung.  
Intoxicated, I spew out this painting from within.
- The waves of Longmen at the Three Gorges swell like mountains,  
Instantly rising to heaven with a huge sound.
- A flying dragon emerges from the gorge and sails over the Spring river,  
The force of the Nine Rivers cannot tame him.
- A dragon from the pond of heaven has a *chi mu* on his head.  
In the land of mist and cloud, fungus sprouts vigorously.



7. 鈞天奇女又遭謫  
The talented celestial maiden is banished to a distant place by Jun Tian [the lord of heaven] again.
- 雷公擘山天地黑  
The God of Thunder strikes open the mountains, heaven and earth become dark.
8. 玉龍皎皎摩蒼崖  
The glistening white jade dragon scrapes against the highest cliffs.
- 蟠虬似避陽陵客  
Coiled dragon and serpent avoid visitors to Yangling.
9. 鼉鼻睡起金蛇奔  
Golden lightning flashed like a snake when the dragon awoke.
- 嶄然頭角當海門  
The towering horns on his head are equal to the gate of the sea.
10. 摩牙厲爪攫明月  
His large teeth, his sharp talons seize the bright moon.
- 天吳起舞搖天根  
Tian Wu [water god] dances, shaking the star of Tian Gen.
11. 雲頭教子掣金鎖  
Over the clouds, the dragon teaches his sons to flash lightning
- 第五圖中龍最老  
The fifth one in the picture, that dragon is the oldest.
12. 兩龍遍活黎與蒸  
Two dragons with timely rainfall relieve all living things.
- 馬鬣夜半天瓢倒  
The horse's mane knocked over the Ladle of Heaven in the night.

13. 桃花浪暖透三層  
禹門岌嶮誰敢登
- In the warm peach blossom season, three layers of waves splash [from carp jumping over the dragon gate].  
Yu Men [Longmen, the dragon gate], who dares to climb it?
14. 蒼髯絳鬣火燒尾  
十月霹靂隨飛騰
- Blue-green whiskers and deep red beards with powerful fiery red tail.  
In the tenth month, with a clap of thunder, they soared upwards.
15. 蜀侯高臥南陽武  
貌出全形奇且古
- The Marquis of Shu is in peaceful seclusion in Wu county in Nanyang.  
The physical appearance of the figures is unusual and antique.
16. 神功收斂待時來  
天下蒼生望霖雨
- They restrain their supernatural power waiting for their opportunity in the future.  
All the living creatures under heaven hope for good rain.
17. 所翁寫之九龍圖  
筆端妙處世所無
- Suo Weng [Chen Rong] has painted the picture of nine dragons.  
There is none in this world that can match the ingenious quality of the tip of his brush.

18. 遠觀雲水似飛動  
 即之疑是神所摹  
 宣城龍公生九子  
 畫入老翁圖畫裏  
 20. 阿誰為我屠雙牛  
 一牛莫著金籠頭  
 21. 九鹿之圖跋於涪翁  
 九馬之圖贊於坡老  
 所翁之龍雖非鹿馬  
 並然欲倣蘇黃二先生贊跡  
 則余豈敢  
 姑述以誌歲月
- When viewing from a distance,  
 clouds and water appear in swift  
 motion.  
 Up close, the artist's hand is  
 undoubtedly blessed by a divine  
 power.  
 The Dragon King of Xuan Cheng  
 had nine sons,  
 They entered venerable Weng's  
 painting.  
 Who will skillfully paint two cows  
 for me?  
 As a cow, do not wear the golden  
 bridle.  
 The Picture of Nine Deer was  
 inscribed by Fu Weng [Huang  
 Tingjian].  
 The Picture of Nine Horses was  
 praised by Po Lao [Su Shi].  
 Suo Weng's dragons cannot  
 compare to these deer and  
 horses.  
 Wishing to emulate both Master  
 Su's and Master Huang's  
 praiseworthy talent.  
 How then do I dare to try to follow  
 and surpass them?  
 I tentatively record this in a year  
 of my life.

## Analysis of the Artist's First Inscription

1.

楚中寫鑿真龍窺

In the state of Chu, a real dragon peeped at Dragon art engravings.

金陵點眼雙龍飛，

In Jinling, a pair of dragons flew away after the pupils of their eyes were dotted [with vitality of spirit].

楚中寫鑿真龍窺

In the state of Chu, a real dragon peeped at Dragon art engravings.

Chen Rong's inscription begins with a reference to a famous historical tale of Zi Gao 子高 (otherwise known as Shen Zhuliang 沈諸梁; c. 529 – after 478 BCE), the Duke of Ye 葉公 (or 葉公子高), who lived during the Spring and Autumn period in the State of Chu (楚).<sup>165</sup> This particular opening line relates to a story about the Duke Ye, who was known for being a great admirer of dragons (葉公好龍), so much so that he had them engraved and painted all over his houses and halls.<sup>166</sup> One day, a dragon heard about the Duke's great admiration for dragons, and decided to pay the Duke a visit. When the dragon peeped through the window, his tail reaching through the hall, the Duke was incredibly frightened, did not

---

<sup>165</sup> The ancient state of Chu was, in the latter part of the Zhou dynasty, roughly the region of the Yangzi Valley below the gorges and as far as Shandong province, currently in the Hunan, Hubei area.

<sup>166</sup> The complete retelling of the story is found in the *Xin Xu* 新序 by Liu Xiang 劉向, dated to 80-9 BCE, scroll 10, and is a recounting by Zi Zhang 子張 who had gone to visit the Duke Ai 哀 of the State of Lu. He waited for seven days and Duke Ai refused to see him, thus the Zi Zhang drew parallels between Duke Ai and Duke Ye.

know what to do, and ran away. Thus, the Duke was not really a true lover of dragons.

Shen Zhuliang's father, General Shen Yinshu 沈尹戌, was a great grandson of King Zhuang of Chu 楚莊王, and died in the Battle of Boju 柏舉之戰 in 506 BCE. After his father's death, King Zhao of Chu 楚昭王 gave Shen the deed to the land of Ye (in present-day Ye County of Henan Province) in the northern frontier of the Chu kingdom in exchange for a pledge of service (enfeoffment). Hence known as Ye Gong (Duke of Ye), he became a prominent general and statesmen in the Kingdom of Chu. In 489 BCE, Confucius visited Shen Zhuliang in Ye, and their conversations were recorded in the Analects of Confucius.<sup>167</sup>

---

<sup>167</sup> For passages in the Confucian Analects of Confucius in conversation with the Duke of Ye, see *Confucian Analects*, Books 7 and 13, in James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, 5 Vols. Reprint. (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960).

**Book 7:**

述而: 葉公問孔子於子路, 子路不對。子曰: 「女奚不曰, 其為人也, 發憤忘食, 樂以忘憂, 不知老之將至云爾。」

Shu Er: The Duke of Ye asked Zi Lu about Confucius, and Zi Lu did not answer him. Confucius said: "Why did you not say to him, 'He is simply a man, who in his eager pursuit of knowledge forgets his food, who in the joy of its attainment forgets his sorrows, and who does not perceive that old age is coming on?'"

**Book 13:**

子路: 葉公問政。子曰: 「近者說, 遠者來。」

Zi Lu: The Duke of Ye asked about government. Confucius said: "Good government obtains, when those who are near are made happy, and those who are far off are attracted."

子路: 葉公語孔子曰: 「吾黨有直躬者, 其父攘羊, 而子證之。」孔子曰: 「吾黨之直者異於是。父為子隱, 子為父隱, 直在其中矣。」

Zi Lu: The Duke of Ye informed Confucius, saying, "Among us here there are those who may be styled upright in their conduct. If their father has stolen a sheep, they will bear witness to the fact." Confucius said, "Among us, in our part of the country, those who are upright are different from this. The father conceals the misconduct of the son, and the son conceals the misconduct of the father. Uprightness is to be found in this."

金陵點眼雙龍飛，

In Jinling, a pair of dragons flew away after the pupils of their eyes were dotted [with vitality of spirit].

In this line, Chen Rong references the famous dragon painter Zhang Sengyou 張僧繇, active during the Southern and Northern Dynasties, and the legend of when Zhang once painted four dragons on the walls of An Le temple 安樂寺 in Jinling 金陵 (present-day Nanjing) that came alive and flew away from the wall once their eyes were dotted.<sup>168</sup> This story is the foundation for the idiom *hua long dian jing* 畫龍點睛 or “to bring the painted dragon to life by adding vitality to its eyes,” which is used to reference not only the legendary skill of Zhang Shengyou and the lifelike quality of his painted dragons, but also of the idea of the importance of adding a “finishing touch,” a key with which to drive home a point, giving the work more power.

The concept of “adding vitality to the eyes” is also relatable to another famed figure painter, Gu Kaizhi, who was known for his preoccupation and detailed attention when dotting the eyes as a means to express the subject’s vitality of spirit. As eloquently stated by Audrey Spiro, “For Gu Kaizhi, ‘dotting the eyes transmits the spirit and pours forth

---

<sup>168</sup> This legendary event was originally recorded in the Tang dynasty by Zhang Yanyuan in *Li Dai Ming Hua Ji* (Record of Famous Paintings in History) and discussed in Chapter Two of this dissertation. When the Sui dynasty reunified China, the city of Jinling was razed and turned into a small town. It was reconstructed during the late Tang dynasty. It was again named as a capital (then known as Jinling) during the short-lived Southern Tang (937-975), who succeeded the Wu (Ten Kingdoms).

the shining. It permits the spirit to take up its abode in the image... which is to say that dotting the eyes animates the image, literally infusing it with life.”<sup>169</sup> When painting portraits of people, Gu would add a white dot or something to show the life of the subject and “transmit the spirit” (傳神), and was known for waiting for extensive periods of time before filling in the subject’s eyes:

When he completed the painting of a human figure, often he waited several years before he would touch up the pupils. When asked for an explanation, he would answer: ‘The beauty or ugliness of the limbs and body is in fact all there without miss. But the subtle point where the spirit can be rendered and perfect likeness portrayed lies just in those little spots.’<sup>170</sup>

When asked to paint a portrait of Yin Zhongkan 殷仲堪, a famous intellectual active during the Northern and Southern dynasties (420-589), Yin first objected on account of having defective eyesight. Gu Kaizhi immediately protested and responded:

‘Your Excellency, just on account of your eyesight [you must be painted]! Would it not be most exquisite if the pupil were first painted bright and then touched with a bit of ‘flying white,’ like a thin veil of clouds over the moon?’ Thereupon Chung-k’an [Zhongkan] consented.<sup>171</sup>

---

<sup>169</sup> Audrey Spiro, “New Light on Gu Kaizhi,” *Journal of Chinese Religions* 16 (Fall 1988): 12-13.

<sup>170</sup> *Biography of Ku K'ai-Chih*, translated and annotated by Chen Shih-Hsiang (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1953), 14.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid*, 15. “Flying white” (飛白) is a technical term in Chinese painting, allegedly originated by calligrapher Cai Yong (133-192), in which the brush is pressed semi-dry and jaggedly, to produce many fine lines in one stroke.

Zhang Sengyou served in the *tian jian* 天監 era (502-516) as a secretary to Prince Wuling 武陵; later on he was also made governor of Wuxing 吳興. Emperor Wu of Liang (Wudi 武帝; r. 502-549) employed him to execute wall paintings in many of the newly erected Buddhist temples, and ordered him to make portraits of all the princes who were living away from the capital. When they were finished, and the emperor looked at them, and he thought that he saw the men themselves before him.

2.

諸梁羽化張亦去

Zhuliang ascended to heaven and became an immortal, Zhang [Sengyou] is also gone,

雌雄笑殺劉洞微

The dragon couple laughs dismissively at Liu Dongwei.

諸梁羽化張亦去

Zhuliang ascended to heaven and became an immortal, Zhang [Sengyou] is also gone,

In this line, Chen Rong refers to the previous two lines. Zhuliang refers to the aforementioned Shen Zhuliang 沈諸梁, the Duke of Ye and admirer of dragons. Zhang refers to Zhang Sengyou, painter of dragons. The term *yu hua* 羽化 is associated with Daoist notions of ascent to heaven and becoming immortal. Here, Chen Rong appears to use these two figures as a metaphor for himself. With this line, he is possibly expressing his admiration for dragons like that of the previously mentioned tale of Shen Zhuliang, and alludes to his own practice of painting dragons,



like that of Zhang Sengyou. At the same time, he laments that someone such as Zhang, who according to legend was truly skilled at portraying the dragon, is no longer here.

雌雄笑殺劉洞微

The dragon couple laughs dismissively at Liu Dongwei.

The Song dynasty text *Cheng Yi Ji* 乘異記, written by Zhang Junfang 張君房 (ca. 970-1040 CE) relates the story of the painter Liu Dongwei 劉洞微 who was very skilled at the painting of dragons, but whose work was one day criticized by a man and woman. Visser relates the rest of the tale as follows:

They said that he did not distinguish male from female dragons, although they were different in reality. When he got angry and asked them how they knew this, they answered that they were dragons themselves and were willing to show him their shapes, whereupon they changed into a male and a female dragon.<sup>172</sup>

According to the late Ming dynasty text *Guang Bo Wu Zhi* 廣博物志 (1607) by Dong Sizhang 董斯張, the difference between male and female dragons should be: “The male dragon’s horns are wave-like and deep, with a strong top and thin bottom. The female dragon has a straight nose, a round mane, thin scales, and a sturdy tail.”<sup>173</sup> However, based on such

---

<sup>172</sup> Visser, *The Dragon in China and Japan*, 71-72.

<sup>173</sup> Zhao, *A Study of Dragons, East and West*, 24.

broad descriptions, it is difficult to discern any male or female distinctions in the *Nine Dragons* scroll specifically.

3.

八軸吳龍不堪掛

The eight scrolls of Wu's dragons could not be hung,

醉余吐出胸中畫

Intoxicated, I spew out this painting from within.

八軸吳龍不堪掛

The eight scrolls of Wu's dragons could not be hung.

According to Tseng Hsien-chi's original translation of this line, the eight scrolls are spoken of in relation to the *Tian long ba bu tu juan* 天龍八部圖卷 or "The Eight Scrolls of Dragons of Heaven" painted by Wu Daoxuan.<sup>174</sup> However, Tseng's analysis lacks historical confirmation or reference for these paintings. Furthermore, Tseng's original translation asserts a negative connotation: "The eight scrolls of Wu's dragons were not worth hanging."

Wu Daoxuan is otherwise known as Wu Daozi 吳道子 (c. 710-760), a painter active during the Tang dynasty whose skill in painting was so pronounced that he has often been referred to in history as a "sage" of painting.<sup>175</sup> The Tang Emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 712-756) invited him to

---

<sup>174</sup> Tseng, "A Study of the Nine Dragons Scroll," 32, fn 12.

<sup>175</sup> In Chinese art history, there are three artists who are oftentimes referred to as artistic "sages." They are the "sage of calligraphy" Wang Xizhi of the Western Jin Dynasty (265-316), the "sage of poetry" Du Fu of the Tang Dynasty, and the "sage of painting" Wu

become an imperial painter at court and changed his name to Daoxuan. Unlike his predecessor, the famed painter Gu Kaizhi, whose line strokes were known for being evenly fine and slender, Wu's strokes are known as being full of vitality and vigor, constantly changing in thickness and thinness. Thus, Wu's paintings of figures were very lively and expressive, capturing the natural movements and vitality of the subject. Wu is known for painting a wide variety of subjects, ranging from religious subjects to figures, landscapes, plants and animals. As mentioned previously, the *Tang Chao Ming Hua Lu* 唐朝名畫錄 or “Record of Famous painters of the Tang dynasty” records that Wu once “painted five dragons in the inner palace, their scaly armor as though flying in movement, on the day that it is going to rain, they produced smoke and fog/mist” (又畫內殿五龍, 其鱗甲飛動, 每天欲雨, 即生煙霧。), thus implying efficaciousness.<sup>176</sup> The text also states that Wu was able to paint so vividly that once he painted a mural of hell scenes at the *Jing yun si* temple in the capital city of Chang'an during the Tang dynasty. Local butchers became so terrified by seeing the brutal punishments given out to those who killed animals that they immediately changed their professions.<sup>177</sup>

---

Daozi, also of the Tang Dynasty.

<sup>176</sup> Zhu Jingxuan (act. Early 9<sup>th</sup> century), *Tang Chao Ming Hua Lu* 唐朝名畫錄 [Famous Paintings of the Tang Dynasty].

<sup>177</sup> Ibid. This story is mentioned in Wu, *Tales from the Land of Dragons*, 167.

With this line, it is possible that Chen Rong may have intended a more positive reading, where the scrolls “cannot be hung” for they are perhaps too big, weighty or even too great and therefore wonderful, particularly in light of Wu Daoxuan’s reputation. Unfortunately, I still have yet to find evidence of this particular set of dragon paintings.

醉余吐出胸中畫

Intoxicated, I spew out this painting from within.

Here with this line, Chen Rong alludes to his own unconventional artistic practice literally and metaphorically. As discussed previously in Chapter One of this dissertation, Chen’s contemporary, Li Maoying 李昂英, described that Chen was known to drink before he painted, writing that Chen was “...Intoxicated to his content and with an open spirit, urgently fetching ink, creating thousands and thousands of *zhang* [ten feet] in length of dragons within a few *chi* [a Chinese foot] of unadorned silk...” (酒酣氣張，急取墨汁，作千萬丈龍於尺素間). Also, the Yuan dynasty art historian Xia Wenyan further affirmed Chen’s free-spirited quality when he engaged in painting, writing that Chen: “intoxicated and with a great shout, loosened his robe, and freely spread and smeared ink with his hand”(醉餘大叫，脫巾濡墨).

It should be noted that while the line speaks to Chen Rong’s literal artistic practice, the terms of drunkenness and intoxication may not reference so much a literal drunkenness or spitting out of water or ink, but

more about the idea of a relaxed and uninhibited opening of the spirit. Or, of talent and inspiration as coming out literally from within, from one's heart. When thinking of inebriation, a connection could be drawn between Chen Rong and the "Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove" (竹林七賢), a group of learned men active in the third century. During that time of political upheaval, the Seven Sages group is known for distancing themselves from government service, choosing instead to spend time engaged in poetry, music and conversation, sometimes while drunk. The seven sages were Ji Kang 嵇康 (Xi Kang; 223-262), Shan Tao 山濤 (205-285), Xiang Xiu 向秀 (228-281), Ruan Ji 阮籍 (210-263), Ruan Xian 阮咸 (231-281), Liu Ling 劉伶 (c. 221-c. 300), and Wang Rong 王戎 (234-305). The *Shi Shuo Xin Yu* 世說新語 or "New Account of Tales of the World," a book of anecdotes compiled by Liu Yiqing 劉義慶 (403-444) relates the story of how one of the Seven Sages, Liu Ling, had a propensity for taking off his clothes and sitting naked in his room when under the influence of wine. Once when someone saw him and laughed at him for it, Liu famously retorted "I take heaven and earth for my pillars and roof, and the rooms of my house for my pants and coat. What are you gentlemen doing in my pants?"<sup>178</sup> The Seven Sages were highly learned men, scholars and officials, who often engaged in inebriation or in seemingly non-

---

<sup>178</sup> Qian Nanxiu, *Spirit and Self in Medieval China: The Shih-shuo hsin-yu and Its Legacy* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 59.

conventional outlandish behavior, and through such actions, were able to be completely free and uninhibited. As an artistic theme, the Seven Sages were frequently referenced in Chinese and Japanese works beginning in the Tang dynasty and in the Ming and Qing dynasties.

4.

龍門三峽浪如山

The waves of Longmen at the Three Gorges swell like mountains,

從與漲天聲大價

Instantly rising to heaven with a huge sound.

龍門三峽浪如山

The waves of Longmen at the Three Gorges swell like mountains,

In Tseng's original interpretation of this line, he references two tales, specifically of the mythological Emperor Yu's famous stopping of the great flood and also brief information regarding the Three Gorges located between Sichuan and Hebei provinces.<sup>179</sup> As an alternative, I propose that in this line Chen Rong was speaking of Longmen 龍門, literally "dragon gate," specifically in reference to Longmen gorge. Today Longmen gorge is referred to as one of the "Lesser" Three Gorges 小三峽 (Longmen, Bawu, Dicu) on the Yangzi river, that together occupy an area of 3,000 acres. These three gorges are located primarily on the lower

---

<sup>179</sup> Tseng writes: "According to old references, Yu had led the river to Long men (the dragon gate) and channelled the river for the purpose of stopping the flood. It is located in northwest Shensi province, sometimes called Yu-men." (32, fn 14) Of the Three Gorges, he writes: "The Three gorges are located along the Yangtze river between Szechuan and Hubei provinces." (32, fn 15)

reaches of Daning River, a tributary of the Yangzi River, with Longmen gorge being particularly known for its fast-flowing waters, sheer cliffs and steep mountains that rise on either side of it.

從與漲天聲大價

Instantly rising to heaven with a huge sound.

This line is tied with the previous line and provides more detail regarding the strength of the waves at Longmen gorge. Here, Chen Rong describes that the waters rise up with a tremendous sound that could be possibly read as an allusion to a large dragon's movements. The painting itself could be seen to portray this metaphor, where the first dragon in the scroll is shown squatting underneath in the gorge, and thus serving as the actual source of the noise and waves.

5.

飛龍出峽駕春江

A flying dragon emerges from the gorge and sails over the Spring River,

九河之勢不敢降

The force of the Nine Rivers cannot tame him.

飛龍出峽駕春江

A flying dragon emerges from the gorge and sails over the Spring River,

This line continues with discussion of Chen Rong's description of the dragon's momentum and imposing manner.

九河之勢不敢降

The force of the Nine Rivers cannot tame him.

The *jiu he* 九河 or “Nine Rivers” is in reference to the Yellow River and its nine rivers.<sup>180</sup> The term *jiu he* is also a term used in astronomy to refer to a region of stars and constellations, specifically of a region that is part of the *Tian Shi Yuan* (天市垣) or the “Heavenly Market Enclosure.” Stars and constellations of this group are visible during the late summer and early autumn in the Northern Hemisphere (late winter and early spring in the Southern). In this case, I believe the term Chen Rong is using here for the Nine Rivers is most likely in reference to the power and force of the Yellow River.

6.

一龍天池戴赤木

A dragon from the pond of heaven has a *chi mu* on his head.

菌蠢猛省雲霧邦

In the land of mist and cloud, fungus sprouts vigorously.

一龍天池戴赤木

A dragon from the pond of heaven has a *chi mu* on his head.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, concerning the early visual representation of dragons, Zhao Qiguang and Marinus Wilhelm Visser both translate a passage by Wang Fu 王符 (ca. 85-162 CE) who described

---

<sup>180</sup> The Nine Rivers are named: Tu Hai 徒駭, Ma Jia 馬頰, Fu Fu 覆釜, Hu Su 胡蘇, Jian 簡, Jie 洁, Tai Shi 太史, Gou Pan 鉤盤, and Li Jing 鬲津.



all the physical features of a Chinese dragon and standardized these features as the “three joints and nine resemblances.” In addition to these three joints and nine resemblances, Wang states that a dragon must have a large physical protuberance on its head called a *chi mu*. He writes: “Upon his head he has a thing like a broad eminence (a big bump), called a *ch’ih mu* (*chi mu*; 尺木). If a dragon has no *ch’ih mu*, he cannot ascend to the sky.”<sup>181</sup> The *tian chi* 天池 or “Pond of Heaven” is usually in reference to a pool or pond that is found high in the mountains.

菌蠢猛省雲霧邦

In the land of mist and cloud, fungus sprouts vigorously.

In Howard J. Weschler’s study of ritual and symbolic activity during the Tang dynasty, he reports the legendary sightings of dragons and their auspicious implications, noting that at the time of Emperor Taizong’s birth, “two dragons sported outside his dwelling, departing only after three days.” Furthermore, the sight of fungus, like the dragon, served as a positive omen. At the birth of the Tang dynasty Emperor Gaozong, “twenty-four stalks of a purple fungus, in the shapes of dragons and phoenixes, were produced in the crown prince’s chambers.”<sup>182</sup> In this example, the dragon and fungus are visually conflated, possibly for

---

<sup>181</sup> Visser, 70.

<sup>182</sup> Howard J. Weschler, *Offerings of Jade and Silk* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 74.

additional emphasis. The appearance of fungus growth served as an auspicious sign, with fungus symbolic of long life and prosperity.<sup>183</sup>

7.

鈞天奇女又遭謫

The talented celestial maiden is banished to a distant place by Jun Tian [the lord of heaven] again.

雷公擘山天地黑

The God of Thunder strikes open the mountains, heaven and earth become dark.

鈞天奇女又遭謫

The talented celestial maiden is banished to a distant place by Jun Tian [the lord of heaven] again.

According to the *Yu Lin Zhe Zhi* 寓林折枝, a collection of historical fables, a woman was said to have fallen to the ground before a group of children. She explained that she was a celestial maiden who angered Jun Tian 鈞天 (the Lord of Heaven) and was banished to earth for seven days.<sup>184</sup> After serving her time, she took a sip of water and breathed out a five-colored cloud. She then transformed into a white dragon and flew

---

<sup>183</sup> See Terese Tse Bartholomew, *Hidden Meanings in Chinese Art* (San Francisco: Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, 2006).

<sup>184</sup> Liu Guozheng 劉國正, Ma Da 馬達, and Dai Shanqing 戴山青, *Yu Lin Zhe Zhi: Zhong Guo Li Dai Yu Yan Xuan Zhu* 寓林折枝: 中國歷代寓言選注 (Beijing: Beijing Chu Ban She, 1984), 416.

away. According to the *Huai Nan Zi* and other texts, Jun Tian is also a term for the center of all directions in Buddhism and Daoism.<sup>185</sup>

雷公擘山天地黑

The God of Thunder strikes open the mountains, heaven and earth become dark.

Legends state that Lei Gong 雷公, the God of Thunder, had a dragon body. Lei Gong is considered a Daoist deity who, when ordered by heaven, punishes earthly mortals and dispels evil spirits. He carries a drum and a mallet to produce thunder. Lei Gong is often depicted as a fearsome creature with claws, bat-like wings and a bird's beak.

8.

玉龍皎皎摩蒼崖

The glistening white jade dragon scrapes against the highest cliffs.

蟠虺似避陽陵客

Coiled dragon and serpent avoid visitors to Yangling.

玉龍皎皎摩蒼崖

The glistening white jade dragon scrapes against the highest cliffs.

In this line, Chen Rong is possibly referring to the posture of the third dragon (Figure 4), who is shown clinging and rubbing against a jagged mountain formation. In this image, the dragon's arms and claws are outstretched and over what appears to be a cliff, with one of its hind

---

<sup>185</sup> Hsien-chi Tseng observes in his footnotes that in the *Lu Shi Chun Qiu* 呂氏春秋, scroll 13, it says "Central is Jun-tian. Jun tian means the Lord of Four Sides, Jun means level."

legs and its tail hidden behind rock. Further, Chen describes this dragon as being of jade. Jade or *yu* 玉 is a significant element in Chinese cultural history, as it has traditionally served as a primary material for ritual and ornamental implements, and celebrated for its unyielding hardness and natural beauty, particularly when polished. Scholars have noted the prevalence of metaphors and moral ideals associated with jade, as seen here described by the great Sage Confucius himself:

Tzu-kung [a favorite of the disciple of Confucius] asked Confucius, “Why do people value *yu* [jade] and not *min* [a beautiful stone]? Is it because *yu* is rare and *min* is plentiful? Confucius replied, “It is not because *min* is plentiful and therefore not valued, and it is not that jade is valued because it is rare. In the old days, people compared jade to virtue. It is warm and radiant; this is humanity. It is well structured and compact; this is intellect. Its sharp edges do not harm; this is righteousness. It hangs as a pendant; this is etiquette. When struck, it emits a clear ring which lasts a long time and then is heard no more; this is music [of the rites]. Its beauty does not hide the flaws, and neither do the flaws hide its beauty; this is honesty [or loyalty]. Colors permeate the entire stone; this is faithfulness. Its radiance rises like a white rainbow [a dragon, in Han belief]; this is the firmament. Its spirit is seen [or reflected] in the mountains and streams; this is the earth. The *kuei* and the *ts’ung* convey virtue. It is valued by all under heaven; this is the Way. It is said in *The Book of Poetry*, ‘When one things of a gentleman, one is reminded of the warmth of jade.’ This is the reason why people value jade.<sup>186</sup>

Chen Rong’s description of a “jade dragon” may thus not only be associated with virtuous human qualities and moral ideals, but further emphasizes the connection between the Chinese dragon and heaven, or the firmament.

---

<sup>186</sup> James C. Y. Watt, “Jade” in Wen C. Fong and James C. Y. Watt, *Possessing the Past: Treasures from the National Palace Museum, Taipei* (New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc., 1996), 49.

蟠虬似避陽陵客

Coiled dragon and serpent avoid visitors to Yangling.

*Panlong*, literally “coiled dragon” are an aquatic dragon resembling the *jiaolong* or “river crocodile” in Chinese mythology. The character “pan” means “coiling, curling, curving, bending, winding, twisting.” The *Huai Nan Zi* first records the *panlong* as a decorative symbol on Chinese bronzes.<sup>187</sup>

In Tseng’s analysis of this line, he does not address the visitor of Yangling 陽陵客. Yangling 陽陵 is a term for the Imperial tombs, where only Imperial family can be buried. I speculate that the only guests to the tombs are possibly ghosts, tomb robbers, or the bottom rungs of society, of which dragons would naturally wish to avoid, and where possibly a political statement is being made here by Chen Rong, perhaps as a comment for maintaining one’s integrity and for being able to avoid bad people. This could be a reflection of Chen Rong’s own wish to avoid interaction with unsavory individuals, where the dragon possibly serves as a metaphor for himself.

9.

鼾鼻睡起金蛇奔

Golden lightning flashed like a snake when the dragon awoke.

---

<sup>187</sup> *Huai Nan Zi*, 8 (translated by Evan S. Morgan, *Tao, The Great Luminant: Essays from the Huai Nan Tzu*, Kelly & Walsh, 1934/5).

嶄然頭角當海門

The towering horns on his head are equal to the gate of the sea.

鼾鼻睡起金蛇奔

Golden lightning flashed like a snake when the dragon awoke.

This line describes the natural, winding shape of the dragon with the sinewy shape of lightning bolts when they flash.

嶄然頭角當海門

The towering horns on his head are equal to the gate of the sea.

In Tseng's original translation, he relates the term "Hai men" 海門 to the city of Haimen located in Jiangsu province.<sup>188</sup> However, the whole line together suggests not the city of Haimen, but is more descriptive of the dragon's physical body, specifically its head and horns. The term *hai men* or "gate of the sea" suggests that the dragon's head and horns are like the architectural structure that would function almost like a corridor to the sea in one's imagination.

10.

摩牙厲爪攫明月

His large teeth scrape and sharp talons seize the bright moon,

天吳起舞搖天根

Tian Wu (water god) dances, shaking the star of Tian Gen.

摩牙厲爪攫明月

His large teeth scrape and sharp talons seize the bright moon,

---

<sup>188</sup> Tseng, 33.

This line emphasizes the formidable size and power of the dragon; so powerful that his teeth and talons can scrape and claw the moon, and so large that his talons can seize the moon.

天吳起舞搖天根

Tian Wu (water god) dances, shaking the star of Tian Gen.

There is explanation of Tian Wu 天吳 in the *Shan Hai Jing* 山海經 or “Classic of the Mountaings and Seas,” dated to the early 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE, as being a water deity with eight heads, eight faces, eight feet and eight tails, and is blue/green and yellow in color. Tian Gen 天根 relates to a star, specifically the third star of the twenty-eighth constellation, and thus I have translated it as “shaking the star” versus Tseng’s original translation of “shaking the base of heaven.”

11.

雲頭教子掣金鎖

Over the clouds, the dragon teaches his sons to flash lightning

第五圖中龍最老

The fifth one in the picture, that dragon is the oldest.

雲頭教子掣金鎖

Over the clouds, the dragon teaches his sons to flash lightning

As mentioned previously in Chapter Two, the dragon is said to have nine sons. In this line, the dragon teaches his sons to flash lightning, which further associates the duties of the dragon as bringer of rain.

第五圖中龍最老

The fifth one in the picture, that dragon is the oldest.

This line is in direct reference to the *Nine Dragons* scroll. Here, Chen Rong identifies the fifth dragon in the painting as the oldest (Figure 6). When closely viewed, each dragon in Chen Rong's *Nine Dragons* scroll is unique in its appearance, from the pattern of its scales to the shape of its horns. Thus, Chen Rong identifies this fifth dragon as the oldest, however it is unclear from the dragon's portrayal what specific physical characteristics define the dragon's age.

12.

兩龍遍活黎與蒸

Two dragons with timely rainfall relieve all living things.

馬鬃夜半天瓢倒

The horse's mane knocked over the Ladle of Heaven in the night

兩龍遍活黎與蒸

Two dragons with timely rainfall relieve all living things.

In the previous line, Chen Rong identifies the fifth dragon as the eldest, and follows to say that two dragons initiate timely rainfall. When comparing the imagery of the *Nine Dragon* scroll, the fifth and sixth dragon appear to be engaged with one another, either in play or argument (Figure 7). This suggests that these two dragons are the ones that Chen Rong alludes to in this poetic line, where rainfall is the result of their interaction with one another.



馬鬃夜半天瓢倒

The horse's mane knocked over the Ladle of Heaven in the night.

This line is in reference to a tale of a heavenly horse that carried the "Ladle of Heaven" on his back, filled with water to make rainfall.

Tseng Hsien-chi's retells the story as follows:

One night, Li Jing 李靖 was lodging at the house of a person who was wearing vermilion clothes after a hunting party. During the middle of the night there came a hasty knock at the door. Then an old woman appeared and said to him: 'This is a dragon's palace, and I have just received an order from the Lord of Heaven to start rain. My two sons are not at home so I just ask you to do me this favour.' At this time, a piebald horse and small bottle of water were given to him by the old woman, who warned him, saying that 'when the horse begins to jump and neigh, that's the time for you to put one drop of this water in the horse's mane. Remember, this one drop means one or two *ch'ih [ji]* of water on earth, please don't put too much.' Then the horse ran like lightning through the clouds and was followed by twenty drops of water, thus the rain was more than twenty *ch'ih [ji]* on earth."<sup>189</sup>

In the Song dynasty, this tale was known by scholars such as Su Shi, who in one of his poems mentions the horse's mane toppling over the ladle in the middle of the night.<sup>190</sup> When thinking of a horse's mane in this case, one may also think of the connection between the horse and dragon in Fu Xi's discovery of the river diagram and formation of the Eight Trigrams.

---

<sup>189</sup> In his seminal study of the *Nine Dragons* scroll, Tseng reproduces this quote from the *Pi Ya Kuang Yao (Gu Jin Tu Shu Ji Cheng 古今圖書集成, qin chong dian 禽虫典, scroll 131) (33, fn. 31)*. One "ch'ih" (ji) is equivalent to 12 years.

<sup>190</sup> Su Shi 蘇軾 mentions in one line of his poem 宋《二十六日五更起行至礮溪天未明》詩：安得夢隨霹靂駕，馬上傾倒天瓢翻？

13.

桃花浪暖透三層

In the warm peach blossom season, three layers of waves splash  
(from carp jumping over the dragon gate)

禹門岌嶮誰敢登

Yu Men (Longmen, the dragon gate), who dares to climb it?

桃花浪暖透三層

In the warm peach blossom season, three layers of waves splash (from  
carp jumping over the dragon gate)

Marinus Willem de Visser quotes Wang Fu extensively, noting that the scales of the dragon are like that of a carp. These scales follow closely to the legend that carp can transform into dragons if they are able to jump over the “dragon gate” located in the Yellow River, forming the Chinese idiom “a carp jumping over the dragon gate” 鯉躍龍門 used to acclaim a scholar who earned first place in the Imperial examination, or any sort of rise in social status. Peach blossoms are highly prized in Chinese culture, and symbolic of ideas of longevity.

禹門岌嶮誰敢登

Yu Men (Longmen, the dragon gate), who dares to climb it?

Tseng originally translated this line as “Who dares to climb Yu men, the most hazardous place?” “Yu” is named after the famous mythological Emperor Yu, who was founder of the Xia dynasty. Yu is associated with being able to tame water. According to Chinese mythology, a great flood occurred called *Da yu zhi shui* 大禹治水 or “the Great Yu controls the

waters.” At the beginning of the flood, Yu’s father had been assigned by Yao to control the waters, however after a period of heavy flooding he became unsuccessful, and was thus executed. Yu inherited his father’s task, and was successful, as he devised a system of irrigation channels and he opened up the channel at Mount Longmen, which subsequently became known *Yu men kou* 禹門口 or “Yu’s Doorway.” Thus, based on this reading, it does not mean “hazardous place,” it must mean “grand” or “magnificent” height; in other words, to accomplish something that is incredibly difficult.

14.

蒼髯絳鬣火燒尾

Blue-green whiskers and deep red beards with powerful fiery red tail

十月霹靂隨飛騰

In the tenth month, with a clap of thunder, they soared upwards.

蒼髯絳鬣火燒尾

Blue-green whiskers and deep red beards with fiery red tail

The color of blue-green (*cang* 蒼) is an auspicious color as it represents nature, and implies vigor and vitality. In early periods the color was made with the use of mineral dyes. In contrast to Tseng’s original translation of “Blue whiskers and deep red beards grew when fire was burning off their tails,” I propose that the dragon’s tails were not literally on fire, rather the color of the tails are a fiery red. In the *Nine Dragons* scroll,

Chen Rong includes light touches of red ink on his dragons, to indicate such hints of color on the body of a dragon.

十月霹靂隨飛騰

In the tenth month, with a clap of thunder, they soared upwards.

In this line, Chen Rong is possibly alluding to the eighth dragon in the scroll that is depicted soaring upwards towards in the sky (Figure 11).

15.

蜀候高臥南陽武

The Marquis of Shu is in peaceful seclusion in Wu county in Nanyang.

貌出全形奇且古

The physical appearance of the figures is unusual and antique.

蜀候高臥南陽武

The Marquis of Shu is in peaceful seclusion in Wu county in Nanyang.

The Marquis of Shu or Shu Hou 蜀候 is in reference to Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮 (Zhuge Kong Ming 諸葛孔明; 181-234 CE), whose noble name is Marquis of Shu or Duke of Wu Xiang 武鄉. Zhuge Liang is a legendary figure of the Three Kingdoms period, recognized as a brilliant military and political strategist, scholar and inventor. The use of the term of Marquis of Shu is in reference to Zhuge as he dwelled in the mountains before he was sought out by Liu Bei 劉備 to serve as Liu's military advisor. The name *Shu hou* indicates who Zhuge was before he was in service of Liu

Bei. I posit that this line alludes to the idea of talented persons who prefer to stay in peaceful seclusion.

This painting of the *Nine Dragons* scroll was done in 1244, and likely while Chen Rong still served as a court official. Based on Chen Rong's biography, I suggest that Chen Rong may have been relating to himself, for preferring to be in seclusion and away from the stresses of official life, and possibly lamenting the fact that he was not understood or recognized for his talents. It is possible to consider also that the ninth dragon in Chen Rong's painting, of a dragon coming to a rest and in retirement, is visually representative of this line (Figure 12).

貌出全形奇且古

The physical appearance of the figures are unusual and of antiquity.

In this line, Chen Rong refers to all of the nine dragons collectively, speaking of their unique physical appearances as dragons.

16.

神功收斂待時來

They restrain their supernatural power waiting for their opportunity in the future.

天下蒼生望霖雨

All the living creatures under heaven hope for good rain.

神功收斂待時來

They restrain their supernatural power waiting for their opportunity in the future.

Chen Rong continues to describe the latent power of the dragon, again possibly in allusion to the last dragon, resting and waiting for the future. This line may also be read in reference to the previous mention of the Marquis of Shu or Zhuge Liang. Liu Bei succeeded in recruiting Zhuge Liang but only after paying three personal visits, the idea being that great men must be sought out. During his lifetime, Zhuge was nicknamed *wolong* 臥龍 or “hidden dragon.” Thus, Zhuge’s historical biography could serve as Chen Rong’s subject in this line.

天下蒼生望霖雨

All the living creatures under heaven hope for good rain.

This line references the importance of rain as a source of life and its role in sustaining life on earth, and the dragon as bringer of rain and thus good harvest. Furthermore, here, an allusion can be drawn from the previous line to the idea of “good rain” as a metaphor for also quality leadership, and one’s own integrity.

17.

所翁寫之九龍圖

Suo Weng [Chen Rong] has painted the picture of nine dragons.

筆端妙處世所無

There is none in this world that can match the ingenious quality of the tip of his brush.

所翁寫之九龍圖

Suo Weng [Chen Rong] has painted the picture of nine dragons.

In Chinese painting, the term painting (*hua* 畫) and the term for writing (*xie* 寫) are often conflated to address artistic activity, as both practices utilize the same tools of brush and ink. To write was to paint, and to paint was like writing. The character *xie* literally means to write but also implies a method of “release” (of certain feelings or sentiments), and thus more indicative of the expressive, whereas *hua* or “to paint” is suggestive of the representative, and of portraying something that already exists. Thus Chen Rong utilizes the word *xie* to describe that he has painted the picture of nine dragons, perhaps to emphasize their expressive quality.

筆端妙處世所無

There is none in this world that can match the ingenious quality of the tip of his brush.

Here Chen Rong reveals how pleased and proud he is with his accomplishment in painting this scroll.

18.

遠觀雲水似飛動

When viewing from a distance, clouds and water appear in swift motion.

即之疑是神所摹

Up close, the artist’s hand is undoubtedly blessed by a divine power.

遠觀雲水似飛動

When viewing from a distance, clouds and water appear in swift motion.

In this line, Chen Rong alludes to the dragon's association with clouds and thus rainfall. As described previously, Chen's *Nine Dragons* are not always fully-delineated and depicted to be moving swiftly and winding their bodies in and out of the surrounding clouds and water. When viewing the scroll from a distance, the dragons appear to blend within their natural environment.

即之疑是神所摹

Up close, the artist's hand is undoubtedly blessed by a divine power.

Here, Chen Rong references the experience of painting this scroll and how delighted he is by the results; so pleased in fact that he suspects divine intervention.

19.

宣城龍公生九子

The Dragon King of Xuan Cheng had nine sons,

畫入老翁圖畫裏

They entered Old Weng's painting.

宣城龍公生九子

The Dragon King of Xuan Cheng had nine sons,

Xuancheng is a city located in southeastern Anhui province in Eastern China. The nine sons of the dragon were listed previously in Chapter Two of this dissertation.



While the nine sons are not represented specifically as the nine dragons in this painting, one may consider the significance of the number nine itself. In Chinese history and culture, the number nine “9” is an auspicious number, likened to the power of the heavens. As the largest single-digit number possible, the number nine has long been associated with not only the dragon itself, but also with the Chinese emperor and therefore the strength and spirit of the Chinese nation. The number also alludes to Daoist principles and practice, as it is indicative of the male cosmic principle or *yang* 陽, where nine is the ultimate *yang*, a great transformative and interactive power. In ancient Chinese rulership, it had been the Nine Tripods (*jiu ding* 九鼎) and charts and records (*tu ji* 圖記) that were at the heart of a ruler’s possessions and symbolic conveyers of power. They were the treasures that conferred legitimacy on a ruler. The Nine Tripods were said to have been cast by the mythical Emperor Yu (Yu the Great) and to have descended from him to the Xia and Shang kings and then to the Zhou kings.<sup>191</sup> Records of the Grand Historian recount that once Yu had finished taming the floods that once engulfed the land, he divided the territory into the Nine Provinces and collected bronze in tribute from each one. Thereafter he cast the metal into nine large tripod cauldrons. Thus, the number nine is representative of the mythical

---

<sup>191</sup> See K. C. Chang, *Art, Myth and Ritual: The Path to Political Authority in Ancient China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983).

Chinese dragon itself, and later became fittingly representative of the Chinese emperor or “son of heaven.”

畫入老翁圖畫裏

They entered Old Weng’s painting.

In this line, Chen Rong refers to the previous verse and suggests that the nine dragon sons have been painted into the *Nine Dragons* scroll. While the nine sons are not represented specifically as the nine dragons in this painting, Chen puts forth the idea of them, invoking historical and traditional notions of the Chinese dragon and dragon lore.

20.

阿誰為我屠雙牛

Who will skillfully paint two cows for me?

一牛莫著金籠頭

As a cow, do not wear the golden bridle.

阿誰為我屠雙牛

Who will skillfully paint two cows for me?

In Tseng’s original translation, he shares a possible reference for the painting of two cows from the *Nan Shi* 南史 (scroll 76)

Dao Hongjing 陶弘景 (452-536) was appointed many times by the Emperor Wu to be an official, but he refused to accept the appointment. Then he painted the picture of two cows; one was eating grass near the river and the other had a gold bridle on his head. A man held the rope and was sweeping his back. When the emperor saw this painting, he said “how can I force the man to do what he does not like to do?”<sup>192</sup>

---

<sup>192</sup> Tseng, “A Study of the Nine Dragons Scroll,” 33.

Based on this story, Tseng posits that the character *tu* 屠 in the inscription, which means “to slaughter,” is a possible a mis-writing of the character *tu* 圖 which means “to paint” or “a picture,” and he thus translates the line to be “Who will paint two cows for me?” It is difficult to verify if Tseng’s hypothesis is correct, as it assumes that Chen Rong mis-wrote a character by accident. The *Shi Qu Bao Ji* has transcribed the same character as *tu* 屠, matching that of the scroll, in its record of this painting in Emperor Qianlong’s collection. However, if translated to the character *tu* 屠, it meaning to “slaughter” or “butcher,” this line could serve as an allusion to some sort of ritual or sacrificial offering, and could therefore also be read as an oblique political statement of feelings of underappreciation. For the purposes of maintaining faithfulness to Chen Rong’s original inscription, the original character *tu* 屠 is represented here, however translation of this line is of the same nature as originally proposed by Tseng.

一牛莫著金籠頭

As a cow, do not wear the golden bridle.

Based on Li Maoying’s account, Chen Rong’s painting of *Nine Dragons* could have possibly have been painted at the time when he may have been suppressed by Jia Sidao and was melancholic in suffering under the strains of officialdom and possible political suppression. In the previous line, Chen alludes to two cows with golden bridles, and in this

line, he expresses the desire to not “wear the golden bridle,” where the golden bridle serves as a metaphor for the trappings of officialdom, possibly an allusion to the strains of being tied down as an official.

21.

九鹿之圖跋於涪翁

The Picture of Nine Deer was inscribed by Fu Weng [Huang Tingjian]

九馬之圖贊於坡老

The Picture of Nine Horses was praised by Po Lao [Su Shi]

所翁之龍雖非鹿馬

Suo Weng’s dragons cannot compare to these deer and horses.

並然欲傲蘇黃二先生贊跡

則余豈敢

姑述以誌歲月

Wishing to emulate both Master Su’s and Master Huang’s praiseworthy talent.

How then do I dare to try to follow and surpass them?

I tentatively record this in a year of my life.

In Tseng Hsien-chi’s original study and translation of this inscription, he identifies the two paintings that Chen refers to here. The *Picture of Nine Deer* 九鹿之圖 was painted by Huizong 惠宗 a priest painter active during the eleventh century and known for his painting of birds and intimate landscape scenes.<sup>193</sup> The *Picture of Nine Horses*

---

<sup>193</sup> Tseng, “A Study of the Nine Dragons Scroll,” 34, fn 41.

九馬之圖 was painted by Cao Ba 曹霸 (fl. ca. 704-764) a military general who also specialized in horse painting during the Tang dynasty.<sup>194</sup>

Chen Rong identifies these paintings in his mention of Huang Tingjian's 黃庭堅 (1045-1105) inscription on the *Picture of Nine Deer*, and Su Shi's 蘇軾 (1036-1101) praise on the *Picture of Nine Horses*. As mentioned previously, Huang Tingjian and Su Shi were famed poets and calligraphers active during the early Song period. Su and Huang are noted to have often associated together, with Su serving as the progenitor of the concept and movement of literati painting. Here, Chen Rong refers to himself and humbly offers his painting outwardly, perhaps suggesting that this work, the *Nine Dragons* scroll, is worthy of inscription and commentary from great calligraphers and poets such as Huang and Su. Further, with his own poetic long inscription, he expresses his desire, with this painting and poem, to be able to emulate and follow their lead as great literary figures.

#### The Artist's Second Inscription

This inscription, while located at beginning of work, was written later. This additional inscription by Chen Rong confirms the date of the

---

<sup>194</sup> Ibid, fn 43. The horse painter Han Gan 韓幹 (c. 715-after 781) was a student of Cao Ba 曹霸. For a study of both horse painters, see Cai Xingyi 蔡星儀, *Cao Ba Han Gan 曹霸韓幹* [Cao Ba and Han Gan] (Shanghai: Shanghai ren min mei shu chu ban she, 1986).

*Nine Dragons* scroll painting to be 1244, and identifies that from the artist, the scroll moved to the home of his relative, Xian Li 仙李:

九龍圖作於甲辰之春  
此畫復歸於甥館仙李之家  
神物圖有所屬耶

The *Nine Dragons* painting was painted in the Spring of *jia chen* (1244)  
This painting has been returned to the home of my nephew Xian Li<sup>195</sup>  
[This] painting of divine creatures is in its rightful place.

## Conclusion

Chen Rong's contribution to the history of literati painting, as evidenced from the *Nine Dragons* scroll, is that based on all historical accounts, he is possibly the first to incorporate a long poem inscription with a dragon painting, which makes known the painting's idea. Previously to Chen Rong, artists had rarely incorporated such long poetic inscriptions with their dragon paintings, or one artist had painted while another artist would contribute a poem. To date, Chen Rong's *Nine Dragons* scroll (1244), is quite possibly the earliest surviving authentic example of poetry, dragon painting and calligraphy, all by the same author, and incorporated into a single work.

The *Nine Dragons* scroll demonstrates not only Chen Rong's tremendous skill at painting, poetry and calligraphy, but through careful

---

<sup>195</sup> Tseng translates 館 as "son-in-law," however it is possible that Chen Rong could have meant "nephew." Tseng's translation of Chen Rong's second inscription is as follows: "The Picture of Nine Dragons was painted in the spring of *jia chen* (corresponding to the year 1244). This scroll has come back into the possession of my son-in-law Hsien Li. Does not a divinely inspired thing surely find its allotted place?"

analysis of his inscriptions, we are treated to a sense of his own personal aspirations and ambitions.

## Chapter 4: Chen Rong and the Nine Dragons Scroll: Impact and Perceptions in Later History

This chapter will discuss the later collecting of the *Nine Dragons* scroll as well as later admirers. In addition to discussing individuals who officially had the scroll in their collections, I also discuss writings by others who reviewed the scroll.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section reviews the official provenance record of Chen Rong's *Nine Dragons* scroll, based upon firm evidence demonstrated on the scroll. The second section is a discussion of the other hands through which the scroll passed, and of prominent individuals who viewed the scroll in later periods, leaving evidence of their admiration. This second section includes analysis of writings of additional inscriptions on the scroll, and other texts about the scroll.

### Provenance

As stated in Chen Rong's own second inscription, the *Nine Dragons* scroll was painted in the spring of *jia chen* 甲辰 or 1244 and was later placed in the home of Xian Li 仙李, who was possibly Chen's son-in-law or nephew (此畫復歸於甥館仙李之家).<sup>196</sup> From the home of Xian Li,

---

<sup>196</sup> As stated previously, Tseng translates 館 as "son-in-law," however it is possible that Chen Rong could have meant "nephew." I still have not been able to confirm the identity of Xian Li and his placement in Chen Rong's family history.



based upon the scroll's various inscriptions, seals and published information by the the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, we can establish and confirm the provenance of the scroll and a lineage of possession of the scroll by certain individuals throughout history. According to the Museum, the scroll is confirmed to have been in the possession of Geng Zhaozhong (1640-1686), then the imperial art collection of Emperor Qianlong (1711-1799), followed by Emperor Jiaqing (1796-1820), then Prince Gong (1833-1898). From Prince Gong, the scroll was acquired by Yamanaka and Company in 1917, and was then sold by Yamanaka and Company to the Museum where it is currently located. The scroll's additional movements from the home of Xian Li to the hands of Geng Zhaozhong, and from Prince Gong to Yamanaka and Company, is unconfirmed.

### *Geng Zhaozhong*

The *Nine Dragons* scroll was in the collection of Geng Zhaozhong 耿昭忠, a distinguished Qing dynasty art collector and connoisseur. Geng Zhaozhong was born during the second month of the *geng chen* 庚辰 year of the *chong de* 崇德 period (March 22 / April 20, 1640) and died during the first month of the *bing yin* 丙寅 year of the Kangxi 康熙 period (January 24 / February 21, 1686), when he was 47 *sui*.<sup>197</sup> Originally from

---

<sup>197</sup> Thomas Lawton, "Notes on Keng Chao-chung," *Renditions* 6 (1976): 149. One of the best English language sources available concerning the various members of the Geng family is in Arthur Hummel, *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period, 1644-1912* (Taipei:

Shandong, Geng's family, particularly his grandfather Geng Zhongming 耿仲明, supported the Manchus for many generations, and was part of the Plain Yellow Banner 正黃旗. The family was rewarded for its loyalty.<sup>198</sup> Geng's father, Geng Jimao 耿繼茂 (d. 1671), Geng Zhongming's eldest son, had served the Manchus militarily with distinction, and was thus able to arrange to have his eldest son, Geng Jingzhong 耿精忠, with his second son, Geng Zhaozhong, sent to court to wait upon the emperor when Geng Zhaozhong was only 15 *sui*.<sup>199</sup> The emperor subsequently arranged marriages for both sons; Geng Jingzhong was married to the daughter of Hooge (Hao Ge 豪格; 1609-1648), and Geng Zhaozhong was married to the daughter of an Imperial Princess of the Second Degree, *Duo luo xian zhu* 多羅縣主, who was the granddaughter of Prince A-ba-tai 阿巴泰 (1589-1646).<sup>200</sup>

Geng's collector's seals appear on many of the finest Chinese paintings extant. As Geng never compiled and published a catalogue of his collection, his seals and inscriptions are the only means we have to

---

Ch'eng Wen Publication Co., 1970), 415-417.

<sup>198</sup> As noted by Lawton, Geng's grandfather Geng Zhongming 耿仲明 was awarded the title of *huai shun wang* 懷順王 in 1633 in recognition of his military victories for the Manchus, and in 1642 he also became a Chinese bannerman attached to the Plain Yellow Banner 正黃旗. See Lawton, "Notes on Keng Chao-chung," 149.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.* Hooge (Hao Ge 豪格) was a Manchu prince of the Qing dynasty and eldest son of Hong Taiji 皇太極 (r. 1636-1643), son of the founder of the Qing dynasty Nurhaci 努爾哈赤 (r. 1616-1626)

reconstruct his holdings. Notable paintings that Geng collected currently located in the National Palace Museum, Taiwan include Guo Xi's *Early Spring*, dated 1072, *Emperor Ming Huang's Journey to Shu*, Zhou Wenju's *Parting of Su Wu and Li Ling*, Li Gonglin's *Nine Songs*, calligraphy by Ma Hezhi, calligraphy by Emperor Huizong, and paintings by Cao Zhibo, Wang Mian, Fang Congyi, Ni Zan and Wang Fu, among others.<sup>201</sup> Other paintings collected by Geng include Juran's famed *Buddhist Retreat by Streams and Mountains* and Yan Hui's *Lantern Night Excursion of Zhong Kui*, both currently in the Cleveland Museum of Art, and Xu Daoning's handscroll *Fishermen* and Li Kan's *Ink Bamboo* handscroll in the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art.<sup>202</sup> Geng's seals appear on Li Gonglin's *Knick-knack Peddler and Playing Boys* album leaf in the collection of the Freer Gallery (Figure 29). Examples of Geng's written colophons on scrolls are extremely rare; the Freer Gallery has a set of four Song-period album leaves by Zhou Wenju, Yan Ciyu and Huang Jucai with four short colophons and collector's seals by Geng.<sup>203</sup>

---

<sup>201</sup> See Marshall Wu, "A-Erh-Hsi-P'u and His Painting Collection" in Chu-Tsing Li, ed., *Artists and Patrons* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas in association with University of Washington Press, 1989), 72-3.

<sup>202</sup> This list of paintings is based on the online catalogue entries of the listed museums, which list Geng's seals on these paintings, indicating their possible inclusion in his collection, or at least evidence of these works having passed through his hands. A cursory review of paintings in the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington D.C. also list Geng's collector's seals on them.

<sup>203</sup> Thomas Lawton's article, "Notes on Keng Chao-chung," analyzes four short colophons written by Geng on album leaves in the Freer Gallery of Art by Huang Jucai and acquired by Charles Lang Freer in 1911. The paintings and colophons were originally part of an album of 18 leaves entitled *Li Dai Ming Bi Ji Sheng* 歷代名筆集勝, all of which are

During Geng Zhaozhong's lifetime, he was successful in Kangxi's court and received many honorary titles. As the husband of an Imperial Princess, Geng Zhaozhong received the title *Duo luo e fu* 多羅額駙, a title equivalent to that of *Fu ma* 駙馬 ("emperor's son-in-law") under earlier dynasties. Following his marriage, he was given the honorary position of *Tai zi shao bao* 太子少保 ("Junior Guardian of the Heir Apparent") and the title *He shuo e fu* 和碩額駙. His title was subsequently raised to that of *Tai zi shao shi* 太子少師 ("Junior Preceptor of the Heir Apparent"), and another honorary title, *Guang lu tai fu* 光祿大夫 ("Minister of Banqueting") was conferred upon him. During Geng Zhaozhong's final illness, the Kangxi Emperor sent medicines prepared by his own physicians, and when Geng died in 1686, he was buried with all his honors and received the posthumous title *Qin xi* 勤僖. As noted by Lawton, the seals of Geng Zhaozhong's son, Geng Jiazuo 耿嘉祚, occasionally appear on paintings together with those of his father, suggesting that Geng's art collection remained intact after his death.<sup>204</sup>

On the *Nine Dragons* scroll, Geng Zhaozhong's collector's seals are located towards the end of the scroll between two inscriptions, specifically those by Dong Sixue and Zhang Sicheng (Figure 15). Two

---

recorded in the Qing dynasty collector Pang Yuanji's 龐元濟 (1865-1949) art catalogue *Xu Zai Ming Hua Lu* 虛齋名畫錄, scroll 11.

<sup>204</sup> Lawton, "Notes on Keng Chao-chung," 150-151.

seals on the seams between painting paper, silk panel and colophon paper reads: *Bo hai zhu ren zhen cang* 渤海主人珍藏 (A precious possession of the Master of Bohai). In addition, a large square seal on the end of the painting paper read: *Du wei Geng Xingong shu hua zhi zhang* 都尉耿信公書畫之章 (Seal for calligraphies and paintings in Du wei Geng Xingong's possession). This same large square intaglio seal appears on Li Gonglin's album leaf *Knick-knack Peddler and Playing Boys* at the Freer Gallery Art, located on the lower right half of the painting (Figure 29).

### *Qianlong Emperor*

During the eighteenth century, the bulk of Geng's art collection, including the *Nine Dragons* scroll, was acquired by the Qianlong Emperor 乾龍帝, undoubtedly due to Geng's relationship with the Kangxi Emperor, Qianlong's grandfather. The Qianlong Emperor or Hongli 弘曆 (1711-1799; r. 1735-1796) was the fourth son of the Yongzheng Emperor (r. 1722-1735), and succeeded to the throne in 1735 under the reign title of Qianlong (Figure 30). Over the course of his sixty year reign, he oversaw a great period of flourishing prosperity and territorial expansion, in addition to his strong patronage of the arts.<sup>205</sup>

Throughout his reign, the Qianlong Emperor was personally involved with the expansion, preservation and restoration of the imperial

---

<sup>205</sup> The Qianlong Emperor's reign of sixty years exactly was not by coincidence; it was a filial act to not reign longer than his grandfather, the Kangxi Emperor.

art collection. Before Qianlong, other emperors had ordered the cataloguing and inventory compilation of the imperial art and calligraphy collections. Notable examples of such earlier imperial art catalogues include Emperor Wu (r. 502-49) of the Liang dynasty and his catalogue of paintings and calligraphy entitled *Liang Tai Qing Mu* (Art Catalogue of Liang Tai Qing) and Huizong's *Xuan He Shu Pu* (Xuan he calligraphy catalogue) and the *Xuan He Hua Pu* (Xuan he painting catalogue), dated to the second year of the *Xuan He* reign (1120).<sup>206</sup> Portions of Qianlong's extensive holdings, specifically Buddhist and Daoist painting and calligraphy, were first catalogued in 1744 in the *Mi (Bi) Dian Zhu Lin* 秘殿珠林 (Pearl Forest of the Secret Hall), and titled after the Secret Hall of the Han dynasty Emperor Wu Di (r. 141-87 BCE).<sup>207</sup> This catalogue included 271 works. Shortly thereafter, Qianlong commissioned a second catalogue of calligraphy and paintings in the collection called *Shi Qu Bao Ji* 石渠寶笈 (Treasured Boxes of the Stone Channel), titled in reference to the Han dynasty Stone Channel Pavilion where the first Han Emperor, Liu

---

<sup>206</sup> Willow Hai Chang, "Talented Sons of Heaven," in *The Last Emperor's Collection*, 65-66. The *Xuan He Shu Pu* is a 12 volume catalogue of 1,198 works by more than 190 calligraphers covering a period from the Han dynasty up to the early Song dynasty. The *Xuan He Hua Pu* consists of 20 volumes and recorded a total of 6,296 paintings in the collection by 231 artists beginning from the Six Dynasties period onwards.

<sup>207</sup> For more on the cataloguing activities of Qianlong, see Patricia Berger, *Empire of Emptiness: Buddhist Art and Political Authority in Qing China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003); Evelyn Rawski and Jessica Rawson, eds., *China: The Three Emperors, 1662-1795* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2005); and Hironobu Kohara, "The Qianlong Emperor's Skill in the Connoisseurship of Chinese Painting," in *Chinese Painting under the Qianlong Emperor*, ed. Claudia Brown and Ju-hsi Chou, *Phoebus* 6, no. 1 (Tempe: Arizona State University, 1988): 56-73.

Bang, had kept the charts and records taken from the Qin palace. This catalogue included 1,774 works. Over the course of his reign, Qianlong added many additional works to the imperial collection, many works of which were by court artists and by himself, therefore a second edition was completed in 1793 and a third supplementary catalogue was commissioned and completed in 1816.

Qianlong worked closely with the editors of his catalogues, conducted his own research on the calligraphy and paintings, and wrote numerous inscriptions and colophons for many of the works. The chief editors of the catalogues were Zhang Zhao (1691-1745), Liang Shizheng (1697-1763) and Dong Bangda (1699-1769). Since the catalogue was an inventory, all the calligraphy and paintings were listed according to the palace buildings where they were stored – locations such as the *Qian qing gong* 乾清宮 (Palace of Heavenly Purity), the *Yang xin dian* 養心殿 (Hall of Mental Cultivation), the *Chong hua gong* 重華宮 (Palace of Double Brilliance), the *Wen yuan ge* 文淵閣 (Pavilion of Literary Profundity), otherwise known as the Imperial library, among others. Works were also ranked for quality, ranging from either superior to secondary. For works of superior quality, full catalogue information was given using the private catalogues of the seventeenth century.<sup>208</sup>

---

<sup>208</sup> For more on the *Shi Qu Bao Ji* and *Mi (Bi) Dian Zhu Lin*, see Hin-cheung Lovell, *An Annotated Bibliography of Chinese Painting Catalogues and Related Texts* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Center for Chinese Studies, 1973), 51-54.

The *Nine Dragons* scroll is confirmed as being a part of the Emperor Qianlong's collection as evidenced by his inscription on the scroll and imperial seals. The scroll entered the palace before 1745 since it was catalogued in the first edition of the *Shi Qu Bao Ji*. Emperor Qianlong's numerous imperial seals on the scroll include:

*Front of the scroll:*

- *Shi qu bao ji* 石渠寶笈 (Treasured boxes of the Stone Channel, i.e. the title of the catalogue of paintings and calligraphy in the Qing imperial collection), upper seal, square relief
- *Yu shu fang jian zang bao* 御書房鑑藏寶 (Examined and collected treasure of the imperial library), second seal from the top, oval relief
- *San xi tang jing xian xi* 三希堂精鑒璽 (Imperial seal of essential examination of the Hall of the Three Rarities), third seal from the top, rectangular relief
- *Yi zi sun* 宜子孫 (Suitable for sons and grandsons), lower seal, square intaglio
- *Qianlong yu lan zhi bao* 乾隆御覽之寶 (Treasure for Qianlong's imperial inspection), left side of inscription, large square relief

*Middle of the scroll:*

- *Ba zheng mao nian zhi bao* 八徵耄念之寶 (Treasure commemorating the advanced age of 80), large square relief



- *Tai shang huang di zhi bao* 太上皇帝之寶 (Treasure of the Highest Emperor), large square relief

*End of the scroll:*

- *Wu fu wu dai tang gu xi tian zi bao* 五福五代堂古希天子寶 (Treasure of a Son of Heaven rarely seen since antiquity in the Hall of the Five Blessings and Five Generations), upper right, large square relief
- *Qianlong jian shang* 乾隆鑑賞 (Examined with appreciation by Qianlong), upper left, small round intaglio.<sup>209</sup>

According to Willow Hai Chang's study of Qing Imperial Appreciation Seals for Calligraphy and Painting, the Qianlong Emperor's cataloguing of the imperial collection into the *Shi Qu Bao Ji* were fixed with five imperial seals – "Qianlong yu lan zhi bao" (Treasure viewed by the Qianlong Emperor), "Shi qu bao ji," "Qianlong jian shang" (Appreciated by Qianlong), "San xi tang jing jian xi" (Meticulous inspection seal of the Studio of the Three Rarities), and "Yi zi sun" (Suitable for sons and grandsons) – and usually an additional seal to indicate the storage location, thus making a total of six imperial seals.<sup>210</sup> Thus, the sixth seal

---

<sup>209</sup> For reproductions of impressions of imperial seals, see Victoria Contag and Wang Chi-Ch'ien, *Seals of Chinese Painters and Collectors of the Ming and Ch'ing Periods, Reproduced in Facsimile Size and Deciphered* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1966).

<sup>210</sup> Willow Hai Chang, "Appendix A: Qing Imperial Appreciation Seals for Calligraphy and Painting" in *The Last Emperor's Collection*, 339-41. The *San xi tang* or "Studio of the Three Rarities" was Emperor Qianlong's studio located on the western side of the *Yang*

on the *Nine Dragons* scroll, *Yu shu fang jian zang bao* 御書房鑑藏寶 (Examined and collected treasure of the imperial library), tells us the *Nine Dragons* scroll was stored in the imperial library.

Additional seals by Qianlong on the scroll such as *Wu fu wu dai tang gu xi tian zi bao* 五福五代堂古希天子寶 (Treasure of a Son of Heaven rarely seen since antiquity in the Hall of the Five Blessings and Five Generations) and *Ba zheng mao nian zhi bao* 八徵耄念之寶 (Treasure commemorating the advanced age of 80), provides evidence that Qianlong viewed the scroll several times throughout his reign.<sup>211</sup> Each time Qianlong inscribed the scroll and added even more seals. His inscription on Chen Rong's *Nine Dragons* scroll and its accompanying seals will be discussed below.

### *Jiaqing Emperor*

Following Qianlong, the scroll remained in the imperial art collection under the following monarch, the Jiaqing Emperor 嘉慶帝 (1760-1820), otherwise known as Renzong 仁宗. The Jiaqing Emperor oversaw the

---

*xin dian* (Hall of Mental Cultivation) of the Forbidden City. There, he stored three prized rare calligraphy scrolls: "Timely Clearing After Snow" by Wang Xizhi, "Mid-Autumn Festival" by Wang Xianzhi, and "Letter to Boyuan" by Wang Xun, amongst other important antiquities.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid. According to Chang: "Late in his reign, the Qianlong emperor would probably spontaneously place "*Wu fu wu dai tang gu xi tian zi bao*" (Five generations of progeny in one lifetime, treasure of the septuagenarian Son of Heaven), "*Ba zheng mao nian zhi bao*" (Treasure commemorating the advanced age of eighty) and "*Gu xi tian zi*" (A son of heaven rarely seen since antiquity) seals on whatever work of art he was reviewing."

compilation, from 1815 to 1816, of a further supplement of the Qianlong Emperor's Imperial art collection catalogues. On the *Nine Dragons* scroll, there is one seal from the Jiaqing Emperor, which indicates that the scroll was reviewed by him:

- *Jia qing yu lan zhi bao* 嘉慶御覽之寶 (Treasure for the imperial inspection of Emperor Jiaqing), round seal relief

This seal is located above the hind leg and tail of the first dragon. Aside from the emperor having viewed the scroll, we know little else of Jiaqing's opinion of the scroll. However, its place in Jiaqing's collection is confirmed.

### *Prince Gong*

Prince Gong 恭親王 (Yixin 恭忠親王奕訢; 1833-1898) (Figure 31) was the sixth son of the Daoguang emperor 道光帝 (1782-1850), and his mother was the imperial consort Jing (1812-1855) who later became the Imperial Dowager Consort Kangci, and was made posthumously Empress Xiao Jing Cheng 孝靜成皇后. In 1850, the Daoguang emperor was dying, so he ordered the revelation of the secret edict of succession: Yixin was made Prince of the First Rank Gong while his older half-brother Yizhu was proclaimed heir to the throne as the Xianfeng emperor 咸豐帝 (r. 1850-1861). In 1860 during the Second Opium War, Xianfeng left him behind in Beijing to negotiate with the approaching British and French armies who

had invaded northern China while the court fled. Prince Gong negotiated the Convention of Peking and thus obtained a position of great influence due to his newly acquired credit with the Western Powers and his control of the militia in Beijing. He was in charge of the government of China in 1860s and 1870s, and is largely remembered for his strong ties with westerners and his attempts to open and modernize China. In 1861, the Xianfeng emperor died, leaving his only heir, the son of Noble Consort Yi 懿貴妃, to ascend the throne as the Tongzhi emperor 同治帝 (r. 1861-1875). Over time, the Noble Consort became suspicious of the group of eight senior officials that the Xianfeng emperor had designated as regents to the new emperor, and thus with Prince Gong, launched a coup. The Noble Consort Yi became co-regent under the name Empress Dowager Cixi 慈禧太后 (1861-1908), along with the less politically involved Empress Dowager Ci'an 慈安太后 (1861-1881), and they ruled from "behind the curtain." Prince Gong was named as prince-regent and was appointed to a variety of powerful posts. With the support of the two dowagers, the Prince was a powerful political figure until the 1880s, until he gradually lost favor with Empress Dowager Cixi.

During the Jiaqing emperor's reign, an increasing number of works in the court collection began to be used as royal gifts from the emperor to princes and high-ranking officials. For example, Prince Cheng (Yongxing) was given *Ping fu tie* or "Calligraphy of Recovery" by Lu Ji (Jin dynasty,

currently in the Palace Museum, Beijing), and the horse painting *Zhao ye bai* or “Night-Shining White” attributed to the famed horse painter Han Gan of the Tang dynasty, now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.<sup>212</sup> Later, Prince Gong was awarded several paintings, including such works as the Northern Song Emperor Huizong’s *Five-colored Parakeet* (*Wu se ying wu tu*) and Chen Rong’s *Nine Dragons*.<sup>213</sup> Prince Gong’s seal on the *Five-colored Parakeet* is the same as his seal on the *Nine Dragons* scroll, and thus both paintings are speculated to have been royal bestowals.<sup>214</sup>

Prince Gong’s collectors’ seal is located at the end of the scroll between Dong Sixue’s and Zhang Sicheng’s inscriptions, next to Geng Zhaozhong’s three collector’s seals (Figure 15):

- *Gong qin wang zhang* 恭親王章 (Seal of Prince Gong), square seal

*Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*

In 1911, the Qing dynasty came to an end. The *Nine Dragons* scroll was acquired by Yamanaka and Company in 1917, almost twenty years after Prince Gong’s death, and was then sold by Yamanaka and Company to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston that same year for

---

<sup>212</sup> Willow Hai Chang, *The Last Emperor’s Collection*, 2.

<sup>213</sup> Yang Renkai “The Story Behind the Last Emperor’s Dispersal of the Imperial Painting and Calligraphy Collection,” in Willow Hai Chang, *The Last Emperor’s Collection*, 2.

<sup>214</sup> For more on the phenomenon of imperial use of ancient paintings and calligraphy as gifts to officials and princes during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, see Yang Renkai, *Guo Bao Chen Fu Lu* [The loss and recovery of national treasures], (Shenyang: Liao Hai Chu Ban She, 1999), 31-34.

\$25,000.<sup>215</sup> The painting was accessioned into the Museum's collection on June 14, 1917.

According to the Museum's records, the dragon painting was a major acquisition for the Asian art curator at that time, John Ellerton Lodge (1849-1942), who had joined the Museum as a curator in 1910 and assumed control of the department after the death of his mentor, Okakura Kakuzo (1862-1913). Lodge described *Nine Dragons* to the then Director of the Museum, Arthur Fairbanks (1864-1944) in the following way:

"The dragon scroll I consider one of the ultimate masterpieces of Chinese painting...I cannot, however, better express my own opinion of the picture and the Museum's duty in regard to it, than by quoting what Dr. [William Sturgis] Bigelow wrote me concerning it. He said: "As for the (dragon) roll, it is a thing to judge others by, not to compare with them. The price is not a matter to be considered. Such a thing is a bargain at any price."  
(John Ellerton Lodge to Arthur Fairbanks, June 7, 1917. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Art of Asia, Oceania and Africa Archives.)<sup>216</sup>

William Sturgis Bigelow (1850-1926) was a major historical collector of Japanese art. After having traveled to Japan with Ernest Fenollosa (1853-1908) and Edward Sylvester Morse (1838-1925), he stayed in Japan for several years traveling and extensively collected a variety of works. Upon his return to the United States, he donated over 40,000 objects of Japanese art to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and his gifts of

---

<sup>215</sup> \$25,000 USD in 1917 is approximately equivalent to \$446,428.57 USD in 2012.

<sup>216</sup> Joseph Scheier-Dolberg, "Qianlong in Our Eyes: A Study of Evolving Taste at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston" in Willow Hai Chang, *The Last Emperor's Collection*, 327. As further noted by Joseph Scheier-Dolberg: "In the *Nine Dragons*, Lodge had found his *Court Ladies Preparing Newly Woven Silk*: an iconic painting that would be recognized by his senior colleagues in the MFA as a work of genius and would help solidify the Boston Museum's reputation as a leader in Asian art collecting." (327)

Japanese prints, drawings, paintings, Buddhist sculpture, Noh robes and sword fittings, along with those from Morse, Fenollosa, and Charles Goddard Weld (1857-1911) and Okakura Kakuzo, created the newly founded Department of the Art of Asia at the Museum, with the largest collection of Japanese art anywhere outside of Japan.<sup>217</sup>

### Additional Inscriptions

This section is divided by dynasty, and provides insight into inscriptions on the *Nine Dragons* scroll, as well as texts about the Nine Dragons scroll. For painting inscriptions, the Chinese characters were compared from the original painting to the regular script transcription of each inscription found in the Qianlong Emperor's imperial art catalogue entry of the entire scroll in the *Shi Qu Bao Ji* 石渠寶笈 (Treasured Boxes of the Stone Channel). The following English translations of inscriptions are by this author.

### *Southern Song Dynasty*

Inscription by Dong Sixue 董思學

Following Chen Rong's long inscription, the first inscription is by Dong Sixue, a contemporary of the artist, dated to 1306 (Figure 15, inscription on the right):

---

<sup>217</sup> "The Bigelow Gift," *Museum of Fine Arts Bulletin*, 9 no. 53 (Oct. 1911): 48-50.

辛酉所翁在九松斑園中。迫晚作雙劍圖。遺東山韓忻。妙絕之甚。  
大德丙午玉田酒邊獲觀此卷。豈遜當時遺韓之筆。  
老君山人董思學書。

In the year of *xin yu* [1261], Suo Weng was in the Garden of Nine Streaked Pines. At twilight he created a painting of a pair of swords for Han Xing of Dong Shan. It was excellently done. In the tenth year of *da de* [1306] I saw this scroll at a banquet in Yu tian. How modest the brushwork of the painting given to Han [Xing]!

Written by the Mountain Man of Laojun, Dong Sixue

According to Tseng Hsien-chi's original article, Dong was a native of Qiantang in Zhejiang province.<sup>218</sup> Based on this poem, Dong was a contemporary of Chen Rong, having witnessed Chen Rong's social and painting activities. Dong's inscription provides much information, as he indicates not only Chen's active painting of other subjects such as a pair of swords, but also that Chen Rong's *Nine Dragons* scroll was admired and celebrated by those who saw it. Dong's exclamation of "How modest the brushwork of the painting given to Han" after having viewed the *Nine Dragons* scroll is in praise of Chen's brushwork on the *Nine Dragons* scroll, to which the 1261 painting of swords given to Han Xing pales in comparison. Unfortunately Dong does not identify who brought out Chen Rong's scroll at this banquet, nor any other guests present or the host.

Dong's mention of Chen Rong painting of a pair of swords is suggestive of additional symbolic meaning and interpretation. While there

---

<sup>218</sup> Tseng in "A Study of the Nine Dragons Scroll," writes of Dong Sixue's inscription as follows: "By Tung Ssu-hsueh, a contemporary of the artist, whose original name is Tung Su-kuo a native of Qian-tang (Chekiang province). He hid himself among Taoist priests after the destruction of the Sung dynasty. The eulogy is written in the year 1306..." (20)



are any number of reasons as to why Chen Rong painted such a subject (for example, a personal story, joke, a homophonic play), a pairing of swords may also be read as conveying a particular auspicious meaning. According to legend, swords first appeared during the time of Huang Di, the mythical Yellow Emperor, when Chi You 蚩尤, a tribal leader and master blacksmith, who is said to have had a bull-shaped head made of copper and a forehead made of iron, forged the first Chinese swords. A pair of swords could be read as being symbolic of *yin* and *yang*, and of marital bliss. A tale which dates to the Spring and Autumn Period (770–476 BCE) is of a husband and wife team of Gan Jiang 幹將 and Mo Ye 莫邪, who crafted a pair of swords for King Hele 闔閭 of Wu. The pair of swords was named after the couple, with one male (*yang*) and one female (*yin*). Furthermore, the notion of a pair of swords associated with *yin* and *yang* also relates to the notion of the swords to be seen as a weapon for battle, but also for driving away evil spirits, particularly in relation to some religious Daoist ideas.

According to Daoist legend, the sage Lao Zi of the *Dao De Jing*, appeared before Zhang Daoling on "Crane Cry Mountain" (*he ming shan* 鶴鳴山) in Sichuan Province and proclaimed him a "Celestial Master." Lao Zi gave Zhang Daoling two swords, one male (*yang*) and the other female (*yin*), in order to carry out the mandate. Zhang Daoling then proceeded to establish one of the major Daoist religious sects, known

as the "Five Bushels of Rice" sect ("Five Pecks of Rice" or *Wu Dou Mi Dao* 五斗米道).

The recipient of the painting, Han Xing, was from Dong Shan, a county located in Southern Fujian province.

*Yuan Dynasty* (1271-1368)

Inscription by Zhang Sicheng 張嗣成

Following Dong's inscription, we find an inscription written by Zhang Sicheng 張嗣成 (*zi*: Ci Wang 次望; *hao*: Tai Xuan 太玄; ? - 1344) dated to 1331, and written in seven character verse form (Figure 15, inscription on left):

玄雲潑墨號天風，  
雲頭擲火驅雷公，  
元氣淋漓兩師急，  
天地變化誰為雄。

兩龍奮迅見光怪，  
夭矯西行出天外，  
一龍起處山石摧，  
摩盪餘聲隱磅磕。

一龍不競群龍趨，  
搏取明月看隋珠，  
老龍居中最蒼古，  
盤旋引子方自娛。

一龍出水露頭角，  
白浪如山映空作，  
一龍飛上蒼茫間，  
傾倒天瓢振枯涸。

最後一龍心獨閒，  
回頭似欲歸潛淵，  
騰驤宛轉各異態，  
匪龍安得知其全。

洞微物化僧繇死，  
千載神交所翁繼，  
觀龍不在鱗鬣精，  
妙用應須論神氣。

九陽數極變必通，  
此物豈困緘滕中，  
但愁辟歷隨昏濛，  
一旦飛去蒼旻空。

後署至順二年孟春天師太元子書。

Mysterious [black] cloud and splashed ink command the divine wind,  
Clouds with fire inside provoke the God of Thunder,  
The vitality [of the painting] is like pouring rain; *Yu Shi* [the Master of Rain]  
feels pressure,  
Within the transformation of heaven and earth, who is the mightiest?

Two dragons rise vigorously and rapidly, appearing like a strange light,  
They display individual charisma with elegant and graceful postures as  
they head west and beyond the heavens,  
Mountain rocks are wrecked at the place where one dragon launches,  
The sound of undulating waves conceals the knocking of heavy stone.

One of the dragons does not join the competition, but the rest of the group  
hastens onwards,  
They court the bright moon and view the Sui pearl,  
The oldest dragon is at the center and is the most vigorous, stable and  
steady.  
He circles around and guides the younger ones in self-enjoyment.

One dragon breaks the surface of the water exposing its head and horns,  
White sea waves roll as high as the top of the mountain and reflect the  
space above,  
One dragon flies up to the distant horizon,  
The Ladle of Heaven is toppled over to relieve the dried up.

The last dragon's mind is at leisure,

It turns its head seemingly longing to return back and sink down into the abyss,  
They are all either galloping or charging forward or winding or circling about, each one in its own different posture,  
If he [Chen Rong] is not a dragon himself, how else could he know all about them!

[Liu] Dongwei and [Zhang] Sengyao both have passed away,  
For a thousand years as soul brothers [with the dragon] and carried on by Suo Weng [Chen Rong],  
To study the dragon is not by their scales and bristle details,  
The clever way should be that one must discuss their vitality of spirit.

When at the highest *yang* [positive] number nine level, all transformations are universal,  
How is it possible to tie them up in a closed area?  
Yet one worries that they will rebel and follow the twilight mist,  
One day they will fly away to the blue heaven above and vanish.

Written by *Tian shi* [Grand Master] *Tai yuan zi* [the Elder Son of Heaven], in the second year of *zhi xun* [1331], first month of spring.

Zhang Sicheng 張嗣成 was the 39<sup>th</sup> celestial master (*tian shi* 天師), as well as a painter in his own right. Xia Wenyan's *Tu Hui Bao Jian* (14<sup>th</sup> century) records three Celestial Masters as painters: Zhang Yucai 張与材 (?-1316) the 38<sup>th</sup>, Zhang Sicheng the 39<sup>th</sup>, and Zhang Side 張嗣德 (?-1353) the 40<sup>th</sup> (Figure 32).<sup>219</sup>

The first four lines of Zhang's inscription talk about the "energy" of Chen Rong's art, mentioning heavenly divinities such as the God of Thunder and a master of rain, and *yuan qi* 元氣 or "original vital breath". I differ from Tseng Hsien-chi's original translation of the third line (元氣淋漓雨師急). Tseng originally translated the line as "Yu-ssu (the

---

<sup>219</sup> Xia's recording of this has been observed by other scholars as being the first ever mention of Celestial Masters as painters.

genius of Rain) is busy; Yuan-chi (Constitution of the Universe) is dripping.”<sup>220</sup> My interpretation of the line and of *yuan qi* as “The vitality [of the painting] is like pouring rain; *Yu Shi* [the Master of Rain] feels pressure” is in relation to the previous two lines. In these first few lines, Zhang is clearly speaking of the visual qualities of the painting overall, particularly with his reference to *po mo* or splashed ink technique. The term *yuan qi* can also be associated with *qi yun* 氣韻 or “vitality of spirit” or “spirit consonance,” one of Xie He’s Six Principles of Painting.

In historical Chinese society, and still traditionally today, thunder was perceived as a harbinger of seasonal fertility but also a sign of heavenly displeasure, which had long been passed down within the classical canon through a range of local cults and the traditions of astrology, magic and divination. From the mid-Tang period, the thunder god was included within the imperial system of sacrifices. People living in imperial China often considered thunder as a celestial phenomenon with direct visible and audible terrestrial consequences, linked to cosmic processes and various divinities. Thunder was a potent form of astral precipitation which related to the subtle processes, including *yin*, *yang* and the five elements or *yin yang wu xing* (陰陽五行) of the cosmos.<sup>221</sup>

---

<sup>220</sup> Tseng, “A Study of the Nine Dragons Scroll,” 20.

<sup>221</sup> Lowell Skar, “Administering Thunder: A Thirteenth-Century Memorial Deliberating the Thunder Rites,” *Cahiers d'Extreme-Asie* 9 (2000): 161.

While asking the question of who is the mightiest, the question is rhetorical in tone, suggesting that while these divine figures compete, it is really Chen Rong who brought them forth in the painting itself. In the next few sections, Zhang describes the actions of each dragon in the painting and their different postures, whether it be galloping, flying or leaping. His various descriptions of the dragons follow their depictions in the scroll and the surrounding rocks and undulating waves.

Zhang writes that the dragons search for the Sui pearl. The *Huai Nan Zi* (“The Masters / Philosophers of Huai Nan”) is a second century BCE Chinese philosophical classic that blends Daoist, Confucian and Legalist concepts. Written under the patronage of Liu An, Prince of Huai Nan, it records the tale of the Marquis of Sui: “The Marquis of Sui... on an excursion saw a big snake on the ground in the wilderness; it had been cut into two pieces. He ordered a physician to put it back together again. When the snake was cured, it left. Then it came back, holding a large pearl in its mouth as a reward. The pearl was probably a ‘bright-moon’ pearl. Subsequently it was called the Marquis of Sui’s pearl and considered a precious object.”<sup>222</sup> Similarly in the *Mozi*, written during the fifth century BCE, Master Mozi said: “He Shi’s jade, Marquis Sui’s pearl, and the nine tripods (*ding*) are what the feudal lords spoke of as precious

---

<sup>222</sup> From *Huai Nan Zi*, 17.14a, commentary, in Chang Ch’ung-ho and Hans H. Frankel, *Two Chinese Treatises on Calligraphy: Shu Pu* [Treatise on Calligraphy] by Sun Qianli; [completed in 687] and *Xu Shu Pu* [Sequel to the Treatise on Calligraphy] by Jiang Kui, [completed in 1208] (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 128.

treasures...”<sup>223</sup> The Sui pearl is a legendary pearl of unexcelled quality, and is thus a metaphor for things of excellent quality.

He then again asks, in his poem about Chen Rong: “If he is not a dragon himself, how else could he know all about them!” Zhang’s inscription plays on this legendary praise of Chen Rong as being a dragon himself, for how else could he paint them so well and so vividly.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Liu Dongwei and Zhang Sengyou are both legendary master dragon painters. Liu is known for not having recognized the difference between male and female dragons, and was said to have been visited and corrected by real dragons. Zhang is known for painting dragons so life-like upon a temple wall that once their eyes were dotted with vitality, they broke the wall and flew away. In Zhang Sicheng’s poem, he remarks that both of these dragon painters are deeply connected to the dragon, and that it is Chen Rong who continues their legacy, through not only his detailed portrayal of them, but through his grasp of their vitality of spirit.

In the last section of his passage, he speaks of *yang*, equated with the number nine, and related to Daoist philosophical ideas. The dragons cannot be restrained within a physical scroll, nor within a storage box.

Inscription by Wu Quanjie 吳全節

---

<sup>223</sup> *The Mozi: A Complete Translation*, Trans. Ian Johnston (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2010), 647.

Following Zhang Sicheng's inscription, we find an undated inscription written by Wu Quanjie 吳全節 (1269-1346) (Figure 16, inscription on right):

雷雨天垂垂，  
電火飛墨水，  
解衣盤礴初，  
神物聽麾指。

雪繭起風雲，  
瞬息幾萬里，  
用九贊乾元，  
猶龍師老子。

閒閒道人吳全節書

The sky [heaven] hangs down with thunder and rain,  
Flying ink and water are like lightning and fire,  
At the moment he loosened his clothes, with legs outspread,  
Spiritual creatures are all under the signal of his command,

Snowy cocoons create wind and cloud,  
In a flash, his ideas are already thousands of miles away,  
By means of the number nine he praises the primordial heaven  
Just like the dragon, Master Lao Zi.

Written by *Xian xian dao ren* [The Leisurely Daoist] Wu Quanjie

Wu Quanjie 吳全節 (1269-1346) was one of the most famous Daoist priests of the Yuan dynasty. He began studying Daoism when he was twelve and became a Daoist priest when he was only sixteen. He was the pupil of Zhang Liusun (1248-1322), who was a pupil of the thirty-sixth Celestial Master, Zhang Zongyan 張宗演 (1244-1292). In 1287, Khubilai Khan, the first Mongol emperor, founded the Mysterious Teaching



or *Xuan jiao* 玄教 school of Daoism and appointed Zhang Liusun as the first patriarch. Wu became the second patriarch following the death of his master, under the Emperor Yingzong (Shidebala; r. 1321-1323).<sup>224</sup> In addition, Wu is credited with the building of the Temple of the Eastern Peak (*Dong yue miao*) in Beijing. While the idea to build the temple was originally Zhang Liusun's, Zhang died before construction could actually begin. In 1322, under the direction of Wu, the main hall was completed, and thus Wu is primarily credited for the temple's construction.

As patriarch, Wu held Daoist prayer services and was put in charge of all Taoist affairs in the country, as he was appointed to the Academy of Worthies (*Ji xian yuan*), which also oversaw all Confucian activities, such as the Imperial College.<sup>225</sup> He served as a mediator between the Mongol court and the literati, and was widely respected by contemporary Chinese literati for his upright character, as described in Yuan dynastic history:

[Wu] Quanjie elegantly favored making friends with literati [*shi da fu*], and there were no favors he would not perform [for them]. In his relations with his elders, he was especially considerate and respectful, and in promoting [the careers of] talented persons, he feared only that he did not exert all his strength. As for helping those in poverty or in dire straits, he never let his mind be altered by personal debts or grudges. In his day he was highly regarded for his endowment of chivalric spirit [*xia qi*].<sup>226</sup>

---

<sup>224</sup> See James C. Y. Watt, et al., *The World of Khubilai Khan: Chinese Art in the Yuan Dynasty*, 147. The *Xuan jiao* or "Mysterious Teaching" school existed only during the Yuan.

<sup>225</sup> Watt, *The World of Khubilai Khan*, 147.

<sup>226</sup> Translation from Stephen Little, *Taoism and the Arts of China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 222.

In the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, there is a long handscroll of a series of portraits of Wu that detail his life activities (Figure 32). The painting includes fourteen portraits, depicting Wu between the ages of 43 and 63, each containing a note indicating the date and circumstances surrounding the image and a poem.<sup>227</sup> Over the course of Wu's career, seventeen portraits of him were painted by such artists as Zhao Mengfu, which suggests that three of the portraits from the Museum of Fine Arts scroll may be missing. The Museum Fine Arts scroll is a 17<sup>th</sup> century reduced-size copy of an original 14<sup>th</sup> century scroll by the portrait painter Chen Zhitian (active mid-14<sup>th</sup> century) and commissioned by Yu Ji (1272-1348).

Wu's inscription on the *Nine Dragons* scroll celebrates the artist Chen Rong as embodying an artistic ideal, and a kind of free-spirited nature. He describes Chen Rong's known distinctive habits as an artist, such as loosening his clothes and sitting cross-legged. The idea of an artist loosening his robes and seated with legs outspread relates back to the idea of a painter as first related by the fourth century Chinese philosopher Zhuang Zi:

When the First Lord of Sung wished to have pictures painted, a multitude of his scribes arrived together. They received his commands respectfully, then stood in attendance. Of those licking brushes and mixing ink, at least half were outside [the ranks of painters]. One scribe arrived later, casually and without hurry. He received the commands respectfully, but did not stand in

---

<sup>227</sup> For a thorough discussion of each of Wu's portraits in this scroll, see Stephen Little, *Taoism and the Arts of China*, 222. See also Wu, *Tales from the Land of Dragons*, 232-34, pl. 149.

attendance, retiring immediately. The noble ordered someone to see what he was doing. Behold, he had loosened his robes and was sitting with his legs outspread, half-naked. The lord then said: “He will do. He is a real painter.”<sup>228</sup>

Furthermore Wu relates the dragon to the sage Lao Zi, the founder of Daoism and of the *Dao De Jing*, as either a master of dragons or a dragon himself (龍師老子). As mentioned previously, dragons are visually portrayed in Daoism as vehicles of immortality.

Inscription by Ouyang Yuan 歐陽元

On the scroll, following Wu Quanjie’s inscription, we find an inscription written by Ouyang Yuan 歐陽元 (1273-1357), also written in seven character verse form (Figure 16, inscription on left).

乾陽六爻陽為實，  
其名六龍象龍質，  
維乾用九神變化，  
後世遂稱九龍出。

湖南馬氏踵其訛，  
八龍繞柱身當一，  
如何括蒼大手筆，  
亦復畫此風雷室。

歐陽元。

Heaven, *yang*, and the six *yao* [solid lines on the trigram], truly represent the phenomena of *yang*,  
Its name, the six dragons [six solid lines], truly represent the dragon’s nature.

---

<sup>228</sup> Bush, *Early Texts on Chinese Painting*, 42; as translated from Zhuangzi (late 4<sup>th</sup> – early 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BCE), Book 21.

Connecting *qian* [heaven] and using the number nine indicates spiritual transformation,  
Later generations appear with the name of Nine Dragons.

Master Ma of Hunan followed this error,  
Eight dragons coiled on a pillar transform into one [acting as the whole].  
How he encompasses the vault of heaven with his grand brushwork!  
He recovers the hall of thunder and wind in Heaven [in this painting].

[Signed] Ouyang Yuan.

Ouyang Yuan (1273-1357) was a scholar and official of the Yuan dynasty, who served in the Han Lin College.<sup>229</sup> In the first half of his inscription, he relates back to the concept of the dragon in relation to the eight trigrams. As discussed in the first chapter of this dissertation, the earliest written description of dragons appeared in the *Yi Jing* 易經 or *Book of Changes*, in describing the lines of the hexagram *qian* 乾 that consists of six undivided *yang* lines to symbolize heaven, and interpretation of the hexagram was based on the dragon's actions. Thus "heaven, yang, and the six *yao* [solid lines on the trigram]," are all representative of the dragon and the dragon's nature, as that of a mythological supernatural transformative creature.

Inscription by Zhang Zhu 張翥:

---

<sup>229</sup> According to Tseng, "A Study of the Nine Dragons Scroll,": "...Ouyang Yuan (1273-1357), a scholar and official of the Yuan dynasty, who served in the Han Lin College and was specially engaged in the preparation of state papers. He was ennobled as Duke and canonised as Wen. The eulogy is written in verse form." (21)

Following Ouyang Yuan's inscription is an inscription by Zhang Zhu

張翥 (Figure 17, inscription on right).

羽人示我九龍圖，  
知是雷電堂中物，  
樽桑金紙三十尺，  
一一蜿蜒寫奇崛。

劃翻斷峽據石崖，  
欵駕奔濤卷溟渤，  
控搏驪珠爭照耀，  
簸蕩蜃雲相出後。

引子雙飛凌太陰，  
垂(髯)獨下蟠幽窟，  
壯哉筆跡窮變化，  
無乃從前識真骨。

我生所見世少如，  
此畫通靈那敢忽，  
自非羽人能制龍，  
誰能藏之筐篋中。

不然(霹靂)下穿壁，  
(蹴踏)白日隨飄風，  
高堂晝開走百怪，  
熟視但覺煙霏濛。

僧繇不作董羽死，  
晚有若人堪比工，  
起須為雨被九土，  
嗟爾意氣何其雄。

丈夫事業政如此，  
一出要掃庸奴空，  
安能屑屑弄丹粉，  
漫費精神圖草蟲。

晉寧張翥。

A Daoist immortal showed me the Nine Dragons painting,  
I am aware [this painting] belongs to the Hall of Thunder and Lightning.  
Precious *fu sang* paper is thirty *chi* [feet] long,  
One by one each wriggling and winding dragon is sketched out strangely  
and prominently.

They scratch, overturn, and break off [into] the gorge and occupy the  
stone cliffs,  
Suddenly they drive quickly into the big waves and are swept up by the  
sea,  
Controlling and fighting while vying for the Li pearl's illumination,  
Rolling and rocking in a misty mirage and appearing to go back and forth.

One leads the younger dragon and they fly up together to the moon,  
Lowering and slowly returning to one's hidden cave,<sup>230</sup>  
Robust brushwork [is] inexhaustible in variation,  
Never before have predecessors known his true skill ["bones"].

In my life, from what I've seen, I've seen few such as this [dragon  
painting],  
This painting can communicate with the spirits, who dares to overlook this,  
He himself knew he was not a Daoist immortal, but he could control  
dragons,  
Who can harbor [the dragons in the painting] within a rectangular box?

Otherwise thunderbolts would come down and cut across the walls,  
Treading upon the bright sun and following the breeze,  
Opened in the Main Hall in daytime, hundreds of odd creatures run away,  
When staring intently [at it, one] feels falling snow and drizzling mist.

[Zhang] Sengyou no longer paints, Dong Yu has already passed,  
Lately, there is no person who can compare in skill,  
In the beginning he needed to bestow rain on the nine lands [China],  
Sigh! This kind of personal enthusiasm, how great and influential!

A true man's undertakings should be in this way.  
With its first appearance sweeping away the ordinary and the untalented  
with one hand.  
How can people be satisfied with playing with red [color pellets] and  
powder [lead white painting powder],  
And waste energy drawing grasses and insects?

---

<sup>230</sup> Tseng translates this line as "With a hanging head returning to Pan-yu Cave."

[Signed] Jinning, Zhang Zhu.

Zhang Zhu (1287-1368) was a *jin shi* scholar-official who was well known for his poetry. He worked in the Han Lin College.

*Ming Dynasty (1368-1644)*

Inscription by Wang Boyi 王伯易

Following Zhang Zhu's inscription is an inscription by Wang Boyi 王伯易 (Figure 17, inscription on left).

龍本神物。其體純陽。故變化不測。畫者取乾元用九之義。以陽之極數。出神物以駭耳目。其變化隱顯。飛龍在天。莫之敢窺。真神妙用。憂出物外。

忽使破壁躍水。亦圖有之。

伯易觀於洪武庚申十月也。江寧王伯易。

Originally the dragon was a divine thing, its essence is pure Yang, and therefore its transmutations are limitless. The painter had to use heaven and employ the meaning of the number nine. The ultimate yang number was used [and] the divine creatures that emerged astonished the senses of the living. Because of its diversification with appearing and disappearing, no one dared to steal a glance when the flying dragons were in the sky. This is truly a marvellous manner to employ! That is beyond imagination. Don't let them break through the wall and escape into the water; it does happen sometimes.

Boyi saw this scroll in the tenth moon of the year *geng shen* of *hong wu* [corresponding to the year 1380]. [Signed] *Jiang ning* [Jiangsu Province], Wang Boyi.<sup>231</sup>

---

<sup>231</sup> The translation of this inscription is very close to Tseng's original translation, however with slight edits made by this dissertation author.

Poem by Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋

Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋, known as the Hongwu Emperor 洪武帝 or Taizu 太祖 (zi: Guo Rui 國瑞; 1328-1398; r: 1368-1398) was founder and first emperor of the Ming dynasty.<sup>232</sup> As recorded in his writings, he admired Chen Rong's dragon paintings, and composed a lengthy and descriptive poem in praise of Chen Rong's *Nine Dragons* scroll.<sup>233</sup> Unfortunately, it is unclear as to where or when the emperor may have seen the *Nine Dragons* painting. While the lines and poem sub-headings do not exactly match the dragons portrayed in Chen Rong's *Nine Dragons*, the emperor's appreciation of Chen Rong's painting and intimate understanding of the Chinese dragon and its natural movements are clearly indicated. I have translated the poem below:

所翁九龍圖贊

蟄于淵底，陽回即起。倏起太虛，黑云見体。

右起蜃龍

蜿蜒其身，翔海而吟。似怒而飛，鬣起遙岑。

右怒飛龍

---

<sup>232</sup> For Zhu Yuanzhang's biography, see L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang, ed., *Dictionary of Ming Biography 1368-1644* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 381-392.

<sup>233</sup> Zhu Yuanzhang, *Ming Taizu Ji* 明太祖集 [Record of Ming Emperor Taizu] (Hefei: Huangshan shu she, 1991), 352. This poem has not been mentioned or referenced in any literature thus far by any literature in regard to Chen Rong's *Nine Dragons* scroll, so far as I know.



至陽出蟄，鬢舒赫烈。顧陰而行，游天隧悅。

右雄龍

配陽至剛，電掣上方。飛雲逐隊，時雨致滂。

右雌龍

既悅且翔，玩珠海洋。飛濤潑天，變化愈昌。

右簸珠龍

舒海氣，玩明珠，黑云無罅，神化莫測，收功天下。

右次簸珠龍

脫胎似蛭，步云以蜓。必教而興，利濟無邊。

右嬌龍

呼子而駕，一吟一吒。飛云九霄，雨澤天下。

右蒼龍

匿身不見，端光赤練。蜓軀一躍，九天掣電。

### **On Suo Weng's [Chen Rong's] *Nine Dragons* painting:**

Hibernating in the bottom of an abyss, the spirit turns around, prompted to rise. Suddenly launching into the vault of sky, their bodies like dark clouds.

### **Rising up from hibernation**

Winding its body, gliding over the oceans and humming. Appearing vigorous and in flight, dorsal fins rise like small hills in the distance.

### **Vigorous flying dragon**

From sun up it is out of hibernation, dorsal fins unfold mighty and fierce.  
Following the sun as it travels, touring the sky and underground with joy.

### Male dragon

Corresponding with the sun exactly, lightning striking down from above.  
Flying clouds lined up in groups, sending a torrent of rain at the right  
moment.

### Female dragon

Soaring joyously, playing with pearls in the sea. Flying with big waves  
splashing into the sky, the variations become more and more prosperous.

### Dragon tossing the pearl

Comfortable in ocean air, playing with illuminated pearl, dark cloud bodies  
with no cracks, its marvelous variations are unpredictable, its meritorious  
deeds benefit the whole world.

### Second dragon tossing the pearl

Emerging from the womb wiggling like a snake, walking on clouds like a  
dragonfly. Flourishing with teaching and following the commandments,  
benefit and help without any boundary.

### Delicate dragon

When called it will come, with one hum or one roar. Flying up to the  
clouds into the nine firmaments, rain moistens the land under heaven.

### Blue-green / black dragon

Hiding the body to not be seen; the ending light shines like a scarlet strip;  
one leap of its dragonfly body; nine skies flash with the thundering light.

*Qing Dynasty (1644-1911)*

Inscription by the Qianlong Emperor

Qianlong expressed his admiration for the scroll not only with the inclusion of his many seals, indicating his frequent review of the scroll, but most tellingly by writing an inscription in the middle of the scroll (Figure 4-5). In the past, Tseng and other scholars did not fully transcribe or translate Qianlong's original inscription. I offer it here. His inscription is as follows:

奇筆驚看陳所翁，畫龍性訝與龍通，  
劈開硤石倒流水，噴出湫雲浮御空。

變化老聃猶可尚，形容居案詎能工，  
乾元用九義爻象，豈在三三拘數中。

丁亥暮春中澣御題目命金廷標仿此卷，頗覺神似，即用前韻題之并書於後：

棲霞山樹會昌翁，陽彤神模概可通，  
謂若無翻驚乍有，不鄰虛復解搏空。

群從定是趨雲伯，大霈寧須藉雨工，  
陳固似哉張似否，壁飛作霽望顛中。

Looking at the miraculous brush strokes with amazement for Chen Suo Weng [Chen Rong's art]

Painting the dragon nature so vividly and knowing them so well,  
Splitting open the mountain rocks and moving the running water,  
Spurting out a pool of clouds that float and govern the space.

The transformations of Lao Zi can be resembled,  
Holding an official position and still be capable of this kind of fine work,  
Heaven as represented by nine dragons resembling Fu Xi's trigrams,  
How is it possible to confine the numbers only within this three by three?

In mid-month of March of the year *ding hai*, I [Qianlong Emperor] ordered Jin Tingbiao to copy this scroll, I found [the copy] to be very lively in resemblance to the original, so I promptly, by means of the initial verses, have inscribed the following poem:

Qianlong went to visit Qixia Mountain and viewed the scroll of the man of *Huichang* Weng [Chen Rong]

The shape of *yang* and imitation of the spirit are all possible to reach,  
To speak of it and be surprised that they are suddenly there,  
Not crouching against space but returning back, seizing the sky.

The dragons follow the command of the cloud hurrier emissary [Chen Rong]

Heavy torrents of rain wait for the assistance of the rainmaker [the dragons]

It is true that Chen Rong resembles Zhang Sengyao,  
Flying away from the wall, becoming rising clouds, leading us to gaze into  
the great distance.

Qianlong's inscription is accompanied by four seals:

- *Shi qu ji jian* 石渠繼鑑 (Second Inspection by the Library of Stony Gutter; this is a reference to the supplement to the imperial painting catalog *Shi Qu Bao Ji*), upper seal on the right of the inscription
- *Gu xi tian zi* 古希天子 (A Son of Heaven as rarely seen since antiquity), lower seal on the right side of the inscription
- *Qian long* 乾隆, (Qianlong reign title), two seals on the left side of the inscription together

In the first poetic inscription, Qianlong describes the dragons of Chen Rong's paintings, particularly their movement and Chen's vigorous ink splatter. Qianlong references Chen Rong's dragons as displaying the transformations of the Daoist sage Lao Zi, and of the Eight Trigrams of Fu Xi, used in Daoist cosmology to represent the fundamental principles of reality. He alludes to the lines of the trigrams with the idea of "three by three," where there are six lines in each trigram, but also that the number

three multiplied by three results in the number nine, the highest prime number and further representative of “*yang*.” He further records his admiration for the scroll with a poem, noting that he brought the scroll and viewed it when he travelled, noting that he had taken the scroll with him to *Qi xia* 棲霞 mountain, a mountain located in the northeast part of Nanjing in Jiangsu province.<sup>234</sup> He notes that he ordered a copy of the scroll to be completed by the Qing court painter Jin Tingbiao 金廷標 (*zi*: Shi Kui 士揆; active at court ca. 1757-67), an artist skilled at painting landscapes, figures and Buddhist subjects. In his poem, Qianlong again equates Chen Rong’s talent to the famed dragon painter Zhang Sengyao.

Qianlong’s admiration for Chen Rong and his dragon painting is revealed in other ways beyond his inscription on the *Nine Dragons* scroll itself. In fact, Qianlong mentions Chen Rong in his other writings. For example, in 1754 Qianlong painted an old pine tree handscroll in ink on paper (Figure 34). On the painting, he inscribed his thoughts that demonstrate how he wished he had Chen Rong’s talent in rendering dragons:

To the west of the town shrine gate there stands an umbrella-like  
pine,  
Half luxuriant, half withered dry.  
[Its form is] divinity made tangible, like an image of Baopuzi [Ge  
Hong],

---

<sup>234</sup> Qixia Mountain includes several mountain peaks, like the main peak, Sanmao Peak, with an elevation of 286 meters; Dragon Mountain, like a lying dragon, located in the Northeast; Tiger Mountain, like a fallen tiger, located in the Northwest.

I'm ashamed I'm not a Chen Suo Weng [Chen Rong] [to render this dragon],  
Standing under it [it, one] abruptly doubted daylight for dark,  
And now before [it, one] can comprehend the opposition of form  
and emptiness,  
Why wait until the sixth month to sit by its base?  
Reading commentary, and suddenly hearing the souging wind.  
Personally recorded on the Eastern inspection tour of *jia xu*  
(1754).<sup>235</sup>

Here, Qianlong relates the painting of an old pine to one of Chen Rong's dragons, wishing that he could render it as successfully as Chen Rong does his dragon. Qianlong's reference to the dragon painter Chen Rong has been interpreted by Ju-hsi Chou as a "self-conscious comment on the creative act of painting, itself a means of transformation."<sup>236</sup>

It is clear that Qianlong treasured this work. He not only wrote two inscriptions directly onto the painting's surface, but he also invited eight of his most senior court officials to rhyme his verse in colophons of their own. In his 1767 colophon on the original *Nine Dragons* scroll, Qianlong mentions having commissioned a copy from Jin Tingbiao, but he also commissioned another copy by Yang Dazhang in 1790.<sup>237</sup> A miniature copy was also made, likely by Zhang Ruoi (1713-1746), and currently resides in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (1971.324)

---

<sup>235</sup> Qianlong's painting of an old pine tree is published in Ju-hsi Chou, *The Elegant Brush: Chinese Painting Under the Qianlong Emperor, 1735-1795* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Urban Council, 1986), 19.

<sup>236</sup> Chou, *The Elegant Brush*, 19

<sup>237</sup> See *Sheng Jing Gu Gong Shu Hua Lu*, ce 3, p. 53.

(Figure 35).<sup>238</sup> Zhang was a high official who served at court from the 1730's until his death in 1746. The emperor similarly inscribed Jin's copy, a full scale version, and several high officials, among them Dong Bangda and Qian Weicheng, added their poems to both scrolls.<sup>239</sup>

#### Inscriptions by Qianlong's Eight Officials

The remainder of the *Nine Dragons* scroll contains short poetic inscriptions by Yin Jishan 尹繼善 (1696-1771), Liu Tongxun 劉統勳 (1700-1773), Yu Minzhong 于敏中 (1714-1780), Dong Bangda 董邦達 (1699-1769), Qiu Yuexiu 裘曰修 (1712-1773), Wang Jihua 王際華 (ca. 1720-1776), Qian Weicheng 錢維城 (1720-1772), and Chen Xiaoyong 陳孝永 (1715-1779).<sup>240</sup> Each of their inscription lines end with matching characters and follow the same quatrain format as that of Emperor Qianlong's poetic inscription (通, 空, 工, 中); however, each poetic inscription bears a different meaning and play on the words. Each short

---

<sup>238</sup> Chou, *The Elegant Brush* p. 73. Chou notes however: "Attribution of this small scroll to Jin Tingbiao stems from the reputation of Jin's copy of the famous painting. This miniature scroll is unlikely to have been painted by Jin, however, for Zhang Ruoai, who wrote the long colophon on the scroll, died some ten years before Jin's arrival at court. More likely, this copy is by Zhang himself, his own long colophon appended to the painting which he did not sign."

<sup>239</sup> Wu, *Tales from the Land of Dragons*, 200.

<sup>240</sup> See Arthur W. Hummel (1884-1975), ed., *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period, 1644-1912* (Taipei: Ch'eng Wen Publication Co., 1970), for biographical information on Qian Weicheng (Ch'ien Wei-ch'eng), 158; Qiu Yuexiu (Ch'iu Yueh-hsiu), 172-173; Liu Tongxun (Liu T'ung-hsun), 533-534; Dong Bangda (Tung Pang-ta), 792; Yin Jishan (Yin-chi-shan), 920; and Yu Minzhong (Yu Min-chung), 942.

colophon is accompanied by two seals belonging to the respective inscriber. The following offers for the first time a full transcription and translation of these eight inscriptions into English:

*Yin Jishan* 尹繼善 (1696-1771):<sup>241</sup>

何須投杖說仙翁，靈異全從畫裏通，  
恍見飛騰群戲海，更疑舒卷勢行空。  
點睛破壁傳難信，隨筆生雲擬未工，  
仰睹龍章知聖意，還輪沛澤遍寰中。

臣尹繼善恭和

There is no need to cast a staff when talking about the immortal Weng [Chen Rong],<sup>242</sup>  
The supernatural is fully revealed from within his painting,  
Dazzled from seeing the flying, galloping and grouping of them playing in the sea,  
Even more amazed to unfold the scroll and have all this grandeur traveling into the sky.

The legend of dotting the eyes and breaking the wall is unbelievable,  
Employing the brush according to his wishes and creating clouds effortlessly,  
Admiring and seeing the written imperial order and knowing the intention of the emperor,  
Returning and taking turns bringing beneficence all over the universe.

Your servitor, Yin Jishan, respectfully matched.

---

<sup>241</sup> Yin Jishan (*zi*: Yuan Chang 元長, *hao*: Wang Shan 望山), was a member of the Yellow Banner and became a *jin shi* in 1723, and was made a Grand Secretary in 1764. In 1765, at the age of 70 sui, he began his service as Grand Secretary of Peking (Beijing) and was assigned to many concurrent posts, including that of chief tutor in the Palace School for Princes and chancellor of the Han Lin college.

<sup>242</sup> The concept of “casting a staff” is related to an arhat’s ability to throw a staff and the staff turns into a dragon, a scene that has been represented visually in paintings. See Chou, *The Elegant Brush*, 51.



*Liu Tongxun* 劉統勳 (1700-1773):<sup>243</sup>

龍化曾傳賣藥翁，九龍畫意與仙通，  
無方變態洪波涌，出地靈蹤上界空。  
精想直窮真假外，睿裁妙契卷舒工，  
誰歟解托青蓮鉢，萬點雲隨指顧中。

臣劉統勳恭和

According to legend, he is a dragon transformed as a medicine man,  
The painted idea of Nine Dragons is connected with immortals,  
An unlimited place of transformative condition with great waves rushing  
forth,  
Out from the earth with spiritual traces, the heavens must be empty.

With utmost care and wanting to go all the way beyond the phenomena of  
reality and unreality,  
With astute judgement and ingenious brushwork the scroll unfolds with  
ease  
Who is the one who can understand and hold in one's hand the green  
lotus bowl? <sup>244</sup>  
Clouds of many ink drops follow his command to take care of all the  
common people.

Your servitor, Liu Tongxun, respectfully matched.

*Yu Minzhong* 于敏中 (1714-1780):<sup>245</sup>

---

<sup>243</sup> Liu Tongxun (*zi*: Er Dun 爾鈍; *hao*: Yan Qing 延清) was a *jin shi* in 1724 and was promoted several times, and was placed in charge of the Imperial Printing Press and Bindery, President of the Censorate, the Board of Works, and the Board of Punishments, and in 1753 was made a Grand Councillor. His seal below the poem section reads 勳, but in the poem writing it looks like this character 勳

<sup>244</sup> 青蓮鉢 or green lotus bowl has several possible readings, for example; 1) Green lotus bowl was a ceremonial tool for begging for rain from Dragon King. It holds the water in the bowl. 2) Could be in reference to Chen Rong's own ink bowl filled with ink. However, whether Chen Rong's actual ink bowl was green is unconfirmed.

<sup>245</sup> Yu Minzhong (*zi*: Zhong Chang 重常; *hao*: Shu Zi 叔子) became a *jin shi* with highest honors in 1737 when he was 24 sui, and was made a first class compiler of the Han Lin college. Later he served several positions, including on the Grand Council, as president of the Board of Revenue, and as a Grand Secretary. He became Chief Grand Councillor in 1773. It is recorded that he understood the task of editing the Emperor's poems which

漫論坡老與涪翁，鹿馬何如靈氣通 –  
(九鹿之圖跋於涪翁九馬之圖贊於坡老見卷中識語)，  
飯劃臨江神自合 - (容曾為臨江倅)，蹟藏仙李幻非空 -  
(圖歸仙李之家亦卷首所識)。  
雲濤舒卷騰身現，雷雨經綸信手工，  
正是三農生穀候，會覘澤起墨池中。

臣于敏中恭和

Freely commenting on Po Lao [Su Shi] and Fu Weng [Chen Rong],  
Deer and horses, how they are like vitality of spirit – (Painting of Nine Deer  
and Fu Weng's Nine Horses inscription with Po Lao are seen in the middle  
of the scroll's inscription),  
Managing and planning at Linjiang official duty in a naturally fitting manner  
– (Chen Rong already served as Deputy in Linjiang),  
This scroll stored in Xian Li's house was not an illusion - (the scroll was  
returned to Xian Li's home; in the scroll's passage it is recorded).

With a big wave of clouds, the scroll when unfolded, the soaring dragons  
present themselves,  
Thunderstorms pass through the silk mount, his fine brushwork free and at  
ease.  
This is right at the third month as farmers are busy with their crops.  
It is possible to observe the moisture rising from the ink pond.

Your servitor, Yu Minzhong, respectfully matched.

*Dong Bangda* 董邦達 (1699-1769):<sup>246</sup>

---

were often composed at intervals during an audience and which Yu would write down later from memory. It is said that even under those circumstances, he seldom made an error. For several years, Yu was constantly with the emperor in the capital or on tour, and enjoyed a powerful position at court.

<sup>246</sup> Dong Bangda served as a Grand Secretary, President of the Board of Ceremonies, and was well known as a painter himself. He taught painting to Qian Weicheng. In 1751 Dong was one of the examiners in the Metropolitan Examination, along with three other prominent statesmen; his painting "A Pavilion Under Pine Trees" (1751), which commemorates this occasion, is currently located in the Phoenix Art Museum (gift of Roy and Marilyn Papp). See Claudia Brown and Ju-hsi Chou, *Journeys on Paper and Silk: The Roy and Marilyn Papp Collection of Chinese Painting* (Phoenix: Phoenix Art Museum, 1998), 104, no. 36.

髯鬣葩姿九老翁，淋漓元氣地天通，  
披函已覺雲生室，當畫如聞浪簸空。  
信是前身投杖幻，故教奇筆點睛工，  
圖成詎有天瓢手，霽澤端由宸藻中。

臣董邦達恭和

Whiskers and bristles dancing around the nine [dragons] of Old Weng,  
Unrestrained original vital breath opens to heaven and earth,  
To browse this artwork one already feels the clouds starting to form in the  
room,  
Even in daytime one can hear the sound of waves tossing in space.

Believing that before he cast the staff,  
Hence he was taught with the wonderful brush skill and dotting its eyes  
[bringing the dragon to life],  
The painting accomplished, how there is the hand of the heavenly dipper,  
A torrent of rain and moisture is begun by the emperor's literary  
writings.<sup>247</sup>

Your servitor, Dong Bangda, respectfully matched.

*Qiu Yuexiu* 裘曰修 (1712-1773):<sup>248</sup>

展卷如逢海上翁，靈蹤各各具神通，  
盪胸雲欲千層起，到眼塵先一洗空。  
小大有倫紛可數，屈信以候狀皆工，  
為霖為雨知多少，瀉入齊州九點中。

---

<sup>247</sup> 宸藻 refers to the Emperor's literary writings, which was aimed at complimenting Qianlong's writing ability in general.

<sup>248</sup> Qin Yuexiu (zi: Shu Du 叔度, Man Shi 漫士, Nuo Gao 諾皋) received his *jin shi* degree in 1739 and afterwards held the following positions: second class compiler in the Han Lin College (1739), junior vice-president of the Board of War (1751-53), of the Board of Civil Office (1753—54 and 1756-57), and of the Board of Revenue (1754-55 and 1757-59), senior vice-president of the Board of Civil Office (1757), of the Board of Works (1771) and of the Board of Revenue (1759-67); president of the Board of Rites (1767), of the Board of Works (1767-68 and 1771-73), and of the Board of Punishments (1768-70). He also served in the Grand Council of State and was later a director in the office of the *Si Ku Quan Shu*. His principal activity was as Superintendent of flood control in eastern Henan province, western Shandong and northern Anhui (1757-58).

臣裘曰修恭和

Unrolling this scroll is like coming across Weng of the sea,  
The spiritual traces of each [dragon] all possess supernatural abilities,  
Thick clouds sweep away against the chest up to a thousand levels,  
By the time they are seen by the eye what is left is more refined than dust  
[like nothing is there].

The small and the large all have their order; they are disorderly but they  
can still be counted,

They stay humble waiting, their postures were all carefully and neatly  
done.

To bring continued rain and to bring moisture, how many people know,  
All draining into the land of China.<sup>249</sup>

Your servitor, Qin Yuexiu respectfully matched.

*Wang Jihua* 王際華 (ca. 1720-1776).<sup>250</sup>

潑墨依稀化杖翁，雲從腕底有靈通，  
名徵周殿圖呈瑞，影起仙潭勢劈空。  
妙手恰憑探頷得，傳神那讓點睛工，  
藝林絕藝標真賞，上契乾文德正中。

臣王際華恭和

Broken ink was likely the immortal manifested as the one who cast a staff,  
Clouds created from his wrist are spiritually linked,  
The Zhou Palace had heard of his famous dragon painting and wanted to  
have his art presented in their palace  
The image rises from the immortal pond and its power can split open the  
sky.

With highly skilled hand as if obtaining the pearl under the dragon's chin,  
The vivid expression is no less than dotting the eye,  
In the forest of art his supreme ability indicates his true worth,

---

<sup>249</sup> 九點 refers to 九州, as from the poem entitled 夢天 of Li He 李賀(Tang dynasty), where the term 齊州 is used in reference to all of China.

<sup>250</sup> Wang Jihua was Minister of Revenue and General of the State Historiographer's Office.

This agrees with Heaven and astronomy as his morality and conduct is fair and honest.<sup>251</sup>

Your servitor, Wang Jihua respectfully matched.

*Qian Weicheng* 錢維城 (1720-1772):<sup>252</sup>

豈是情移海上翁，海邊鱗甲與神通，  
九陽幻出雲蹤活，一氣收來墨跡空。  
各體具存非各種，全身不現有全工，  
雁門題句推天下，果入天門兩化中。

臣錢維城恭和

Could it be that one's passion moved the immortal [dragon] of the sea,  
At the seaside the scaly armored [dragon] can communicate with the  
divine essence,  
Nine *yang* [dragons] are a figment of one's imagination appearing and  
leaving a live footprint in the cloud.  
In one go, the ink tracks vanish into space.

Each existing with its own particular appearance,  
The whole body is not fully visible but it is all there,  
Inscriptions at Yanmen are revered by all under heaven,<sup>253</sup>

---

<sup>251</sup> Here the use of the character “*qian*” for heaven, can also be read in reference to the Qianlong Emperor at same time, particularly considering for whom this poem was written.

<sup>252</sup> Qian Weicheng (*zi*: Zong Pan 宗磐, *You An* 幼安; *hao*: Jia Xuan 稼軒, Cha Shan 茶山) was from Wujin in Jiangsu province. He became a *jinshi* in 1745 with highest honors (first place) and was appointed as Han Lin College compiler of the first class. He was a master both of calligraphy and painting. Qian is said to have studied painting under his grandmother, the highly respected flower and landscape painter Chen Shu (1660-1736). Chen Shu's paintings were held in high esteem by the Qianlong emperor, and her works influenced other painters of the era. For her biography, see Hummel, *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period*, 99. Chen was the mother of Qian Chenqun (1686-1774), who in turn was Qian Weicheng's chief examiner and superior. See Claudia Brown and Ju-hsi Chou, *Scent of Ink*, 95. Qian Weicheng's brother, Qian Weiqiao 錢維喬, similarly served the Qianlong Emperor.

<sup>253</sup> *Yanmen* 雁門 refers to Yanmen Guan, the name of a Great Wall pass. It is situated on Yanmen Mountain. The east side and the west side of the mountain face each other, and hence the whole mountain looks like a huge door. Yanmen Mountain was named for its door-like shape, where “Yanmen” means door in Chinese.

As a result, entering the gate of heaven to help all the people.

Your servitor Qian Weicheng respectfully matched.

*Chen Xiaoyong* 陳孝永 (1715-1779):<sup>254</sup>

墨龍妙繪有陳翁，點筆能令造化通，  
杖擲葛陂爭夭矯，鑑懸漢殿數層空。  
超騰雷雨千尋拔，隱現之而萬變工，  
河馬同來邀睿賞，卷舒飛灑灑寰中。

臣陳孝泳恭和

Of wonderful drawings of ink dragons there is Chen Rong,  
With dotting brush strokes he could command Nature [the mother of all things]  
Tossing a staff and with rugged hemp cloth, [he] displays their individual  
charisma with elegant and graceful postures,  
The mirror hanging at Han palace hall reflects a thousand layers of  
nothingness.

Transcendent and soaring thunderstorms rise a thousand feet [from the  
ground],  
Invisible or visible, numerous transformations are all carefully and neatly  
done,  
The river horse came to admire the scroll,<sup>255</sup>  
The scroll unfolded sprinkles heavy rain over the continent of China.

Your servitor, Chen Xiaoyong respectfully matched.

---

<sup>254</sup> Chen Xiaoyong 陳孝永 (1715-1779) was a critic and calligrapher who participated in the compilation of the catalog of bronzes in the imperial collection titled *Xi Qing Gu Jian* 西清古鑑

<sup>255</sup> *He ma* or river horse is related to Fu Xi viewing the river diagram and discovering the Eight Trigrams.

## Chapter 5: Contemporary Reinterpretations of Chen Rong's Nine Dragons Scroll

Contemporary Chinese artists have reinterpreted Chen Rong's *Nine Dragons* scroll in recent years. This chapter discusses the work of three contemporary Chinese artists, Li Huayi, Zeng Baojun, and Chan Shengyao, who have recently reinterpreted the *Nine Dragons* scroll specifically. By examining how contemporary artists interpret and re-imagine Chen Rong's *Nine Dragons* scroll motif, we can explore how Chen's original painting continues to impact and inspire artists working today.

Each artist's association and circumstances for reinterpreting Chen Rong's *Nine Dragons* scroll is different. In 2006, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston invited ten contemporary Chinese artists to study its collection of Chinese paintings, and asked each artist to choose one piece from the collection to create a new work in direct response. The resulting new works were presented alongside their inspired originals in an exhibition in 2010 entitled "Fresh Ink: Ten Takes on Chinese Tradition" (on view November 20, 2010 – February 13, 2011). Of the many exceptional paintings in the Museum's collection, Chen Rong's *Nine Dragons* scroll was chosen by two of the ten artists, Li Huayi and Zeng Baojun. At the symposium accompanying the opening of the exhibition, both artists expressed their intense admiration for the scroll. In addition, while most

artists created one new work in response, Zeng created two works. Furthermore, at around that same time, the contemporary artist Master Shengyao (Chan Shengyao) was actively creating large abstract dragon portrayals, and painted a large ink painting that also gives a nod to Chen Rong's *Nine Dragons* scroll as a source of inspiration. While the artists' individual styles, views and creative processes differ, their passion for the dragon motif and admiration for Chen Rong's original painting is shared. Each artist's interpretation of Chen Rong's scroll is strikingly different, but the implication, relevant to this dissertation, is that Chen Rong's *Nine Dragons* scroll is a force in the inspiration of contemporary art.

Li Huayi (b. 1948)

*Artist's Background and Philosophy*

Li Huayi 李華弋 was born in 1948 in Shanghai. The son of wealthy Shanghai parents, he began studying traditional Chinese literati painting at the age of six with Wang Jimei (1903-1976), the son of famous Shanghai school painter Wang Zhen 王震 (zi: Yiting, 1867-1938).<sup>256</sup> As a teenager, he studied with Zhang Chongren 張充仁 (1907-1998), who was trained as a Western-style realist artist in Brussels at the Royal Academy. During the Cultural Revolution, Li survived by doing propaganda works in the realist style, thanks to his training with Zhang. Following the Cultural

---

<sup>256</sup> For more on Wang Zhen (Wang Yiting), see Walter B Davis, *Wang Yiting and the Art of Sino-Japanese Exchange* (PhD Diss., Ohio State University, 2008).



Revolution, Li became dissatisfied with the realist works he had been forced to create. In 1982 he moved to San Francisco and obtained a Master's degree at the San Francisco Academy of Art. He practiced oil painting and continued to practice socialist realist styles and briefly rendered Chinese historical and Buddhist figures. After seeing the work of Zhang Daqian 張大千 (1899-1983), Li changed directions and began to work again in the traditional Chinese literati style, while interested in infusing his work with Western style in some way.<sup>257</sup> Inspired by Zhang Daqian's unique artistic mixing of Western styles and Chinese heritage, Li began practicing and integrating splashed ink techniques in his work.

Li's new works were strongly reminiscent of traditional Chinese landscape styles such as the monumental landscapes of eleventh and twelfth century Northern Song dynasty master landscapists Fan Kuan 范寬 (ca. 950–1032) and Li Cheng 李成 (919-967), particularly in his detailed rendering of soaring angular mountain rock shrouded in thick fog and mist.<sup>258</sup>

Confucian order and Daoist harmony is visually portrayed in Fan Kuan's most famous painting *Travelers Among Mountains and Streams*.

---

<sup>257</sup> Zhang's original name is Zhang Zhengquan, given name Zhang Yuan 張爰. He styled himself Ji Yuan and had the assumed name of Daqian after having become a Buddhist monk in Songjiang. For more on Zhang Daqian, see Shen Fu, *Challenging the Past: The Paintings of Chang Dai-Chien* (Washington, D.C.: Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, 1991).

<sup>258</sup> On Fan and Li, see Richard Barnhart, James Cahill, et al. *Three Thousand Years of Chinese Painting* (New Haven: Yale University Press; Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1997), and Michael Sullivan, *The Arts of China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

Fan Kuan did not associate at court, and instead led a life as a hermit within the mountains. Song Dynasty official Guo Ruoxu 郭若虛 noted that Fan Kuan's "manner and appearance had an antique severity; his behavior was rude and rustic; it was his nature to crave wine and to love the [Taoist] Way."<sup>259</sup> In Fan's painting *Travelers Among Mountains and Streams*, a monumental mountain towers over the foreground of trees and caravan of travelers, sprung upward like an impenetrable wall. Fan's vision is successful; the sheer size of the mountain in comparison to the minute figures dramatizes a reverence for the power of nature itself, and in turn the power of the universe and the cosmos. There is a pervasive sense of a greater order and harmony inherent within the forces of nature, reflective of a Neo-Confucianist point of view. The travelers are physically dwarfed by the colossal size of landscape and the mountain, symbolic of their place within the greater Confucian order. It is nature that dominates society overall. Li Cheng similarly created monumental landscape paintings. A notable painting attributed to him is *Buddhist Temple in the Mountain*, in the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. Li is known for creating the appearance of fog through the use of diluted ink to create cloud-like texture, with aging evergreens in the foreground.

Li Huayi continues to explore the monumental landscape to this day. Also inspired by the Song dynasty, he has created many intimate

---

<sup>259</sup> *Guo Ruoxu's Experiences in Painting / T'u-Hua Chien-Wen Chih*, trans. Alexander Soper (Washington, D.C.: American Council of Learned Societies, 1951), 57.

smaller format artworks such as fan leaves and album leaves; however, the landscape scenes depicted in them are no less monumental. Li's paintings exude a particular dream-like quality, where trees and rock are surrounded with the lightest touches of brush. The landscapes themselves are not of any one particular vista or venue. He creates images that feel calm, surreal and fantastical all at the same time.

Li's artistic philosophy appears to be grounded in the search for *qi yun* in his painting. Xie He's original concept of *qi yun* 氣韻 or "spirit resonance," which refers to a painting's vitality, and the idea of *qi* or "living breath," is still applied today in Li's work. As described by Britta Erickson, Li begins each painting by spreading ink wash and then developing the painting according to such randomly-generated results; in regards to this process, Li has remarked "Mostly I just follow the energy."<sup>260</sup> Thus, Li's preoccupation with landscape painting is driven by a search for this creative vitality.

### *Reinterpretation of Chen Rong's Nine Dragons*

Li Huayi's recent interpretation of Chen Rong's *Nine Dragons* scroll demonstrates not only Li's steady interest in traditional Chinese ink painting, particularly Northern Song dynasty monumental landscape painting, but also his desire to express these concepts with a slightly

---

<sup>260</sup> Britta Erickson, "Landscape as a Condition of the Spirit" in Britta Erickson and Kuiyi Shen, *Li Huayi at 60* (Hong Kong: The Ink Society, 2008), 9.

modern twist in his plays on sculptural display. The work which he created for the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, exhibition “Fresh Ink”, *Dragon Amidst Mountain Ridges* (2006-2009) (Figure 36), is a set of six ink and color paper panels with one large hanging scroll that hangs inches above the other panels beneath it. It is his largest work to date. The side panels underneath are lighter, paler, mountainous landscapes that contain subtle and ghostly images, in contrast to the intricately detailed central landscape that folds over it. In the central panel, trees cling perilously to the side of a cliff, and the size of the landscape itself, highlighted by different tonalities of gray ink wash, is overwhelming to the eye. This two-tiered format is a new and purposeful endeavor for the artist, the intention being to force the viewer to see the work as being in two different states of contrast. Li likens the two stages to elements of Chinese calligraphy which work together to reveal his own unique style:

For me, Chinese ink painting is basically a ready-made form; not the image, but rather each stroke, reveals your personality. It's symbolic, like calligraphy – each character has a prescribed stroke order, but everyone has his or her own way of writing it. You can read my works stroke by stroke, just like calligraphy. In *Dragon amidst Mountain Ridges*, there are two different parts that are like different calligraphy styles, cursive script and regular script. These different styles match and reveal my artistic personality.<sup>261</sup>

He further describes the central panel, with its highly detailed and startlingly angular mountain side, as serving as a central focus point that is both intimate and meditative:

---

<sup>261</sup> Joseph Scheier-Dolberg, “Li Huayi,” *Orientations* (October 2010), 56.

Even with monumentality, every Chinese painting needs to have areas of meditation. The way of ink, the power of ink is different; you cannot use impact alone, you need subtlety, you need people to feel intimacy with the painting, and they need time to digest the work. This is the idea behind the middle panel in the Boston work; it is the visual focus, the meditative focus. I also think the hanging-scroll format is especially good for meditation; the work becomes more like an object, not just an ordinary painting.<sup>262</sup>

The most intriguing and essential element to Li's work based on Chen Rong's *Nine Dragons* scroll is the fact that there is actually no representation of a physical dragon whatsoever, and thus the painting is completely unlike Chen's original scroll.

At the *Fresh Ink* symposium at Boston, a gathering of scholars and artists held in honor of the exhibition, Li was asked why he chose the *Nine Dragons* scroll, to which he replied that Chen Rong's dragons were "in my gut, in my belly."<sup>263</sup> Li connects with Chen Rong's scroll not necessarily in terms of a physical portrayal, but much more in representation of *qi yun*, or its indefatigable "vitality of spirit." Li says of the *Nine Dragons* scroll: "The first time I saw the painting I think the prevailing impression was just its

---

<sup>262</sup> Ibid.

<sup>263</sup> Dissertation author's notes from attending *Fresh Ink: Ten Takes on Chinese Tradition* Rockefeller Symposium on East Asian Art at Harvard University, in conjunction with the exhibition *Fresh Ink: Ten Takes on Chinese Tradition* at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, held on December 4, 2010. Chaired by Eugene Wang, Yukio Lippit and Hao Sheng, the ten artists of the *Fresh Ink* exhibition participated in the symposium panels and reflected upon the exhibition in relation to post-Mao Chinese art.

energy – it has a very fierce spirit.”<sup>264</sup> Li revels in the scroll’s illustrious history, but also Chen Rong’s particular style of brush and ink:

The amazing thing about *Nine Dragons* is that not everything resides in the point of most energy [the vortex]. Looking at it from one perspective, this painting’s most important goal is to depict nine dragons, right? But more impressive to me is the way he deploys energy through these soft elements – clouds, water, and so forth. The dragons are sort of moving within the energy that these create.<sup>265</sup>

Li further expressed fascination and ardent admiration for Chen’s use of materials, brush stroke, and grand historical associations:

From the moment you see it, you realize that this work has been appreciated for centuries: the scroll’s wrapping shows it was in the Qing dynasty imperial collection, and it is registered in the *Shi qu bao ji*, the catalogue of the imperial painting collection. You see the colophons on the fabric, the jade toggles of the handscroll; attention has been paid to every single detail. Now it is my turn to show my respect.

This painting is from the Southern Song dynasty, but it is paper-based and not on silk, which was more common for painters of the time. And the way Chen Rong used water and ink is so abstract – the strokes are very loose and handsome, but still you can find so many unique elements: there is even *po mo*, ‘dropped ink’! His *bi mo* (‘brush and ink’) moved me right away. It’s an incredible piece, and it’s a contemporary piece.<sup>266</sup>

Thus, Li’s interpretation focuses not on the physical forms of the dragons themselves, but firmly in the creation of the impression of the dragon, and of the dragon’s essence and vitality of spirit.

---

<sup>264</sup> *Fresh Ink: Ten Takes on Chinese Tradition*, ed. Hao Sheng, Yan Yang and Joseph Scheier-Dolberg (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 2010), 140.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>266</sup> Joseph Scheier-Dolberg, “Li Huayi,” *Orientalisms* (October 2010), 56.

Zeng Xiaojun 曾小俊 (b. 1954)

*Artist's Background and Philosophy*

Zeng Xiaojun was born in Beijing in 1954. Like Li Huayi, he spent his teenage years living amidst the Cultural Revolution. He attended the Central Art and Craft Academy of Beijing, from which he graduated in 1981. In 1983, Zeng moved to the United States, and exhibited in several solo and group exhibitions. In 1997, he returned to Beijing, where he now lives and works. As an artist, he is also a collector and designer.

Zeng is an avid collector of Ming and Qing dynasty furniture as well as scholar's objects. He is knowledgeable and most passionate about wood in all its different kinds. His paintings are well-known for depictions of unique trees and scholar's objects. Zeng is artistically inspired by the aesthetics of the Ming dynasty and the works of Wen Zhengming (1470-1559). Like Wen Zhengming, Zeng is best known for his study of old trees, a special theme distinct from landscape painting in China. When asked to discuss his artistic philosophy, Zeng reveals that his inspirations are open:

I focused on murals when I studied at the Tsinghua [Qinghua] Art Academy, and in the course of the programme, we learned from many different traditions, whether Chinese or Western. As a result of this comprehensive approach, I like everything from prints to Western line drawings. In my heart, there is no concept of classical traditions; there is only good and bad. The distinction between

traditions was created by art historians. What I look for is spirituality, dedication, technical skill and taste.<sup>267</sup>

### *Reinterpretaton of Chen Rong's Nine Dragons*

Zeng created a two-part response to *Nine Dragons* to reflect the range of his interests, synthesizing diverse concerns in an ambitious multimedia project.

The first part was a large 32 foot long handscroll painting entitled *Nine Trees* (2007-2010) (Figure 37), where Zeng speaks directly to Chen Rong's *Nine Dragons* by substituting the dragons with gnarled cypresses and pines. Zeng's trees draw on the shapes of Chen's dragons, where the eighth and ninth trees echo the standoff between the fifth and sixth dragons in Chen's original scroll.

The second work was a large 8 x 11 foot folding screen entitled *Dragon Screen* (Figure 38), comprised of a large, three-fold wood screen with cypress paintings on the front and lacquered painted panels of dragons on the reverse. Viewed in person, the size of the screen was imposing. Zeng's use of *zi tan* 紫檀 wood was carved with detailed openwork and lacquered. The piece was inspired by an old fourteenth century screen from the artist's own collection. First he created a prototype out of *nan mu* 楠木, a type of durable softwood of an evergreen laurel tree native to China, and the final product was carved out of *zi tan*, a

---

<sup>267</sup> Joseph Scheier-Dolberg, "Zeng Xiaojun," *Orientations* (October 2010), 89.



type of rosewood known for its rich purple-brown tone. *Zi tan* wood was especially favored for hardwood furniture during the Ming and Qing dynasty, and is prized as it grows very slowly.<sup>268</sup> The screen can be viewed open or closed. When closed, the screen presents a scene from Chen Rong's *Nine Dragons* scroll, painted by Zeng.

In contrast to Li Huayi's landscapes, Zeng's tree paintings lend themselves to a more intimate viewing experience. Historical literati identified with old trees, seeing their twisted forms and marks of weather and exposure as an analogy for aging and the natural course of life. Zeng's interpretation of relating the dragon to a tree is not a new idea, rather a creative play on a traditional concept.<sup>269</sup> In fact, as mentioned in the previous chapter, the Qianlong Emperor himself likened his own painting of an old pine tree to that of the dragon, lamenting in his inscription how his rendition of the dragon falls short of Chen Rong and his dragons.

---

<sup>268</sup> It is said that the Qianlong Emperor took special measures to protect existing stores of *zi tan*, which were kept in the warehouses of the Imperial workshop. The use of *zi tan* was strictly monitored and restricted to Palace workshops.

<sup>269</sup> The connection between trees and dragons is noted in Guo Ruoxu's *Experiences in Painting* from the Northern Song dynasty. As translated by Alexander Soper, Guo wrote of modeling trees to resemble the dramatic effects of a dragon: "In doing woods or single trees, there will be drooping branches and upstanding trunks, crooked joints and furrowed bark; their bonds splitting apart into a multitude of [twig] tips, and subdividing into a myriad forms. One will create the effect of furious dragons or fearful serpents, or build up an atmosphere of chill clouds and an overcast sun." See *Kuo Jo-Hsu's Experiences in Painting (T'u-hua chien-wen chih): An Eleventh Century History of Chinese Painting Together with the Chinese Text in Facsimile*, Trans. Alexander C. Soper, 11.

Chan Shengyao (b.1958)

*Artist's Background and Philosophy*

Master Shengyao or Chan Shengyao 詹聖堯 (*zi*: *Xiao Yao* 逍遙; *hao*: *Shen Long* 神龍, *Tai Yi* 太一, *Tai Chu Dao Ren* 太初道人) began painting at a young age, and to this day, his painting methods and techniques are largely self-taught. He moved to the United States in 1986 and attended the MFA program in the Art Department at the University of Kansas for two years. For years, he has combined Chinese ink and other materials to create abstract and semi-abstract ink paintings. More recently, he has combined Chinese inks with diverse media to create large-scale canvases and outdoor installations. A contemporary Chinese literatus, he demonstrates proficiency in all traditional Chinese literati “perfections” of painting, poetry and calligraphy.<sup>270</sup>

In his artwork, Chan expresses his ideas regarding his perspectives and contemplations on the truth of life. His connection and deep understanding and study of “Nature” within the three great philosophies of Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism has played a key role in his artistic production, resulting in artwork that is undeniably spiritual. This “spiritual” dimension of his artwork is not necessarily synonymous with the religious.

---

<sup>270</sup> For a discussion of the traditional Chinese literati perfections, see Michael Sullivan, *The Three Perfections: Chinese Painting, Poetry and Calligraphy* (New York: George Braziller, 1980).

Instead, his art and artistic philosophy is “spiritual” in the sense that it is a way of living the ordinary while sensing the extraordinary.

To Chan, truly great art is an expression drawn from within his original inherent nature. He uses the term “enlightenment power” to describe the great original life power of all living creatures (本來面目) to create their universe, and the natural power of creativity itself. For Chan, all human beings possess this creative ability, as it is based largely on one’s sincere cultivation of the power of the mind. His concept of enlightenment is largely based upon Buddhist teachings, particularly the Southern school of Zen Buddhism, and the idea of spontaneous enlightenment as propagated by the Sixth Zen Patriarch Huineng, in which it is believed that anyone, regardless of race, gender, class or background, has the potential and ability to achieve enlightenment at any moment.<sup>271</sup> A prolific writer, he discusses these ideas in his artist statement “Manifesto on the Use of Enlightenment Power in Art Creation,” writing:<sup>272</sup>

---

<sup>271</sup> *Chan* (禪) is the Chinese character for Chan Buddhism, a school of Mahayana Buddhism, which entered the Chinese vocabulary as an abbreviated form of the Sanskrit word *dhyana*. “Zen” is the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese character *Chan*, and the two terms are thus interchangeable. The emergence of Chan Buddhism as a distinct school of Buddhism was first documented in China in seventh century CE, and was traditionally established by Bodhidharma, a monk who was a former prince from India who traveled to China by sea. Because the Zen tradition was made known to Westerners largely through the works of Japanese scholars and religious figures, the term “Zen” is widely recognized in the West. For this reason, as well as to avoid confusion with the surname of the artist Chan Shengyao, the term “Zen” will be used instead of the Chinese term *Chan*.

<sup>272</sup> This document was produced in its current translated form in a limited edition two-

The power of enlightenment does not end, cannot be exhausted, and is everywhere. When a person's body and soul is thoroughly pure, then enlightenment power will thoroughly manifest itself and function. Enlightenment power is alive and the source of all life and the universe is only a droplet within it. Enlightenment power creates the universe, and the universe reintegrates with enlightenment power. Enlightenment power is where our pure and true selves lie, it is the origin of all beings, and is the source of all things.<sup>273</sup>

Through his artwork, Chan attempts to break through established concepts of how we see, perceive, identify, create, and place ourselves and our world at large.

#### *Reinterpretation of Chen Rong's Nine Dragons*

Inspired by Chen Rong's *Nine Dragons* scroll, Chan created a long ink painted scroll, *Transformation of Nine Dragons to their Essence* 九龍化精, in 2010 (Figure 39). In this scroll, his dragons are more recognizable as traditional portrayals of the Chinese dragon when compared to the works of Li Huayi and Zeng Xiaojun. However, he is unique in his emphasis on the dragon's *transformation* from form to formlessness.

Chan's long scroll *Transformation of Nine Dragons to their Essence* is a rhythmic symphony of ink. He created the entire scroll solely from the use of his hands and fingers to smear and splash Chinese black ink upon

---

volume catalogue of the artist's work, *The Art of Chan Sheng-Yao*, edited by Jacqueline Chao, published by Art Founders Inc. in 2010.

<sup>273</sup> Chao, *The Art of Chan Sheng-Yao*, Vol. 1, 5.

paper. Following the large title characters, several dragons are depicted swirling and playing, wrestling, floating effortlessly and finally coming to a rest in triumphant flurries of ink. From the beginning of the scroll, Chan's dragons are not full-figured; their forms are un-shaded with simple flowing outlines of ink. Towards the end of the scroll, Chan's dragons transform even further, reduced to wiggling ink lines and splashed dots.

While it would not appear so, this long scroll *Transformation of Nine Dragons to their Essence* was the first time Chan had painted the Chinese dragon in its traditional form. Never before in his life had he ever attempted to paint the Chinese dragon, and previously to creating this scroll, he had only rendered the Chinese dragon symbolically in large abstract paintings. He used only his hands and fingers to create all aspects of his scroll, including the calligraphy. His fingers manipulated and applied the ink in a variety of ways: splashing, splattering, pressing down, sweeping, sprinkling, and even dragging and brushing ink with his fingertips, vividly capturing the dragons' features, such as whiskers, scales and claws. Towards the end of the scroll, Chan's dragons are rendered in a completely abstract manner as ink swirls. The previous formal essence of the dragon is clearly indicated, but Chan reduces the dragon form dramatically. With this scroll, Chan expresses the literal process of the Chinese dragon's transformation from the physical to the invisible in one

ink painting, in a direct and profound expression of the dragon's supernatural nature and vital essence.

### *Calligraphy*

Chan Shengyao's long scroll *Transformation of Nine Dragons to their Essence* demonstrates multiple calligraphy script styles as well as the artist's original poetic inscriptions. Before and following the painted section of *Transformation of Nine Dragons to their Essence*, he inscribed a lengthy inscription and poem in his own signature calligraphy style, where playful abstract creatures emerge from the word's forms, written thickly and boldly in ink with his fingers. In the beginning of the scroll, large scrawling Chinese characters illustrate the title of the scroll; the sheer size of each character is at least four feet high. Throughout the scroll, Chan alters his calligraphic style with each inscription, switching between cursive, semi-cursive and more formal lettering. He inscribes the scroll with a little bit of every script style, from the running script of the "Two Wangs" (Wang Xizhi and his son Wang Xianzhi), Huang Tingjian, Su Shi and Mi Fu, the regular script of Yan Zhenqing and Liu Gongquan, to the wild cursive script of Huai Su.

Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (303-361 CE), often referred to as the "sage of calligraphy," is particularly renowned for the organic and expressive nature of his running and cursive calligraphic script styles. Tang dynasty

Emperor Taizong 太宗 (r. 626-649 CE) ensured that Wang's calligraphic style would serve as a paragon of aristocratic elegance and refinement, as well as a model to be emulated frequently by other calligraphers. Original examples of Wang's calligraphy rarely exist now, however his calligraphy has been admired and carefully copied and imitated to this day. His son, Wang Xianzhi 王獻之 (344-386 CE), inherited his father's talent for calligraphy and invented his own script style, notably the "one-stroke" cursive script, which blends all characters in the text with a single stroke. Chan alludes to this technique in the title and ending characters of his scroll *Transformation of Nine Dragons to their Essence*, where each character is connected in a singular line.

Towards the end of the scroll *Transformation of Nine Dragons to their Essence*, Chan also demonstrates calligraphic running script. A simplified style of running script was established during the Tang dynasty with the style of Yan Zhenqing 顏真卿 and his contemporary Liu Gongquan 柳公權 (778-865). In his running script in *Transformation of Nine Dragons to their Essence*, Chan's brushwork is straightforward and bold through the employment of the *zhong feng* 中鋒 or "centered tip" brush technique. His calligraphy further recalls Mi Fu's calligraphic style in its more oblique angular strokes.

Furthermore, Chan demonstrates his talent in writing in a spontaneous and uninhibited calligraphic script style known as "wild

cursive” or *kuang cao* 狂草. The invention of this script is attributed to the Tang dynasty calligrapher Zhang Xu 張旭 (fl. 658?-748?) or *Madman* Zhang Dian 張顛, considered the “sage of cursive script” 草聖, who gained fame as one of the “Eight Drinking Immortals” or *yin zhong ba xian* 飲中八仙. When describing the famed cursive script of Tang dynasty calligrapher Zhang, the great Tang poet Han Yu 韓愈 (768-824) wrote:

When he was moved by joy or anger, poverty, grief, sorrow or pleasure, resentment or longing, intoxication, boredom, or discontent, he would always express it in cursive script. Furthermore, he would create a calligraphic counterpart for what he saw in nature – mountains and rivers, valleys and cliffs, birds and animals, insects and fish, grass and trees, flowers and fruit, sun and moon, the constellations, wind and rain, water and fire, thunder and lightning, song and dance, and the vicissitudes of all things in heaven and earth. Rejoicing over them, amazed by them, he would express them through his calligraphy. Thus the variations in Chang Hsu’s [Zhang Xu’s] calligraphy are as unfathomable as the motivations of gods and demons. For these reasons his name is known by later generations.<sup>274</sup>

Unfortunately, not a single authentic specimen of Zhang’s wild cursive script has been preserved, however Zhang had many followers and admirers. The monk Huai Su 懷素 (ca. 735-ca. 799), a follower of Zhang, was also known for his own style of wild cursive script and for writing while drunk. Huai Su was regarded among the greatest calligraphic innovators of his day, with some reporting that his wildness surpassed that of

---

<sup>274</sup> Nakata Yujiro’s “Calligraphic style and poetry handscrolls: On Mi Fu’s Sailing on the Wu River,” in Alfreda Murck and Wen Fong, *Words and Images: Chinese Poetry, Calligraphy and Painting*, 92.



Zhang.<sup>275</sup> Huai Su studied the styles of the great master calligraphers of the past like Wang Xizhi, and like Zhang Xu, Huai is said to have been inspired by natural elements such as floating summer clouds and cracks in a wall.<sup>276</sup> “Wild” or “mad” cursive script was commonly performed while the writer was inebriated, whereupon drunkenness was a state in which one could be most receptive to divine inspiration and spontaneity. Huai Su’s wild behaviour, initially incited by wine, was regarded by some people as a sign of supernatural spiritual powers, where “calligraphy became an analogy of the drama of natural creation.”<sup>277</sup> This style of calligraphy writing is representative of the merger of the body with the essence of infinity (清虛無極) as discussed in Daoist and Buddhist philosophies.

Chan Shengyao’s calligraphy on the scroll is primarily of his own developed wild cursive script, which has been inspired by both ancient scripts and more modern styles. He employs wild cursive script with a thin and even “silkworm” line in his own style. Furthermore, each character is continuously connected to one another.

### *Inscription*

A prolific calligrapher and writer of poetry, Chan often composes several pieces of writing as an inscribed accompaniment to his paintings.

---

<sup>275</sup> Ibid, 36.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid, 43.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid, 41.

In *Transformation of Nine Dragons to Their Essence*, his poetic

inscriptions are as follows:

來無影，去無蹤，  
桃花依舊笑春風，  
欲識神龍真面目，  
電光雷火顯神通！

**九** 垓霄漢來空濛，  
**龍** 飛天外去無蹤，  
**化** 導蒼生濟四海，  
**精** 神絕妙入圓通。

自古於今，畫鱗甲者焉乏其人，然真入神龍三昧者，唯南宋所翁一人而已，悲夫！今演吾慈通，振千載之頹，以金剛指寫九龍化精圖巨卷，將古龍化作今精。空前絕後，貌神獨新，全顯融古開今之宗風，化導文人造作之誤，斬煞董迂翁之邪說，復我震旦畫道正脈，直入神龍三昧，正法眼藏，寂照妙心也。

詩曰：

**神**龍擊世，**龍**首是瞻，**三**絕化導，**昧**爽隆安。  
**道**源宇外，**法**溯宙傳，**自**在超妙，**然**即是禪。  
**回**造化春，**天**降星才，**之**乎太乙，**妙**入紫寰。  
**盡**吾誥命，**在**吾承傳，**心**惺惺焉，**傳**之永繁。

神龍三昧，道法自然，回天之妙，盡在心傳。

幸甚！幸甚！

太一神龍

Coming without a trace, going without a trail,  
Plum blossoms still like before and smiling in the spring wind,  
Wanting to acknowledge the spirit of the dragon's true appearance,  
Lightning, thunder, and fire are its supernatural abilities!

**Nine** dragons come out of the primal vastness,  
**Dragons** fly beyond heaven and go without a trace,  
**Transforming** and guiding every being in the universe,  
**Their Essence** is absolutely outstanding in universal perfection.

From ancient times to now, those who paint scaly-armored beings are not lacking, but of those who truly entered the spirit of the dragon's *samadhi*, there was only the Southern Song dynasty's Suo Weng [Chen Rong]; how sad! Today I use my compassion, shaking thousands of years of its decline. Using my indestructible fingers to sketch out the *Transformation of Nine Dragons to Their Essence* large painting scroll, I have transformed the ancient dragon forms into its modern essence. It has never been done like this before and no one will be able surpass this later; I am the only one who creates this new appearance and spirit, entirely bridging the old and creating a new style, guiding and educating the literati and the mistakes they made, chopping Dong's [Dong Qichang] pedantic and erroneous statements, recovering China's painting and moving it into the right direction, entering the spirit of the dragon's *Samadhi* directly, using correct wisdom to develop our original pure life quality, incredible enlightenment power penetrates everywhere and all beings achieve inner peace.

*Poem:*

**The Supernatural Power** of the dragon is an outstanding person of this world,  
The **Dragon** leader is looked up to by all,  
**Three** perfections [poetry, painting, calligraphy] teach and lead,  
**Samadhi** is comfortable, grand, and at ease.

**The Way of Bodhi** [enlightenment] originates beyond space,  
**Dharma** is traced back to when the universe began,  
**Free** and at ease, and beyond the inconceivable,

**Spontaneity** [nature in itself] is named as Zen [*Chan* Buddhism].

**Returning** [to nature] to re-create a harmonious universe,  
A **Being Who Possesses Superhuman Powers** descends with the talent  
of a star,  
**This! Is** the one sent from the star of Tai Yi [the star of Polaris],  
**Ingeniously** it leads us into the highest universe and life in itself.

**Entirely** devoting myself to my imperial mandate,  
**Within** my way of following the tradition and passing it on to the next  
generation,  
**A Pure** mind is absolutely without delusions,  
**Transmit** it eternally, multiplying continuously.

**The supernatural power of the dragon is Samadhi,<sup>278</sup>  
The Way of Bodhi and Dharma is free and spontaneous,  
The returning being who possesses superhuman powers is  
ingenious,  
It is entirely within a pure mind to transmit.**

Very honored to do so! Very honored to do so!

Tai Yi Shen Long

In his inscription, Chan composes a poem which contains additional poems within it using the characters of each line. This poetry style is reminiscent of the work of the famed Chinese poetess Su Hui 蘇蕙, active during the fourth century, who is most famous for her construction of complex palindrome poems or *hui wen* 回 (蕙)文. *Hui wen* poems can be written in short couplets or in a traditional lengthier style. Su is famous for producing the most complex and oldest example of *hui wen* extant, called the *Xuan Ji Tu* 璇璣圖 written for her husband Dou Tao. A *xuan ji* is an

---

<sup>278</sup> The word "Samadhi" in Sanskrit translates in Chinese as "三昧"

archaic astronomical instrument used to fix the positions of important stars. *Hui wen* style poetry makes sense whether read forward or backward, but the two readings are not identical, although they are compatible with each other in diction and atmosphere. Su's *Xuan Ji Tu* poem is in the form of a twenty-nine by twenty-nine character grid, and its lines can be read forwards or backwards, horizontally, vertically or diagonally, allowing for 2,848 different readings. Her poem was praised and celebrated by many later poets such as Su Shi, as well as studied and copied by several later emperors. Chan's poetic composition is evocative of this classical and dynamic style of Chinese poetry, where the characters serve to produce multiple poetic sentences of infinite meanings.

For Chan Shengyao, calligraphy is an act from his mind and is reflective of his inner self-nature. Yu-Kung Kao, in his innovative study of Chinese lyric aesthetics, describes how lyric aesthetics exist fundamentally in Chinese music, prose, poetry and calligraphy, and how these messages are then expressed mentally by the artist. In his explanation of Chinese calligraphy and its appreciation, Kao likens the experience of writing calligraphy to being almost meditative, where one's thoughts need to be controlled:

As lyric experience, calligraphy concentrates on the phase of execution, which is the materialization of the power of the artist. Repeatedly, theorists warned the calligrapher to cleanse his mind before execution. It should not escape our attention that a

completely cleansed mind may require the calligrapher to cut himself off from realistic experience. Divorce from the outside world is a necessary condition for great performance, completely dependent as performance is upon the inner reserve the artist can release at the moment. To appreciate calligraphy is to relive the physical action in one's mind. Therefore even the physical aspect of calligraphy can be meaningful only in its mental mode.<sup>279</sup>

The act of calligraphy is likened to the process of creation, where one burst of movement with the brush can both create and destroy a myriad of phenomena. Chan's long scroll is a visual display of the concept that "originally there is not a single thing" (本來無一物), a fundamental Zen Buddhist kernel of wisdom regarding the true nature of all material existence and phenomena, and a phrase often mentioned by the artist in his artworks, inscriptions and poetry. According to the *Platform Sutra* 六祖壇經 or *The Sutra of Huineng*, when the Fifth Patriarch Hongren 弘忍 (601-674) was imparting the teachings of the *Diamond Sutra* 金剛經 to the chosen Sixth Zen Patriarch Huineng (惠能; 638-713), Huineng achieved enlightenment and recollected:<sup>280</sup>

When he came to the phrase "One should activate one's mind so it has no attachment," I was suddenly and completely enlightened, and understood that all things exist in self-nature. I then exclaimed to the Patriarch:

Who would have thought that self-nature is intrinsically pure?  
Who would have thought that self-nature is free from birth and death?

---

<sup>279</sup> Yu-Kung Kao, "Lyric Aesthetics," in Alfreda Murck and Wen Fong, *Words and Images: Chinese Poetry, Calligraphy and Painting*, 80.

<sup>280</sup> For biographies of Hongren and Huineng and discussion of this historical event, see Andrew E. Ferguson, *Zen's Chinese Heritage: The Masters and Their Teachings* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000), 38.

Who would have thought that self-nature is complete within itself?  
Who would have thought that self-nature is unchanging?  
Who would have thought that all things are manifestations of self-nature?<sup>281</sup>

From Huineng's commentary, our inner nature and our minds produce and create what we see, and therefore, enlightenment can be achieved within the mind. Thus, the inner nature of all things is equal, complete, eternal, and exists entirely within ourselves, which is the ultimate meaning and driving concept behind Chan's artworks. Thus, when considering these ideas in relation to Chan Shengyao's dragon scroll, we realize that the Chinese dragon's powerful nature and transformative abilities are not to be understood as separate from mankind's own original inner transformative power.

---

<sup>281</sup> Stephen Addiss, *Zen Sourcebook: Traditional Documents from China, Korea, and Japan*, 26. The Chinese version of Master Hui-Neng's words is as follows: <<六祖壇經>>“何其自性本自清淨!何其自性本不生滅!何其自性本自具足!何其自性本無動搖!何其自性能生萬法!” Other translators have translated this passage differently, sometimes listing four statements instead of five. In Thomas Cleary's English translation of the Sutra of Hui-Neng, the same passage is translated as follows: “When he came to the point where it says, ‘You should activate the mind without dwelling on anything,’ at these words I had the overwhelming realization that all things are not apart from inherent nature. I then said to the Grand Master, ‘Who would have expected that inherent nature is originally intrinsically pure? Who would have expected that inherent nature is originally unborn and undying? Who would have expected that inherent nature is originally complete in itself? Who would have expected that inherent nature can produce myriad things?’ See Cleary, *Classics of Buddhism and Zen*, 12. When comparing the Chinese version to Cleary's version, there are five statements rather than Cleary's translation of only four statements into English. In A. F. Price's and Wong Mou-Lam's English translation of the Sutra of Hui-Neng, the same passage is translated as follows: “‘Who would have thought,’ I said to the patriarch, ‘that the essence of mind is intrinsically pure! Who would have thought that the essence of mind is intrinsically free from becoming or annihilation! Who would have thought that the essence of mind is intrinsically self-sufficient! Who would have thought that the essence of mind is intrinsically free from change! Who would have thought that all beings are the manifestation of the essence of the mind!’” See A. F. Price and Wong Mou-Lam, *The Diamond Sutra and Sutra of Hui-Neng*, 73. Neither translation fully conveys the intensity of the original Chinese.

## Conclusion

Today the Chinese dragon is heavily intertwined with Chinese cultural and national identity. Chen Rong's *Nine Dragons* scroll has continued to inspire artists today. Contemporary Chinese artists Li Huayi, Zeng Xiaojun and Chan Shengyao have each recently reinterpreted Chen Rong's scroll in new ways. To be able to incorporate the past, disseminate and understand its key principles, to master it and express it in order to create one's own individual style is an undeniably special quality.

In Li Huayi's interpretation of Chen Rong's *Nine Dragons* scroll, Li chooses to not illustrate the physical dragon visually, thus emphasizing the inherent vitality of the Chinese dragon's nature. Li focuses on the concept of the dragon's *qi* or energetic vitality rather than the dragon's physical form.

Zeng Xiaojun's interpretation of the *Nine Dragons* is also metaphorical. He pays homage to different formats and techniques, from the painting tradition to furniture design. He portrays Chen Rong's dragons as trees, paying homage to this long standing connection of old trees and the dragon spirit.

Chan Shengyao's dragon art moves beyond the dragon's physical portrayal and instead captures its eternal transformative nature. Like Chen Rong and the *Nine Dragons* scroll, he demonstrates all three literati



perfections of painting, poetry and calligraphy in one painting. His work shows both the dragon's physical form and its actual transformation. Chan is possibly the first artist to render the Chinese dragon both formally and its transformation into total abstraction in a single Chinese ink painting. More importantly, he transforms the Chinese dragon from its physical form to that of its vital and formless essence, emphasizing this process of transformation.

The work of these three artists are imbued with different ideas that reflect their individual artistic philosophies, creative interests and stylistic practice, thus bridging Chen Rong's dragon mastery of the past with the present.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

Chen Rong was a scholar-official active during the late Southern Song dynasty, whose talents in painting, poetry and calligraphy were celebrated in his own time. Based on this study, we see that Chen Rong was a person who was an accomplished individual, of brilliant mind and of high integrity, which were valued as important qualities in a Confucian society. Throughout his life, while serving in various positions such as a governor, a magistrate at the Imperial College, and in the military, he experienced war and struggle firsthand, and was forced to engage in court politics in a period of increased corruption. Understanding who he was, and also what he thought of himself and what he encountered in his own life, sheds new insights when considering his masterpiece the *Nine Dragons* scroll.

This study, largely composed in the year 2012, the year of the dragon, is fittingly appropriate. To paint the subject of the Chinese dragon itself and to render an imaginary creature so successfully speaks to the quality of Chen Rong's artistic skills, but also his spirit. The Chinese dragon is a symbol for ultimate transformation, and is associated with aesthetic and moral ideas that have now reached into every area of Chinese thought, and symbolic of some of the finest attributes of humanity. Dragon painting as a subject, considered to be incredibly difficult, was undertaken by some of the most celebrated artists in Chinese

art history, such as Gu Kaizhi and Wu Daozi. In his painting and poetry of the *Nine Dragons*, Chen Rong celebrates the grandeur and inherent transformative nature of the dragon itself. Through his painting and the poetry surrounding the scroll, Chen reveals his own wishes to be able to become free and unrestrained like the dragon, and to escape the stresses of official life. His interests in celebrating ideas of righteousness, loyalty and integrity are also explored in his other writings; a reflection of his personality and character.

This dissertation demonstrates that Chen's artistic impact has extended beyond his time to today. His dragon imagery, specifically of the *Nine Dragons* scroll, continues to inspire the artistic activity of contemporary Chinese artists, as seen in the work of Li Huayi, Zeng Xiaojun and Chan Shengyao. While the primary focus of this dissertation has been to present an expanded biography of Chen Rong's life and aspects of his creative practice, with particular emphasis on his most famous and authentic work the *Nine Dragons* scroll, possible applications of this research for additional scholarship are far-reaching. Future scholarship on Chen Rong could include a more in-depth investigation of other historical figures who wrote about or mentioned Chen Rong in their writings. For instance, further research may establish whether Chen Rong himself felt that his painting of dragons could accomplish rain efficaciousness or some kind of transformation. A more comprehensive

analysis of the Ming dynasty emperor Zhu Yuanzhang's artistic activities, and his praises of Chen Rong's painting, is certainly warranted. One could also endeavor to perform an expanded comparative analysis of the creative activity of other artists like Chen Rong, active right before the end of Southern Song dynasty, with artists working during the transition into the Yuan period. In general, additional research on other examples of Chinese dragon imagery and its stylistic developments, as rendered in other fields such as Chinese and Japanese religious studies, visual culture studies, film, architecture, and decorative arts is still needed in order to create a fuller understanding of the Chinese dragon in its various forms and later interpretations.

Previous to this study, an indepth analysis and interpretation of written materials related to Chen Rong's biography, character, along with a full translation of all the painting inscriptions on the *Nine Dragons* scroll had yet to be completed. This study contributes a comprehensive analysis and interpretation of written materials related to Chen Rong's biography and character as well as a complete translation and analysis of all the inscriptions on the *Nine Dragons* scroll. An English introduction to previously un-translated historical texts about Chen Rong and the *Nine Dragons* scroll is also offered here. These full translations of primary texts by contemporaries of Chen Rong as well as those of Emperor Qianlong and his high court officials, together with new detailed listings of works

attributed to Chen Rong, provide a greater understanding of Chen Rong's activity and impact. With a look at three contemporary artists and their reinterpretations of Chen Rong's dragon painting, a deeper appreciation of his legacy is achieved.

## REFERENCES

### Abbreviations

SKQS: *Si Ku Quan Shu* 四庫全書 (Wenyuange edition)

XHHP: Xuan He Hua Pu 宣和畫譜

ZSQS: Lu Fusheng 盧輔聖, *Zhong Guo Shu Hua Quan Shu* 中國書畫全書

### Primary Literature

Chang Ch'ung-ho and Hans H. Frankel. *Two Chinese Treatises on Calligraphy*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995.

*Changle Xian Zhi* 長樂縣誌 [Changle County Records]. 2 Vols. Fuzhou: Fujian Ren Min Chu Ban She, 1993.

*Changle Xian Zhi* 長樂縣志 [Changle County records], 8 Vols. Ming Hongzhi, 1503.

Deng Chun 鄧椿 (fl. 1127-1167). *Hua Ji* 畫繼 [Painting, continued]. Beijing: Ren Min Mei Shu Chu Ban She, 1963.

Feng Jin 馮津 (Qing dynasty). *Li Dai Hua Jia Xing Shi Pian Lan* 歷代畫家姓氏便覽. Reproduced in Lu Fusheng 盧輔聖, *Zhong Guo Shu Hua Quan Shu* 中國書畫全書 [Comprehensive Writings on Chinese Painting], v. 11. Shanghai: Shanghai Shu Hua Chu Ban She, 1992.

*Jiajing Linjiang Fu Zhi* 嘉靖臨江府志 [Record of Linjiang compiled under the Jiajing Emperor (r. 1507-1567)]. Shanghai: Shanghai Shu Dian, 1990.

Li Maoying 李昉英 (1201-1257). *Wen Xi Cun Gao* 文溪存稿 [Wen Xi Preserved Literary Manuscript]. Guangzhou: Jinan Da Xue Chu Ban She, 1994.

Liang Zhangju 梁章鉅 (1775-1849). *Tui An Suo Cang Jin Shi Shu Hua Ba Wei* 退庵所藏金石書畫跋尾. Reproduced in Lu Fusheng 盧輔聖. *Zhong Guo Shu Hua Quan Shu* 中國書畫全書 [Comprehensive Writings on Chinese Painting], v. 9. Shanghai: Shanghai Shu Hua Chu Ban She, 1992.

Lu Fusheng 盧輔聖. *Zhong Guo Shu Hua Quan Shu* 中國書畫全書 [Comprehensive Writings on Chinese Painting]. 14 Vols. Shanghai: Shanghai Shu Hua Chu Ban She, 1992.

Lu Jun 魯駿 (Qing dynasty). *Song Yuan Yi Lai Hua Ren Xing Shi Lu* 宋元以來畫人姓氏錄. Reproduced in Lu Fusheng 盧輔聖. *Zhong Guo Shu Hua Quan Shu* 中國書畫全書 [Comprehensive Writings on Chinese Painting], v. 13. Shanghai: Shanghai Shu Hua Chu Ban She, 1992.

National Palace Museum 國立故宮博物院, ed. *Bi Dian Zhu Lin – Shi Qu Bao Ji* 秘殿珠林 – 石渠寶笈 (Taipei, 1971; reprint edition of Zhang Zhao and others, *Bi Dian Zhu Lin*, 1744, and *Shi Qu Bao Ji*, 1745); National Palace Museum, ed., *Bi Dian Zhu Lin – Shi Qu Bao Ji Xu Bian* 秘殿珠林 – 石渠寶笈續編 (Taipei, 1971; reprint edition of Wang Jie and others, *Bi Dian Zhu Lin Xu Bian* and *Shi Qu Bao Ji Xu Bian*, 1793); and National Palace Museum, ed., *Bi Dian Zhu Lin – Shi Qu Bao Ji San Bian* 秘殿珠林 – 石渠寶笈三編 (Taipei, 1969 reprint edition of Hu Jing and others, *Bi Dian Zhu Lin San Bian* and *Shi Qu Bao Ji San Bian*, 1816).

Peng Yuncan 彭蘊燦 (Qianlong, Qing dynasty). *Li Dai Hua Shi Hui Chuan* 歷代畫史彙傳. Reproduced in Lu Fusheng 盧輔聖. *Zhong Guo Shu Hua Quan Shu* 中國書畫全書 [Comprehensive Writings on Chinese Painting], v. 11. Shanghai: Shanghai Shu Hua Chu Ban She, 1992.

*Shu Hua Shi* 書畫史 (Kangxi, Qing dynasty). Reproduced in Lu Fusheng 盧輔聖. *Zhong Guo Shu Hua Quan Shu* 中國書畫全書 [Comprehensive Writings on Chinese Painting], v. 7. Shanghai: Shanghai Shu Hua Chu Ban She, 1992.

*Song shi ji shi* 宋詩紀事. Ed. Li E. 2 Vols. Shanghai: Shanghai Gu Ji Chu Ban She, 1983.

Sun Chengze 孫承澤 (Qing dynasty). *Geng Zi Xiao Xia Ji* 庚子銷夏記. Reproduced in Lu Fusheng 盧輔聖. *Zhong Guo Shu Hua Quan Shu* 中國書畫全書 [Comprehensive Writings on Chinese Painting], v. 7. Shanghai: Shanghai Shu Hua Chu Ban She, 1992.

*Taishō shinshū dai zōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經 [Revised version of the canon, compiled during the Taishō era]. Ed. Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 (1866–1945), Watanabe Kaikyoku 渡辺海旭 (1872–1932) et al. 100 vols. Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924–1932 [–1935].

Tao Cheng 陶成 and Xie Yan 謝晏 (Qing dynasty). *Jiangxi Tong Zhi* 江西通志. Reproduced in *Wenyuange Si Ku Quan Shu Dian Zi Ban* 文淵閣四庫全書電子版 (Complete Library of the Four Branches of Literature, Wenyuange Edition). Completed in 1782, juan 61. Hong Kong: Digital Heritage Publishing Limited.

Tang Guizhang 唐圭璋. *Quan Song Ci* 全宋詞 [Song Dynasty Poetic Verses]. Taipei: Ming Lun Chu Ban She Yin Xing, 1970.

Tang Hou 湯垕 (ca. 1329, Yuan dynasty). *Hua Jian* 畫鑒 [The Mirror of Painting]. Beijing: Ren Min Mei Shu Chu Ban She, 1959.

Wang Chen 王宸 (Qing dynasty). *Hui Lin Fa Cai* 繪林伐材. Reproduced in Lu Fusheng 盧輔聖. *Zhong Guo Shu Hua Quan Shu* 中國書畫全書 [Comprehensive Writings on Chinese Painting], v. 9. Shanghai: Shanghai Shu Hua Chu Ban She, 1992.

Wang Zan 王瓚 and Cai Fang 蔡芳. *Hongzhi Wen Zhou Fu Zhi* 弘治溫州府志. Shanghai: Shanghai She Hui Ke Xue Yuan Chu Ban She, 2006.

*Wenyuange Si Ku Quan Shu Dian Zi Ban* 文淵閣四庫全書電子版 (Complete Library of the Four Branches of Literature, Wenyuange Edition). Completed in 1782. Hong Kong: Digital Heritage Publishing Limited.

Wu Dasu 吳大素 (Yuan dynasty). *Song Zhai Mei Pu* 松齋梅譜. Reproduced in Lu Fusheng 盧輔聖. *Zhong Guo Shu Hua Quan Shu* 中國書畫全書 [Comprehensive Writings on Chinese Painting], v. 2. Shanghai: Shanghai Shu Hua Chu Ban She, 1992.

Xu Qin 徐沁 (Ming dynasty). *Ming Hua Lu* 明畫錄. Reproduced in Lu Fusheng 盧輔聖. *Zhong Guo Shu Hua Quan Shu* 中國書畫全書 [Comprehensive Writings on Chinese Painting], v. 10. Shanghai: Shanghai Shu Hua Chu Ban She, 1992.



*Xuan He Hua Pu* 宣和畫譜 [Catalogue of paintings in the collection of the Huizong Emperor (1082-1135 CE), during the Xuanhe reign (1119-1125)]. Taipei: Taiwan Shang Wu Yin Shu Guan, 1971.

Xue Yingqi (*jin shi* 1535), *Jiajing Zhejiang Tong Zhi* 嘉靖浙江通志 (72 juan). Shanghai: Shanghai Shu Dian, 1990.

Xia Wenyan 夏文顏 (Yuan dynasty, 14<sup>th</sup> century). *Tu Hui Bao Jian* 圖繪寶鑒 [The Precious Mirror of Pictorial Art]. Taipei: Taiwan Shang Wu Yin Shu Guan, Min Guo 45 (1956).

*Zhong Guo Gu Dai Shu Hua Tu Mu* 中國古代書畫圖目 [Illustrated Catalogue of Selected Works of Ancient Chinese Paintings and Calligraphy]. 24 Vols. Beijing: Wen Wu Chu Ban She, 1986-2001.

Zhu Jingxuan (act. Early 9<sup>th</sup> century). *Tang Chao Ming Hua Lu* 唐朝名畫錄 [Famous Paintings of the Tang Dynasty].

Zhu Mouyin 朱謀壘 (17<sup>th</sup> c., Ming dynasty). *Hua Shi Hui Yao* 畫史會要, in Lu Fusheng 盧輔聖. *Zhong Guo Shu Hua Quan Shu* 中國書畫全書 [Comprehensive Writings on Chinese Painting], vol. 4. Shanghai: Shanghai Shu Hua Chu Ban She, 1992.

Zhu Yuanzhang (r. 1368-1398). *Ming Taizu Ji* 明太祖集 [Record of Ming Emperor Taizu i.e. Zhu Yuanzhang]. Hefei: Huang Shan Shu She, 1991.

Zhuang Su 莊肅 (Yuan dynasty). *Hua Ji Bu Yi* 畫繼補遺 [Supplement to 'Painting, Continued']. Beijing: Ren Min Mei Shu Chu Ban She, 1963.

Zhang Yanyuan. *Li Dai Ming Hua Ji* 歷代名畫記 [Records of famous paintings of successive dynasties]. Beijing: Ren Min Mei Shu Chu Ban She, 1963.

## Secondary Literature

Acker, William R. B. *Some T'ang and Pre-T'ang Texts on Chinese Painting*. Leiden: E. J.Brill, 1954.

Addiss, Stephen. *Zen Sourcebook: Traditional Documents from China, Korea, and Japan*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2008.

- Allan, Sarah. *The Shape of the Turtle: Myth, Art, and Cosmos in Early China*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991.
- Barnhart, Richard, James Cahill, et al. *Three Thousand Years of Chinese Painting*. New Haven: Yale University Press; Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1997.
- Bartholomew, Terese Tse. *Hidden Meanings in Chinese Art*. San Francisco: Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, 2006.
- Berger, Patricia. *Empire of Emptiness: Buddhist Art and Political Authority in Qing China*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003.
- "The Bigelow Gift." *Museum of Fine Arts Bulletin* 9 no. 53 (Oct. 1911): 48-50
- Birrell, Anne. *Chinese Mythology: An Introduction*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.
- Bloss, Lowell W. "The Buddha and the Naga: A Study in Buddhist Folk Religiosity." *History of Religions* 13, no. 1 (Aug. 1973): 36-53.
- Boltz, William G. *The Origin and Early Development of the Chinese Writing System*. New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1994.
- Bossier, Beverly J. *Powerful Relations: Kinship, Status, and the State in Song China (960-1279)*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998.
- Boucher, Daniel. *Buddhist Translation Procedures in Third-Century China: A Study of Dharmarakṣa and His Translation Idiom*. Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1996.
- Brown, Claudia and Ju-hsi Chou. *Journeys on Paper and Silk: The Roy and Marilyn Papp Collection of Chinese Painting*. Phoenix, AZ: Phoenix Art Museum, 1998.
- Brown, Claudia and Ju-hsi Chou. *Scent of Ink: The Roy and Marilyn Papp Collection of Chinese Painting*. Phoenix, AZ: Phoenix Art Museum, 1994.
- Bush, Susan and Hsio-yen Shih. *Early Chinese Texts on Painting*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985.

- Bush, Susan. *The Chinese Literati On Painting: Su Shih (1037-1101) to Tung Ch'i-ch'ang (1555-1636)*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971.
- Cahill, James. *An Index of Early Chinese Painters and Paintings: T'ang, Sung, Yuan*. Reprint: Floating World Edition, 2003.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Art of Southern Sung China*. New York: Asia Society, 1962.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Lyric Journey: Poetic Painting in China and Japan*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996.
- Cai Xingyi 蔡星儀. *Cao Ba Han Gan 曹霸韓幹* [Cao Ba and Han Gan]. Shanghai: Shanghai Ren Min Mei Shu Chu Ban She, 1986.
- Capitanio, Joshua. *Dragon Kings and Thunder Gods: Rainmaking, Magic, and Ritual in Medieval Chinese Religion*. PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2008.
- Chao, Jacqueline, ed. *The Art of Chan Sheng-Yao*. 2 Vols. Art Founders Inc., 2010.
- Chapin, Helen, and Alexander C. Soper. *A Long Roll of Buddhist Images*. Ascona: Artibus Asiae, 1970.
- Chang Bide 昌彼得, et al. *Song Ren Chuan Ji Zi Liao Suo Yin 宋人傳記資料索引* [Index to Biographical Materials of Song Figures]. 6 Vols. Taipei: Ding Wen Shu Ju Yin Xing, 1986.
- Chang, K. C. *Art, Myth and Ritual: The Path to Political Authority in Ancient China*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983.
- Chang, Willow Hai, et al. *The Last Emperor's Collection: Masterpieces of Painting and Calligraphy from the Liaoning Provincial Museum*. New York: China Institute Gallery, 2008.
- Chao, Jacqueline, ed. *The Art of Chan Sheng-Yao*. 2 Vols. Art Founders Inc., 2010.
- Chen Gaohua 陳高華. *Song Liao Jin Hua Jia Shi Liao 宋遼金畫家史料* [History of the Painters of the Song, Liao and Jin dynasties]. Beijing: Wen Wu Chu Ban She, 1984.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Xia Wenyan he Tuhui baojian." *Meishu Yanjiu*, no. 4 (1981): 81-83.

Chen, Shouxiang 陳綬祥. *Zhong Guo De Long* 中國的龍 [Chinese Dragons]. Guangxi Guilin: Lijiang Chu Ban She, 1988.

Chen Shih-hsiang. *Biography of Ku K'ai-chih*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961.

Chou, Diana Yeongchau. *A Study and Translation from the Chinese of Tang Hou's Huajian (Examination of Painting): Cultivating Taste in Yuan China 1279-1368*. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2005.

Chou, Ju-hsi. *The Elegant Brush: Chinese Painting Under the Qianlong Emperor, 1735-1795*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Urban Council, 1986.

Chou, Ju-hsi and Claudia Brown. *The Heritage of the Brush: The Roy and Marilyn Papp Collection of Chinese Painting*. Phoenix: Phoenix Art Museum, 1989.

Cleary, Thomas F. *Classics of Buddhism and Zen: The Collected Translations of Thomas Cleary*. 5 Vols. Boston: Shambhala, 2001.

Cohen, Alvin P. "Coercing Rain Deities in Ancient China." *History of Religions* 17, no. 3 (Feb. - May 1978): 244-265.

Cohen, Richard S. "Naga, Yaksini, Buddha: Local Deities and Local Buddhism at Ajanta." *History of Religions* 37, no. 4 (May 1998): 360-400.

Contag, Victoria and Wang Chi-Ch'ien. *Seals of Chinese Painters and Collectors of the Ming and Ch'ing Periods, Reproduced in Facsimile Size and Deciphered*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1966.

Davis, Richard. *Wind Against the Mountain: The Crisis of Politics and Culture in Thirteenth Century China*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996.

Davis, Walter B. *Wang Yiting and the Art of Sino-Japanese Exchange*. PhD Diss., Ohio State University, 2008.

De Bary, William Theodore, et al. *Sources of Chinese Tradition*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1960.

Deng Qiaobin 鄧喬彬. *Song Dai Hui Hua Yan Jiu* 宋代繪畫研究 [Research on Song Dynasty Painting]. Henan: Henan Da Xue Chu Ban She, 2006.

*The Diamond Sutra and the Sutra of Huineng*. Trans. A.F. Price and Wong Mou-lam. Boston: Shambhala, 1990.

Diény, Jean-Pierre. *Le Symbolisme Du Dragon Dans La Chine Antique* [The Symbolism of the Dragon in Ancient China]. Paris: Collège de France, Institut Des Hautes Études Chinoises, 1989.

Ding, Chuanjing 丁傳靖. *A Compilation of Anecdotes of Sung Personalities* [*Song Ren Yi Shi Hui Pian* 宋人軼事彙編], originally published in Shanghai in 1935. Trans. Chu Djang and Jane C. Djang. St. John's University Press, 1990.

Egan, Ronald C. *Word, Image, and Deed in the Life of Su Shi*. Cambridge: Harvard Yenching Institute, 1994.

Erickson, Britta and Kuiyi Shen. *Li Huayi at 60*. Hong Kong: The Ink Society, 2008.

*The Encyclopedia of Eastern Philosophy and Religion*. Ed. Schuhmacher, Stephan and Gert Woerner. Boston: Shambhala, 1989.

Ferguson, Andrew. *Zen's Chinese Heritage: The Masters and Their Teachings*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000.

Fong, Wen C. and James C. Y. Watt. *Possessing the Past: Treasures from the National Palace Museum, Taipei*. New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc., 1996.

Fong, Wen C. *Beyond Representation: Chinese Painting and Calligraphy Eighth-Fourteenth Century*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Images of the Mind: Selections from the Edward L. Elliot Family and John B. Elliot Collections of Chinese Calligraphy and Painting at The Art Museum, Princeton University*. Princeton: The Art Museum, Princeton University, 1984.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Why Chinese Painting Is History." *The Art Bulletin* 85, no. 2 (June 2003): 258-280.

Fontein, Jan and Wu Tung. *Unearthing China's Past*. Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1973.

Fowler, Jeaneane. *Chinese Religions: Beliefs and Practices*. Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2008.

Franke, Herbert, ed. *Sung Biographies*. Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1976.

Fu Shen. *Challenging the Past: The Paintings of Chang Dai-Chien*. Washington, D.C.: Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, 1991.

Fu Xinian. *Zhong Guo Mei Shu Quan Ji* 中國美術全集 [Catalogue of Chinese Art]. Beijing: Wen Wu Chu Ban She, 1988.

Gernet, Jacques. *Daily Life in China on the Eve of the Mongol Invasion, 1250-1276*. Trans. H. M. Wright. London: Allen & Unwin, 1962.

Goodrich, L. Carrington and Chaoying Fang, ed. *Dictionary of Ming Biography 1368-1644*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1976.

*Gu Jin Min Ren Shu Hua Da Guan, Di Yi Ji* 古今名人書畫大觀第一集結 [Ancient and Modern Famous Paintings]. Shanghai: Shanghai Hui Wen Tang Xin Ji Shu Ju, 1932.

Hao Sheng, Yan Yang and Joseph Scheier-Dolberg, eds. *Fresh Ink: Ten Takes on Chinese Tradition*. Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 2010.

Harrist Robert E. *The Embodied Image: Chinese Calligraphy from the John B. Elliott Collection*. Princeton: Princeton University with Harry N. Abrams, 1999.

Hearn, Maxwell K. and Judith G. Smith, eds. *Arts of the Sung and Yuan*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1996.

Hironobu Kohara. "The Qianlong Emperor's Skill in the Connoisseurship of Chinese Painting," in *Chinese Painting under the Qianlong Emperor*, ed. Ju-hsi Chou and Claudia Brown, *Phoebus* 6, no. 1. Tempe: Arizona State University, 1988: 56-73.

Ho, Wai-kam. *Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting: The Collections of the Nelson Gallery-Atkins Museum, Kansas City, and The Cleveland Museum of Art*. Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1980.

Huang Chichung. *Tao Te Ching: A Literal Translation*. Freemont: Asian Humanities Press, 2003.

Hucker, Charles O. *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985.

Hymes, Robert P. and Conrad Schirokauer, ed. *Ordering the World: Approaches to State and Society in Sung Dynasty China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

*Is Art History Global?* Ed. James Elkins. New York: Routledge, 2007.

Hummel, Arthur W., ed. *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period, 1644-1912*. Taipei: Ch'eng Wen Publication Co., 1970.

Jay, Jennifer W. *A Change in Dynasties: Loyalism in Thirteenth-Century China*. Bellingham: Western Washington University, Center for East Asian Studies, 1991.

J.E.L. [John Ellerton Lodge]. "Ch'en Jung's Picture of Nine Dragons." *Museum of Fine Arts Bulletin*, 15 no. 92 (Dec. 1917): 67-73.

Kei Suzuki 鈴木敬, ed. *Chūgoku kaiga sōgō zuroku* 中國繪畫總合圖錄 [Comprehensive Illustrated Catalog of Chinese Paintings]. 5 Vols. Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, c. 1982-1983.

Lawton, Thomas. "Notes on Keng Chao-chung," *Renditions* 6 (1976): 144-51.

Ledderose, Lothar. "Some Taoist Elements in the Calligraphy of the Six Dynasties," *T'oung Pao* 70 (1984): 246-278.

Legge, James. *A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms: Being An Account by the Chinese Monk Fa-Hsien of his Travels in India and Ceylon (A.D. 399-414) In Search of the Buddhist Books of Discipline*. Reprint. New York: Paragon, 1965.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Chinese Classics*. 5 Vols. Reprint. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960.

Li, Chu-tsing, ed. *Artists and Patrons: Some Social and Economic Aspects of Chinese Painting*. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas in association with University of Washington Press, 1989.

Li Fushun 李福順. *Su Shi Lun Shu Hua Shi Liao* 蘇軾論書畫史料 [Su Shi on Painting and Calligraphy]. Shanghai: Shanghai Ren Min Mei Shu Chu Ban She, 1988.

Li Lin-ts'an. *A Study of the Nan-Chao and the Ta-li Kingdoms in the Light of Art Materials Found in Various Museums*. Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1982.

Little, Stephen. *Realm of the Immortals: Daoism in the Arts of China*. Cleveland, Ohio: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1988.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Early Chinese Paintings in The Art Institute of Chicago," *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies* 22, no. 1 (1996): 36-53.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Taoism and the Arts of China*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.

Liu, Cary Y. and Dora C. Ching. *Arts of the Sung and Yuan: Ritual, Ethnicity and Style in Painting*. New Jersey: Princeton University Art Museum, 1999.

Liu Guozheng 劉國正, Ma Da 馬達, and Dai Shanqing 戴山青, *Yu Lin Zhe Zhi: Zhong Guo Li Dai Yu Yan Xuan Zhu* 寓林折枝: 中國歷代寓言選注. Beijing: Beijing Chu Ban She, 1984.

Liu Zhigui 劉治貴. *Zhong Guo Hui Hua Yuan Liu* 中國繪畫源流 [Studies on Chinese Painting]. Henan: Henan Mei Shu Chu Ban She, 2003.

Loehr, Max. *The Great Painters of China*. New York: Harper and Row, 1980.

Loewe, Michael. "The Cult of the Dragon and the Invocation for Rain," in *Chinese Ideas About Nature and Society: Studies in Honour of Derk Bodde*. Edited by Charles Le Blanc and Susan Blader. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1987.

Lovell, Hin-Cheung. *An Annotated Bibliography of Chinese Painting Catalogues and Related Texts*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Center for Chinese Studies, 1973.

*Masterpieces of Chinese Painting from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston: Tang through Yuan Dynasties*. 2 Vols. Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1996.



McNair, Amy. *The Upright Brush: Yan Zhenqing's Calligraphy and Song Literati Politics*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998.

Miyazaki, Ichisada. *China's Examination Hell: The Civil Service Examinations of Imperial China*. Trans. Conrad Schirokauer. New York: Weatherhill, 1976.

*The Mozi: A Complete Translation*. Trans. Ian Johnston. Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2010.

Muller, Deborah del Gais, "Hsia Wen-yen and His T'u-hui-pao-chien (Precious Mirror of Painting)," *Ars Orientalis* 18 (1988): 131-148.

Munsterberg, Hugo (1916-1995). *Dragons in Chinese Art*. New York: China Institute in America, 1972.

Murck, Alfreda. *Poetry and Painting in Song China: The Subtle Art of Dissent*. Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2000.

Murck, Alfreda and Wen Fong, eds. *Words and Images: Chinese Poetry, Calligraphy, and Painting*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991.

Murck, Christian F., ed. *Artists and Traditions: Uses of the Past in Chinese Culture*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976.

Murray, Julia K. "The Temple of Confucius and Pictorial Biographies of the Sage." *Journal of Asian Studies* 55, no. 2 (May 1996): 269-300.

Naquin, Susan and Chun-fang Yu, ed. *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989.

Naquin, Susan. *Peking: Temples and City Life 1400-1900*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

Qian, Nanxiu. *Spirit and Self in Medieval China: The Shih-shuo hsin-yu and Its Legacy*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001.

Rawski, Evelyn S. *The Last Emperors: A Social History of Qing Imperial Institutions*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

Rawski, Evelyn and Jessica Rawson, eds. *China: The Three Emperors, 1662-1795*. London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2005.

- Rawson, Jessica. *Chinese Ornament: The Lotus and the Dragon*. New York: Holmes and Meier, 1984.
- Sadakata, Akira. *Buddhist Cosmology: Philosophy and Origins*. Tokyo: Kosei Publishing, 1997.
- Saso, Michael. "What is the 'Ho-T'u'?" *History of Religions* 17, no. ¾ (Feb. – May 1978): 399-416.
- Schafer, Edward H. *The Divine Woman: Dragon Ladies and Rain Maidens in T'ang Literature*. San Francisco: North Point Press, 1973.
- Sima Qian (ca. 145- ca. 86 BCE). *Records of the Grand Historian of China (Shi Ji)*. Trans. Burton Watson. 2 Vols. New York: Columbia University Press, 1961.
- Siren, Osvald. *Chinese Painting: Leading Masters and Principles*. 7 vols. New York: Ronald Press, 1956-58.
- Skar, Lowell. "Administering Thunder: A Thirteenth-Century Memorial Deliberating the Thunder Rites" *Cahiers d'Extreme-Asie* 9 (2000): 159-202.
- Slingerland, Edward Gilman. *The Essential Analects: Selected Passages with Traditional Commentary*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2006.
- Shen Zhihong 沈治宏, and Wang Ronggui 王蓉貴. *Song Dai Ren Wu Zi Liao Suo Yin 宋代人物資料索引* [Index of Song dynasty figures and biographical materials]. Chengdu: Sichuan Ci Shu Chu Ban She, 1997.
- Soothill, William Edward and Lewis Hodous. *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms: with Sanskrit and English Equivalents and a Sanskrit-Pali Index*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1977.
- Soper, Alexander C., Trans. *Kuo Jo-Hsu's Experiences in Painting (T'u-hua chien-wen chih): An Eleventh Century History of Chinese Painting Together with the Chinese Text in Facsimile*. Washington, D.C.: American Council of Learned Societies, 1951.
- Spiro, Audrey, "New Light on Gu Kaizhi," *Journal of Chinese Religions* 16 (Fall 1988): 12-13.
- Stanley-Baker, Joan, "Forgeries in Chinese Painting," *Oriental Art* 32, no.1 (1986): 54-66.

Strickmann, Michel. *Chinese Magical Medicine*. Edited by Bernard Faure. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002.

Sturman, Peter. *Mi Fu: Style and the Art of Calligraphy in Northern Song China*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997.

Sullivan, Michael. *The Birth of Landscape Painting in China: The Sui and T'ang Dynasties*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Three Perfections: Chinese Painting, Poetry and Calligraphy*. New York: George Braziller, 1980.

Sung, Hou-mei. *Decoded Messages: The Symbolic Language of Chinese Animal Painting*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.

Sung, Z. D. *The Text of Yi King (and its appendices): Chinese original, with English Translation*. Taipei: Ch'eng Wen Publishing Co., 1971.

Teng Ku 滕固, *Tang Song Hui Hua Shi* 唐宋繪畫史 [A History of Chinese Painting during the Tang and Song Dynasties]. Shenzhou: Shenzhou Kuo Guang She, 1933.

Thorp, Robert L. and Richard Ellis Vinograd. *Chinese Art and Culture*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2001.

Tseng, Hsien-chi. "A Study of the Nine Dragons Scroll." *Archives of the Chinese Art Society of America* 11 (1957): 16-39.

Visser, Marinus Willem de. *The Dragon in China and Japan*. Amsterdam: Johannes Muller, 1913.

Wang, Eugene Y. "Mirror, Moon, and Memory in Eight-Century China: From Dragon Pond to Lunar Palace." *Cleveland Studies in the History of Art* 9 (2005): 42-67.

Wang Naidong 王乃棟. *Zhong Guo Shu Fa Mo Ji Jian Ding Tu Dian* 中國書法墨跡堅定圖典 [Chinese calligraphy and calligraphers]. Beijing: Wen Wu Chu Ban She, 1994.

Wang Yuxian 王毓賢 (1724-1805). *Hui Shi Bei Kao* 繪事備考 [Index of Painting]. Taiwan: Taiwan Shang Wu Yin Shu Guan, 1971.

- Watt, James C.Y., et al. *The World of Khubilai Khan: Chinese Art in the Yuan Dynasty*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2010.
- Wechsler, Howard J. *Offerings of Jade and Silk: Ritual and Symbol in the Legitimation of the T'ang Dynasty*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.
- Wilson, Thomas A., ed. *On Sacred Grounds: Culture, Society, Politics, and the Formation of the Cult of Confucius*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002.
- Wu, Tung. *Tales from the Land of Dragons: 1,000 Years of Chinese Painting*. Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1997.
- Yang, Lihui and Deming An. *Handbook of Chinese Mythology*. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2005.
- Yang Renkai. *Guo Bao Chen Fu Lu* [The loss and recovery of national treasures]. Shenyang: Liao Hai Chu Ban She, 1999.
- Yang Xin, Li Yihua and Xu Naixiang. *The Art of the Dragon*. Boston: Shambhala, 1988.
- Yu Yunguo 虞云國. *Song Dai Wen Hua Shi Da Ci Dian* 宋代文化史大辭典 [Dictionary of Song Dynasty Cultural History]. Shanghai: Han Yu Da Ci Dian Chu Ban She, 2006.
- Zhao Qiguang. *A Study of Dragons, East and West*. New York: Peter Lang, 1992.
- Zhou Xun and Gao Chunming, ed. *5000 Years of Chinese Costumes*. San Francisco: China Books and Periodicals, 1987.
- Zhu Zhuyu 朱鑄禹. *Zhong Guo Li Dai Hua Jia Ren Ming Ci Dian* 中國歷代畫家名辭典 [Dictionary of Historical Chinese Artists]. Beijing: Ren Min Mei Shu Chu Ban She, 2003.

Appendices Sources

Bian Yongyu 卞永譽 (1645-1712). *Shi Gu Tang Shu Hua Hui Kao* 式古堂書畫彙考. Reproduced in Lu Fusheng 盧輔聖. *Zhong Guo Shu Hua Quan Shu* 中國書畫全書 [Comprehensive Writings on Chinese Painting], v. 6. Shanghai: Shanghai Shu Hua Chu Ban She, 1992.

Cahill, James. *An Index of Early Chinese Painters and Paintings: T'ang, Sung, Yuan*. Reprint: Floating World Edition, 2003.

Gao Shiqi 高士奇 (1645-1704). *Jiang Cun Shu Hua Mu* 江村書畫目. Reproduced in Lu Fusheng 盧輔聖. *Zhong Guo Shu Hua Quan Shu* 中國書畫全書 [Comprehensive Writings on Chinese Painting], v. 7. Shanghai: Shanghai Shu Hua Chu Ban She, 1992.

Ho, Wai-kam. *Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting: The Collections of the Nelson Gallery-Atkins Museum, Kansas City, and The Cleveland Museum of Art*. Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1980.

Hu Jing 胡敬 (Qing dynasty). *Guo Chao Yuan Hua Lu* 國朝院畫錄. Reproduced in Lu Fusheng 盧輔聖. *Zhong Guo Shu Hua Quan Shu* 中國書畫全書 [Comprehensive Writings on Chinese Painting], v. 11. Shanghai: Shanghai Shu Hua Chu Ban She, 1992.

Kei Suzuki 鈴木敬, ed. *Chūgoku kaiga sōgō zuroku* 中國繪畫總合圖錄 [Comprehensive Illustrated Catalog of Chinese Paintings]. 5 Vols. Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, c. 1982-1983.

*Masterpieces of Chinese Painting from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston: Tang through Yuan Dynasties*. 2 Vols. Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1996.

National Palace Museum 國立故宮博物院, ed. *Bi Dian Zhu Lin – Shi Qu Bao Ji* 秘殿珠林 – 石渠寶笈 (Taipei, 1971; reprint edition of Zhang Zhao and others, *Bi Dian Zhu Lin*, 1744, and *Shi Qu Bao Ji*, 1745); National Palace Museum, ed., *Bi Dian Zhu Lin – Shi Qu Bao Ji Xu Bian* 秘殿珠林 – 石渠寶笈續編 (Taipei, 1971; reprint edition of Wang Jie and others, *Bi Dian Zhu Lin Xu Bian* and *Shi Qu Bao Ji Xu Bian*, 1793); and National Palace Museum, ed., *Bi Dian Zhu Lin – Shi Qu Bao Ji San Bian* 秘殿珠林 – 石渠寶笈三編 (Taipei, 1969 reprint edition of Hu Jing and others, *Bi Dian Zhu Lin San Bian* and *Shi Qu Bao Ji San Bian*, 1816).

Pan Zhengwei 潘正煒 (Jiadao, Qing dynasty). *Ting Fan Lou Shu Hua Ji* 聽帆樓書畫記. Reproduced in Lu Fusheng 盧輔聖. *Zhong Guo Shu Hua Quan Shu* 中國書畫全書 [Comprehensive Writings on Chinese Painting], v. 11. Shanghai: Shanghai Shu Hua Chu Ban She, 1992.

Pang Yuanji 龐元濟 (1864-1949; Qing dynasty). *Xu Zhai Ming Hua Lu* 虛齋名畫錄 [Record of Famous Paintings in the Studio of Emptiness]. Reproduced in Lu Fusheng 盧輔聖. *Zhong Guo Shu Hua Quan Shu* 中國書畫全書 [Comprehensive Writings on Chinese Painting], v. 12. Shanghai: Shanghai Shu Hua Chu Ban She, 1992.

*Shi Bai Zhai Shu Hua Lu* 十百齋書畫錄 (Kangxi, Qing dynasty). 22 scrolls. Reproduced in Lu Fusheng 盧輔聖. *Zhong Guo Shu Hua Quan Shu* 中國書畫全書 [Comprehensive Writings on Chinese Painting], v. 7. Shanghai: Shanghai Shu Hua Chu Ban She, 1992.

Siren, Osvald. *Chinese Painting: Leading Masters and Principles*. 7 vols. New York: Ronald Press, 1956-58.

Su Gengchun 蘇庚春. "Chen Rong 'Yun Long Tu' zhou" 陳容雲龍圖軸 [Chen Rong's "Dragon in Cloud" Hanging scroll]. *Wen Wu* 文物 12 (1978): 81.

Wang Yuxian 王毓賢 (1724-1805). *Hui Shi Bei Kao* 繪事備考 [Index of Painting]. Reproduced in Lu Fusheng 盧輔聖. *Zhong Guo Shu Hua Quan Shu* 中國書畫全書 [Comprehensive Writings on Chinese Painting], v. 8. Shanghai: Shanghai Shu Hua Chu Ban She, 1992.

*Wenyuange Si Ku Quan Shu Dian Zi Ban* 文淵閣四庫全書電子版 (Complete Library of the Four Branches of Literature, Wenyuange Edition). Completed in 1782. Hong Kong: Digital Heritage Publishing Limited.

Wu, Tung. *Tales from the Land of Dragons: 1,000 Years of Chinese Painting*. Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1997.

*Zhong Guo Gu Dai Shu Hua Tu Mu* 中國古代書畫圖目 [Illustrated Catalogue of Selected Works of Ancient Chinese Paintings and Calligraphy]. 24 vols. Beijing: Wen Wu Chu Ban She, 1986-2001.

## FIGURES



Figure 1. Chen Rong (act. 13<sup>th</sup> century), *Nine Dragons* (Detail of beginning of scroll and of Chen Rong's second inscription), 1244. Handscroll, ink and touches of red on paper. 46.3 x 1096.4 cm. Francis Gardner Curtis Fund, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (17.1697)



Figure 2. Chen Rong (act. 13<sup>th</sup> century), *Nine Dragons* (Detail of the first dragon), 1244. Handscroll, ink and touches of red on paper. 46.3 x 1096.4 cm. Francis Gardner Curtis Fund, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (17.1697)



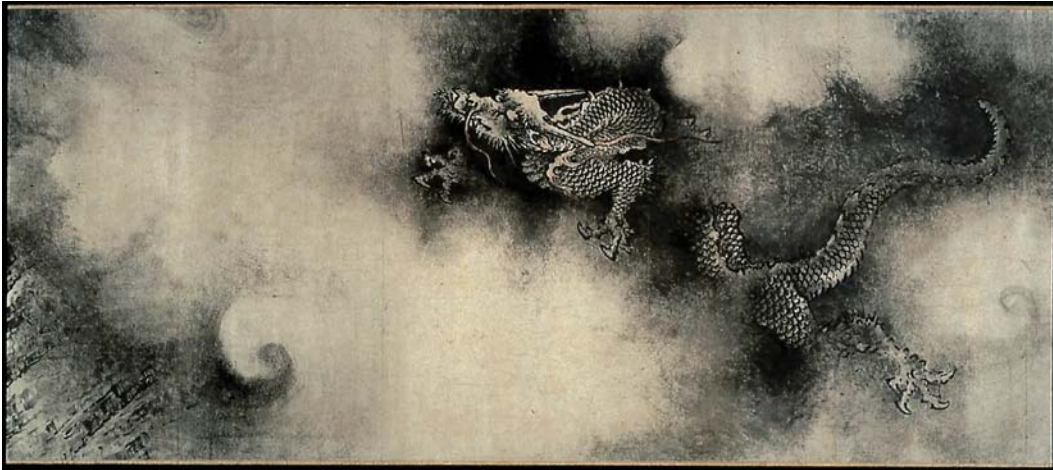


Figure 3. Chen Rong (act. 13<sup>th</sup> century), *Nine Dragons* (Detail of the second dragon), 1244. Handscroll, ink and touches of red on paper. 46.3 x 1096.4 cm. Francis Gardner Curtis Fund, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (17.1697)

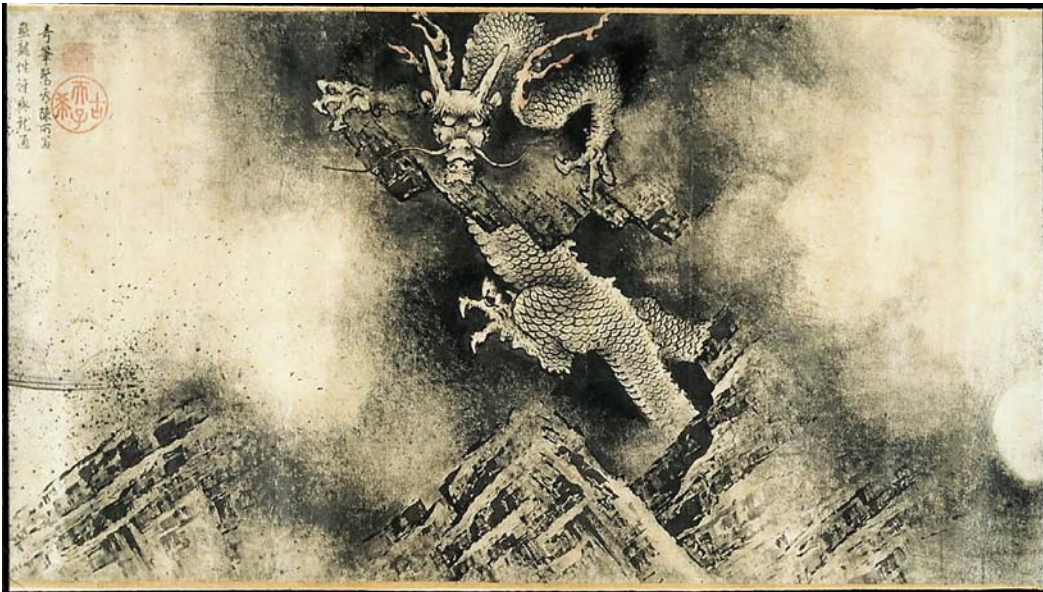


Figure 4. Chen Rong (act. 13<sup>th</sup> century), *Nine Dragons* (Detail of the third dragon and beginning of the Qianlong Emperor's inscription), 1244. Handscroll, ink and touches of red on paper. 46.3 x 1096.4 cm. Francis Gardner Curtis Fund, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (17.1697)





Figure 5. Chen Rong (act. 13<sup>th</sup> century), *Nine Dragons* (Detail of the fourth dragon and the rest of the Qianlong Emperor's inscription), 1244. Handscroll, ink and touches of red on paper. 46.3 x 1096.4 cm. Francis Gardner Curtis Fund, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (17.1697)



Figure 6. Chen Rong (act. 13<sup>th</sup> century), *Nine Dragons* (Detail of the fifth dragon), 1244. Handscroll, ink and touches of red on paper. 46.3 x 1096.4 cm. Francis Gardner Curtis Fund, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (17.1697)



Figure 7. Chen Rong (act. 13<sup>th</sup> century), *Nine Dragons* (Detail of the fifth and sixth dragons), 1244. Handscroll, ink and touches of red on paper. 46.3 x 1096.4 cm. Francis Gardner Curtis Fund, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (17.1697)



Figure 8. Chen Rong (act. 13<sup>th</sup> century), *Nine Dragons* (Detail of section of waves and rocks between the sixth and seventh dragons), 1244. Handscroll, ink and touches of red on paper. 46.3 x 1096.4 cm. Francis Gardner Curtis Fund, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (17.1697)





Figure 9. Chen Rong (act. 13<sup>th</sup> century), *Nine Dragons* (Detail of the seventh dragon), 1244. Handscroll, ink and touches of red on paper. 46.3 x 1096.4 cm. Francis Gardner Curtis Fund, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (17.1697)



Figure 10. Chen Rong (act. 13<sup>th</sup> century), *Nine Dragons* (Detail of the waves and vortex following the seventh dragon), 1244. Handscroll, ink and touches of red on paper. 46.3 x 1096.4 cm. Francis Gardner Curtis Fund, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (17.1697)



Figure 11. Chen Rong (act. 13<sup>th</sup> century), *Nine Dragons* (Detail of the eighth dragon), 1244. Handscroll, ink and touches of red on paper. 46.3 x 1096.4 cm. Francis Gardner Curtis Fund, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (17.1697)



Figure 12. Chen Rong (act. 13<sup>th</sup> century), *Nine Dragons* (Detail of the ninth dragon), 1244. Handscroll, ink and touches of red on paper. 46.3 x 1096.4 cm. Francis Gardner Curtis Fund, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (17.1697)





Figure 13. Chen Rong (act. 13<sup>th</sup> century), *Nine Dragons* (Detail the first half of Chen Rong's first inscription), 1244. Handscroll, ink and touches of red on paper. 46.3 x 1096.4 cm. Francis Gardner Curtis Fund, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (17.1697)



Figure 14. Chen Rong (act. 13<sup>th</sup> century), *Nine Dragons* (Detail of the second half of Chen Rong's first inscription), 1244. Handscroll, ink and touches of red on paper. 46.3 x 1096.4 cm. Francis Gardner Curtis Fund, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (17.1697)



Figure 15. Chen Rong (act. 13<sup>th</sup> century), *Nine Dragons* (Detail of inscriptions by Dong Sixue (active 13<sup>th</sup> century), dated to 1306 (right) and Zhang Sicheng (active 14<sup>th</sup> century), dated to 1331 (left)), 1244. Handscroll, ink and touches of red on paper. 46.3 x 1096.4 cm. Francis Gardner Curtis Fund, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (17.1697)

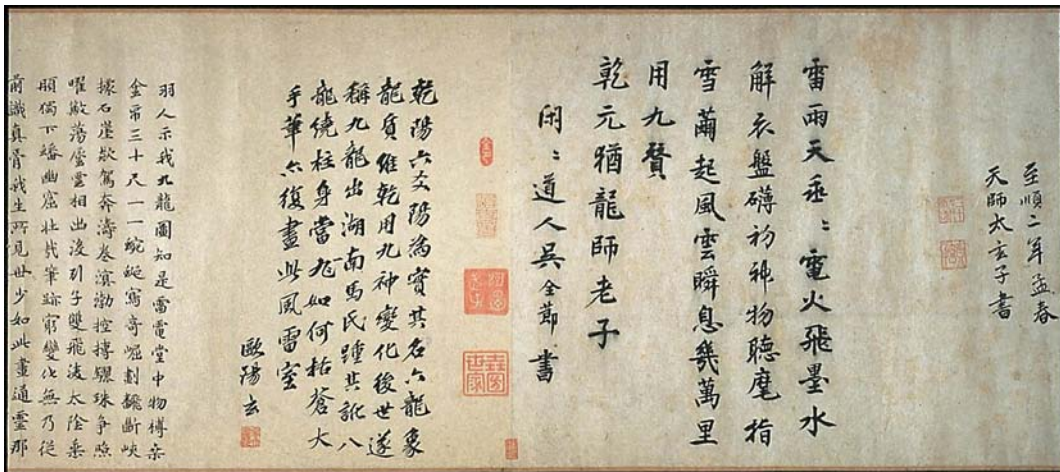


Figure 16. Chen Rong (act. 13<sup>th</sup> century), *Nine Dragons* (Detail of inscriptions by Wu Quanjie (1269-1346), undated (right) and Ouyang Yuan (1273-1357), undated (left)), 1244. Handscroll, ink and touches of red on paper. 46.3 x 1096.4 cm. Francis Gardner Curtis Fund, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (17.1697)



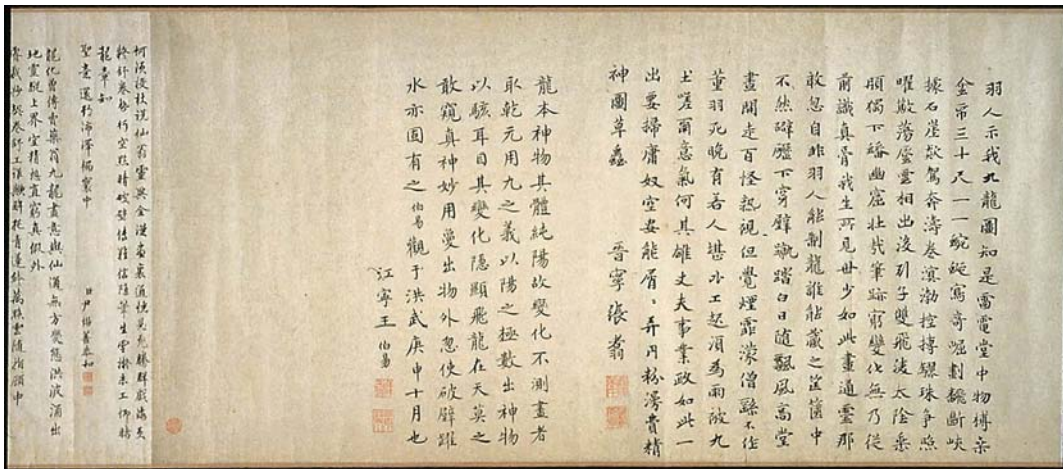


Figure 17. Chen Rong (act. 13<sup>th</sup> century), *Nine Dragons* (Detail of inscriptions by Zhang Zhu (1287-1368), undated (right) and Wang Boyi (act. 14<sup>th</sup> century), dated to 1380 (left)), 1244. Handscroll, ink and touches of red on paper. 46.3 x 1096.4 cm. Francis Gardner Curtis Fund, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (17.1697)



Figure 18. Chen Rong (act. 13<sup>th</sup> century), *Nine Dragons* (Detail of inscribed eight verses by eight high officials of the Qianlong Emperor's court: Yin Jishan (1696-1771), Liu Dongxun (1700-1773), Yu Minzhong (1714-1780), Dong Bangda (1699-1769), Qiu Yuexiu (1712-1773), Wang Jihua (ca. 1720-1776), Qian Weicheng (1720-1772), and Chen Xiaoyong (1715-1779)), 1244. Handscroll, ink and touches of red on paper. 46.3 x 1096.4 cm. Francis Gardner Curtis Fund, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (17.1697)

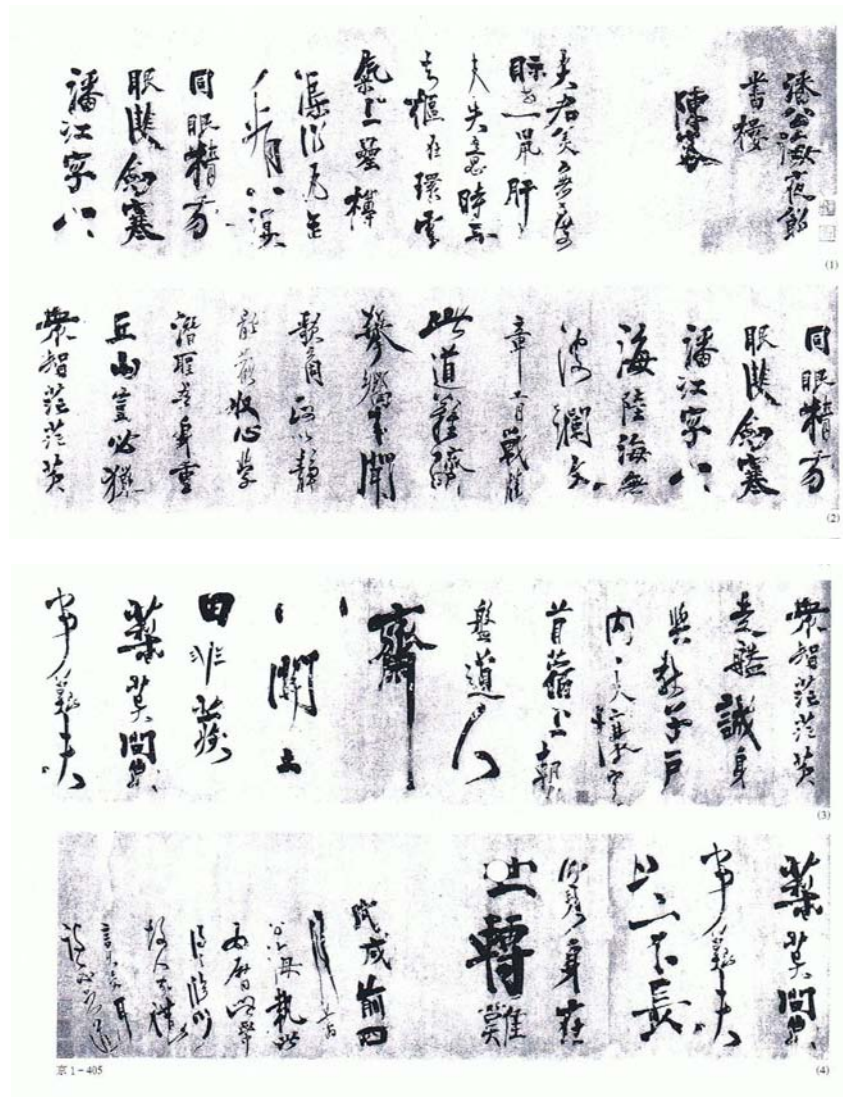


Figure 19. Attributed to Chen Rong (act. 13<sup>th</sup> century), Section of *Pan gong hai ye yin shu lou shi* 潘公海夜飲書樓詩 - Running Script calligraphy, undated. Ink on paper. 30.9 x 382 cm. Palace Museum, Beijing.





Figure 20. Zhang Shengwen (act. 1163-1189), *Long Handscroll of Buddhist Images* (Detail of dragon king section), ca. 1173-76. Handscroll, color and gold on paper. 30.4 x 1881.4 cm. National Palace Museum, Taiwan.



Figure 21. Zhu Yu (Zhu Junbi; 1293-1365), *Scene at the Dragon King's Palace* (Detail), Yuan dynasty. Leaf from an album, color on silk. 45.7 x 43.2 cm. Palace Museum, Beijing.



Figure 22. You Qiu (act. 1540-90), *Luohans Crossing the Sea* (Detail), 1587. Handscroll, ink on paper. 31.2 x 724 cm. The Marilyn and Roy Papp Collection, Phoenix, AZ.



Figure 23. Chen Hongshou (1598-1652), *The Dragon King Revering the Buddha*, 1368-1644. Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk. 107.9 x 51.9 cm. Gift of Charles Lang Freer, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C (F1916.604).





Figure 24. Anonymous, *A Gentleman Riding on a Dragon*, c. 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE. Ink on silk. 37.5 x 28 cm. From Zidanku, Changsha, Hunan Province. Hunan Provincial Museum.



Figure 25. Anonymous, *Painted Silk Funerary Banner of Lady Dai*, early 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE. Ink and color on silk. 205 x 92 cm (at top). From Mawangdui Tomb 1 in Changsha, Hunan Province.



Figure 26. Ma Yuan (act. c. 1190 – c. 1230), *Immortal Riding a Dragon*, early 13<sup>th</sup> century. Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk. 108.1 x 52.6 cm. National Palace Museum, Taiwan.



Figure 27. Attributed to Gu Kaizhi (c. 344-406), *Nymph of the Luo River*, undated. Handscroll, ink and color on silk. 24.2 x 310.9 cm. Gift of Charles Lang Freer, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. (F1914.53).





Figure 28. Attributed to Zhang Sengyou (act. early 6<sup>th</sup> century), *The Five Planets and the Twenty-Eight Lunar Mansions*, 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century or earlier. Handscroll, ink and colors on silk. 27.5 x 489.7 cm. Abe Collection, Osaka Municipal Museum of Art.

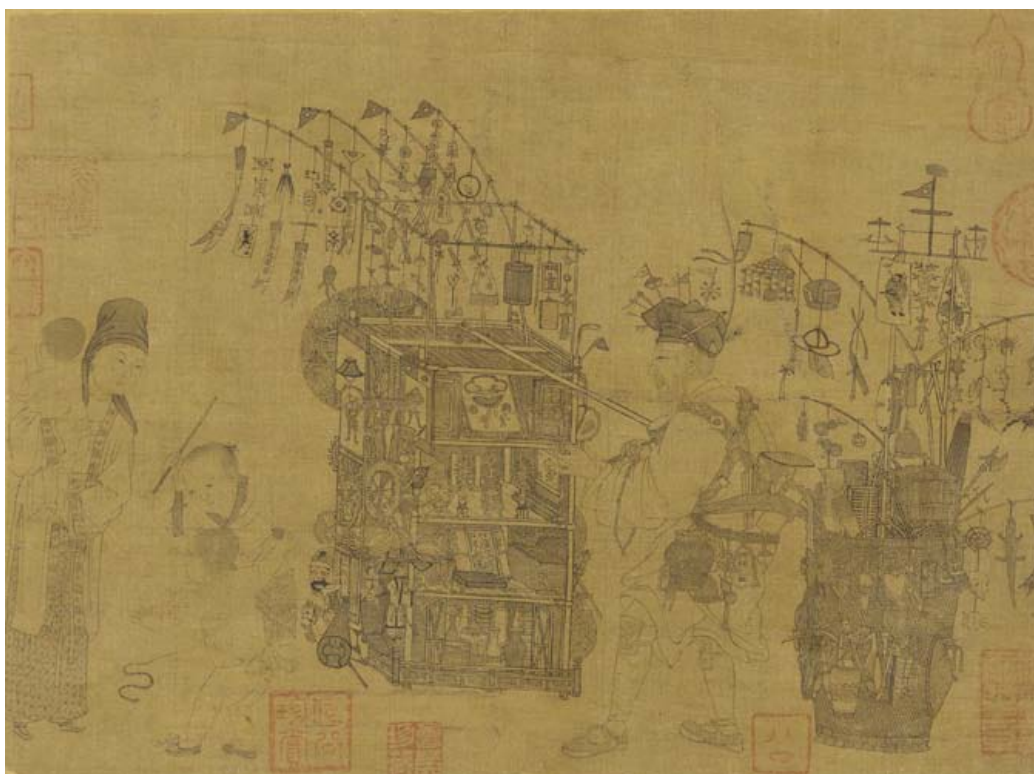


Figure 29. Attributed to Li Gonglin (c. 1049-1106), *Knick-knack Peddler and Playing Boys*, early to mid-14<sup>th</sup> century. Album leaf, ink on silk, 21.8 x 29.4 cm. Gift of Charles Lang Freer, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. (F1911.161e).



Figure 30. Giuseppe Gastiglione (Lang Shining; 1688-1766), and Ding Guanpeng (fl. 1738-68), *The Qianlong Emperor as a Chinese Connoisseur Viewing Paintings*, ca. 1746-50. Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper. 136.4 x 62 cm. Palace Museum, Beijing.

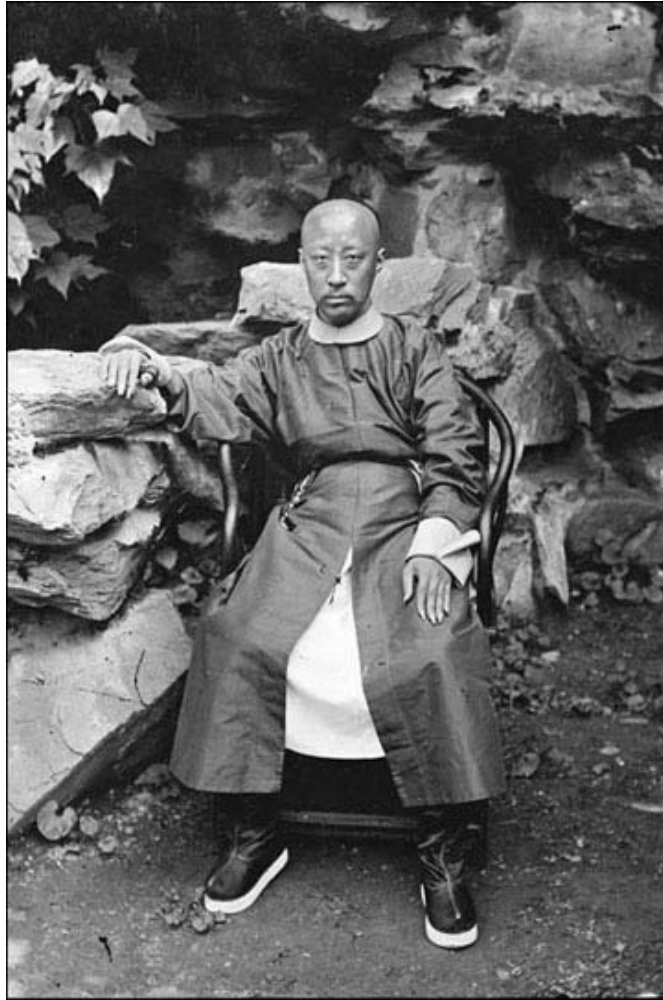


Figure 31. John Thomson (1837-1921), *Prince Kung* [Prince Gong], 1872.  
Modern Albumen print from wet-collodian negative. 254 x 204 mm.  
National Library of Scotland / Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine.



Figure 32. Zhang Yucai (act. 1294-1316), *Beneficent Rain* (detail), late 13<sup>th</sup>-early 14<sup>th</sup> century. Handscroll, ink on paper, 27 x 271.8 cm. Gift of Douglas Dillon, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (1985.227.2).





Figure 33. Attributed to Chen Zhitian (act. mid-14<sup>th</sup> century), *Fourteen Portraits of the Daoist Priest Wu Quanjie*, c. 17<sup>th</sup> century copy of a 14<sup>th</sup> century original. Handscroll, ink, colors and gold on paper. 51.8 x 834.8 cm. Gift of Mrs. Richard E. Danielson, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (46.252).



Figure 34. Emperor Qianlong (1711-1799), *Old Pine*, 1754. Handscroll, ink on paper, 27.5 x 130 cm. Gift of Mrs. Charles Ure, Stanford University Museum of Art (67.76).

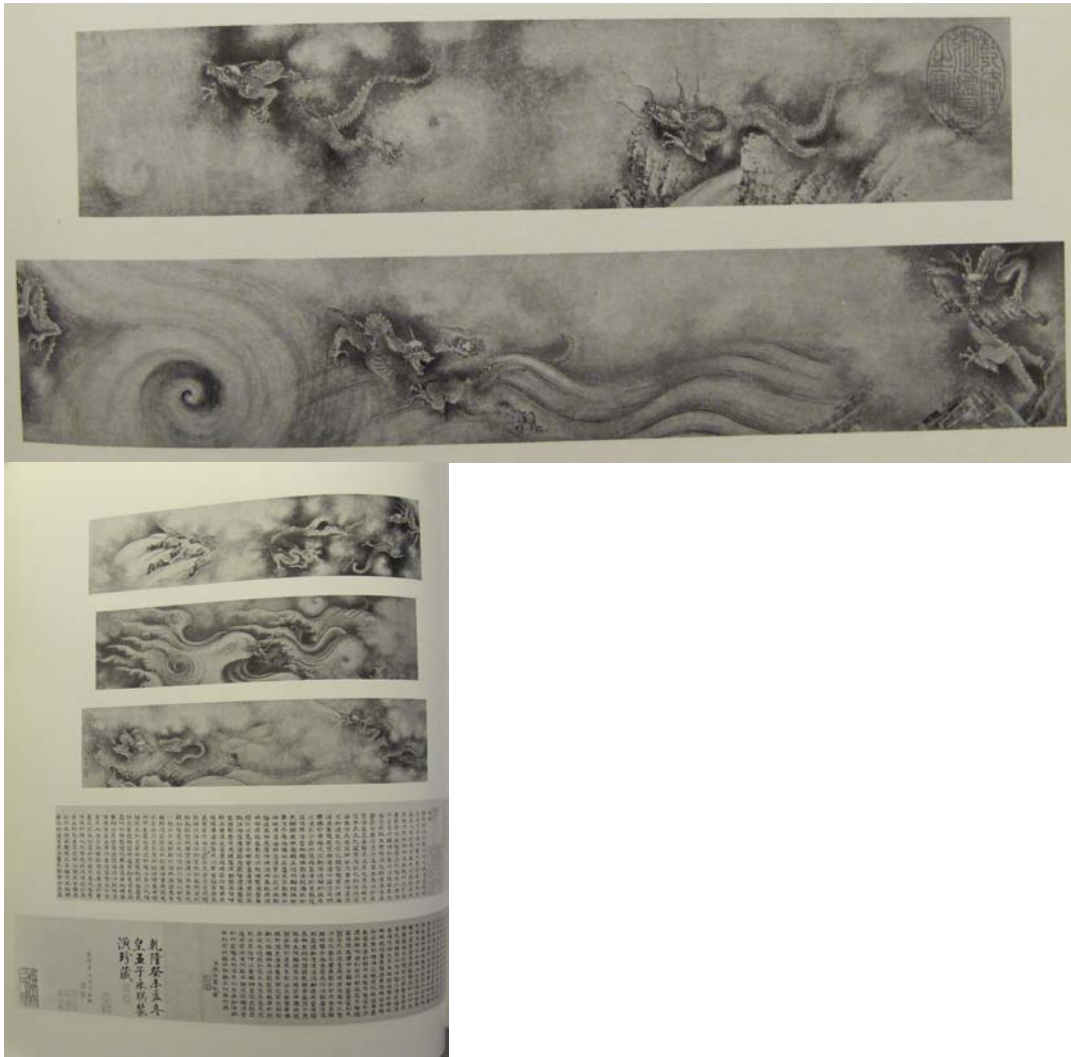


Figure 35. *Miniature Handscroll after Nine Dragons by Chen Rong*, not dated. Handscroll, ink on paper, 7.5 x 115.8 cm (painting), 7.5 x 43 cm (calligraphy). Gift of Philip Hofer, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (1971.324)





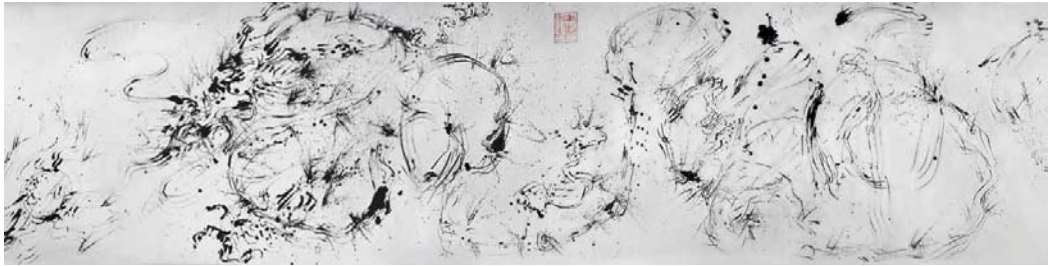
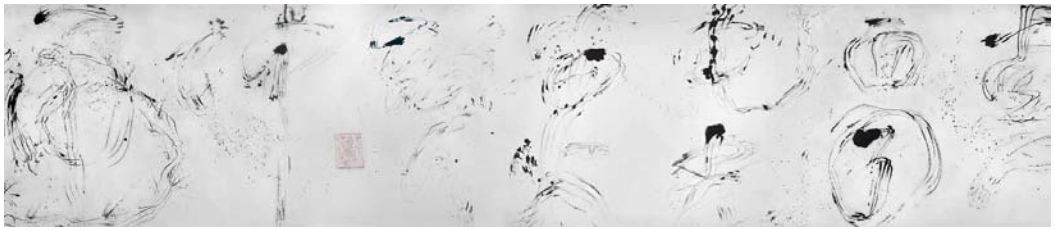
Figure 36. Li Huayi (b. 1948), *Dragon Amidst Mountain Ridges*, 2006-2009. Set of six panels and one hanging scroll, ink and color on paper, 185.1 cm x 92.5 cm (each panel), 205.2 x 109.5 cm (hanging scroll). Collection of Akiko Yamazaki and Jerry Yang, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



Figure 37. Zeng Xiaojun (b. 1954), *Nine Trees* (Detail), 2007-2010. Handscroll, ink on paper, 69 x 990 cm. Collection of the Artist.



Figure 38. Zeng Xiaojun, *Dragon Screen*, 2009. *Zi tan* wood folding screen with carved lacquer decoration and painted panels of ink and color on paper, 260 x 340 x 112.8 cm. Collection of the Artist.







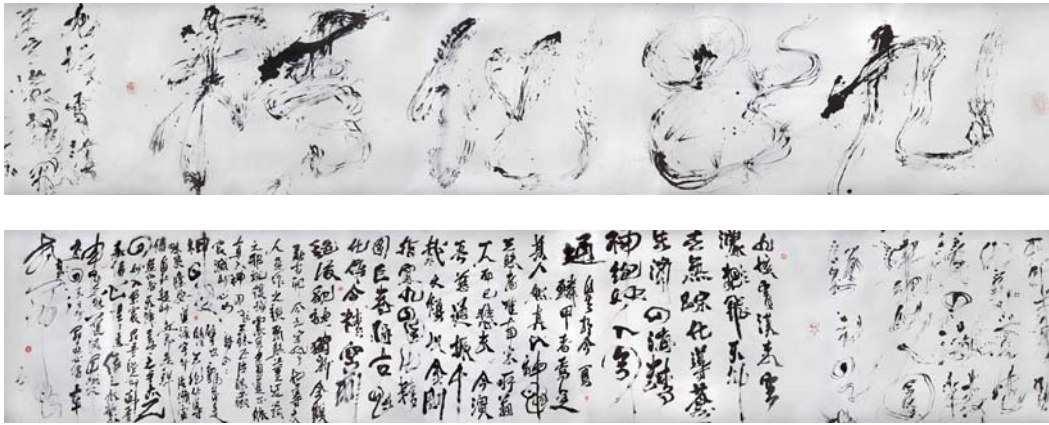


Figure 39. Chan Shengyao (b. 1958), *Transformation of Nine Dragons to their Essence*, 2010. Ink on rice paper, 137 x 6740 cm. Collection of the Artist.

APPENDIX A  
LIST OF PAINTINGS BY AND ATTRIBUTED TO CHEN RONG  
THAT EXIST TODAY

Artist, Title, Date	Format	Signed/Seals	Measurements	Location	Sources and Comments
Chen Rong, 九龍圖 <i>Nine Dragons Scroll</i> , a.k.a. <i>Nine Dragons Appearing in Clouds and Waves</i> , dated to 1244.	Long handscroll, ink and touches of red on paper. Two inscriptions by the painter and several eulogies by writers of Yuan and later periods.	Only work by Chen Rong with two lengthy inscriptions by the artist.	46.3 x 1096.4 cm	Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (17.1697)	Listed in Siren, <i>Chinese Painting: Leading Masters and Principles</i> , v. 2, p. 44, noted "A superior masterpiece," no image. Listed in Cahill, <i>An Index of Early Chinese Painters and Paintings</i> , p. 72, no image. Cahill notes that there is "a copy in the Metropolitan Museum" (47.18.86). Listed in Wu Tung, <i>Tales from the Land of Dragons</i> , p. 197, and <i>Masterpieces of Chinese Painting from the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Tang through Yuan Dynasties</i> , p. 78, with images.
Anonymous (Attributed to Chen Rong), <i>A Large Dragon in Deep Clouds</i>		Poem with signature of painter		Kokka 226, Marquis Y. Tokugawa, Owari	Listed in Siren, <i>Chinese Painting: Leading Masters and Principles</i> , v. 2, p. 44, no image.
Attributed to Chen Rong, 龍飛雲霧圖卷 <i>Dragon in Flight amid Mist and Clouds</i> , dated to Southern Song dynasty	Handscroll, ink on paper		36.5 cm x ?	Princeton University Art Museum (47-188)	Image reproduced in Kei, <i>Chūgoku kaiga sōgo zuroku</i> [Comprehensive Illustrated Catalog of Chinese Paintings], A16-107.
Attributed to Chen Rong,		Signed		Pang Yuanji	Listed in Siren, <i>Chinese</i>



<i>A Dragon amidst Clouds</i>					<i>Painting: Leading Masters and Principles</i> , v. 2, p. 44, no image.
Attributed to Chen Rong, 雲龍圖 [Dragon in Clouds]				中國美術館 China Art Gallery	Listed in <i>Zhong Guo Dai Shu Hua Tu Mu</i> , v. 1, p. 46, no image.
Attributed to Chen Rong, 墨龍圖 [Ink Dragon painting]	Handscroll, ink on silk			Palace Museum, Beijing	Image reproduced in <i>Zhong Guo Gu Dai Shu Hua Tu Mu</i> , v. 19, p. 137 (京1-406).
Attributed to Chen Rong, 行書自書詩 [Running Script Calligraphy], dated to 1238	Handscroll, ink on paper		30.9 x 382 cm	Palace Museum, Beijing	Image reproduced in <i>Zhong Guo Gu Dai Shu Hua Tu Mu</i> , v. 19, p. 138 (京1-405).
Attributed to Chen Rong, 雲行兩施圖卷 <i>Two Dragons Clinging to Rocks Among Trees and Mist</i> , dated to Southern Song dynasty	Handscroll, ink on paper		45 cm x ?	Metropolitan Museum of Art (29.100.531)	Image reproduced in Kei, <i>Chūgoku kaiga sōgō zuroku</i> [Comprehensive Illustrated Catalog of Chinese Paintings], A1-127.
Attributed to Chen Rong, 雙龍戲海圖 [Two Dragons at Play Above the Waves], dated to Southern Song dynasty	Hanging Scroll, ink on silk		135.2 x 84 cm	Saint Louis Art Museum (92.1927)	Image reproduced in Kei, <i>Chūgoku kaiga sōgō zuroku</i> [Comprehensive Illustrated Catalog of Chinese Paintings], A27-041.
Attributed to Chen Rong, 三陽啟泰圖卷 <i>Nine Dragons Amid Clouds and Splashing Waves</i> , titled <i>Welcoming the New</i>	Handscroll, ink on paper		23.1 x ?	Private Collection, American	Image reproduced in Kei, <i>Chūgoku kaiga sōgō zuroku</i> [Comprehensive Illustrated Catalog of Chinese Paintings], A46-004

Year, dated to Southern Song dynasty					
Attributed to Chen Rong, 龍圖 A <i>Dragon Among Clouds</i> , dated to Southern Song dynasty	Hanging scroll, ink on silk		187 x 111.8	Tokugawa Museum	Image reproduced in Kei, <i>Chūgoku kaiga sōgō zuroku</i> [Comprehensive Illustrated Catalog of Chinese Paintings], JM15-027-1. Paired with a hanging scroll of tiger by Mu Qi (JM15-027-2)
Attributed to Chen Rong, 雲龍圖 <i>Dragon in Flight</i> , dated to Southern Song dynasty	Hanging scroll, ink on silk		138.2 x 80.2	Matsuibunko (I-201)	Image reproduced in Kei, <i>Chūgoku kaiga sōgō zuroku</i> [Comprehensive Illustrated Catalog of Chinese Paintings], JM31-008.
Attributed to Chen Rong, 墨龍圖 Ink <i>Dragon Painting</i> , dated to Southern Song dynasty	Hanging Scroll, ink on silk		185.8 x 106.1	Private Collection, Japanese	Image reproduced in Kei, <i>Chūgoku kaiga sōgō zuroku</i> [Comprehensive Illustrated Catalog of Chinese Paintings], JM12-256.
Attributed to Chen Rong, <i>Bodhidharma</i>		Seal of the artist, interpolated. Inscription by Yu-an, unidentified.		Fujita Museum, Osaka	Listed in Cahill, <i>An Index of Early Chinese Painters and Paintings</i> , p. 72, no image.

<p>Anonymous (formerly attributed to Chen Rong), <i>Dragon and Tiger Embracing</i>, dated to second half of 13th century, Southern Song dynasty</p>	<p>Hanging scroll, ink on silk</p>		<p>249 x 124.5 cm</p>	<p>Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (11.6162). Provenance: By 1911, purchased by William Sturgis Bigelow (b. 1850 - d. 1926), Boston [see note 1]; 1911, gift of Bigelow to the MFA. (Accession Date: August 3, 1911). William Sturgis Bigelow Collection. Note: Much of Bigelow's collection of Asian art was formed during his residence in Japan between 1882 and 1889, although he also made acquisitions in Europe and the United States. Bigelow deposited many of these objects at the MFA in 1890 before donating them to the Museum's collection at later dates.</p>	<p>Image reproduced in Wu, <i>Tales from the Land of Dragons</i>, p. 209.</p>
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------	--	-----------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------

<p>Attributed to Chen Rong, <i>Four Dragons in Mists and Clouds</i>, dated to mid-13th century, Southern Song dynasty</p>	<p>handscroll, ink and a touch of color on paper</p>		<p>44.8 x 254.8 cm</p>	<p>Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (14.50) and (14.423). Provenance: 1913, with a Mr. Re, China; October 5, 1913, sold by Mr. Re to Koichi Hayasaki (b. 1874 - d. 1956) and taken to Japan [see note 1]; December, 1913, shipped to Boston and purchased by the MFA. (Accession Date: January 8, 1914)</p>	<p>Listed in Siren, <i>Chinese Painting: Leading Masters and Principles</i>, v. 2, p. 44, no image. Listed in Cahill, <i>An Index of Early Chinese Painters and Paintings</i>, p. 72, no image. Sections of the same handscroll as in <i>Kokka</i> 550. Image reproduced in Wu, <i>Tales from the Land of Dragons</i>, p. 201. Could be part of same handscroll that originally comprised a section containing 2 dragons (44.4 x 191.8 cm) in the MET, and a section with 5 dragons (45.3 x 375 cm) in the possession of Tokyo collector Masao Suzuki. Assumption based on recurrence of similar motifs in dragons' expressions in the 3 sections. Lack of direct continuity suggests that other intervening portions were either cut from the original handscroll or lost due to damage. A tentative reconstruction would start with MET's piece,</p>
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------	--	------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

					BMFA's piece, then Suzuki portion at end, with gaps in between.
Anonymous, <i>Dragon Amid Clouds</i>		Signed		Fujii Yurinkan, Osaka	Listed in Cahill, <i>An Index of Early Chinese Painters and Paintings</i> , p. 72, as an imitation.
Anonymous, <i>A Dragon in Clouds</i>	Hanging scroll, ink on silk	Poem with signature of the painter		Tokugawa Museum, Nagoya.	Listed in Cahill, <i>An Index of Early Chinese Painters and Paintings</i> , p. 72, as an imitation.
Anonymous, <i>A Dragon in the Clouds</i>				Kokka 568	Listed in Cahill, <i>An Index of Early Chinese Painters and Paintings</i> , p. 72, as an imitation.
Anonymous, <i>Dragons in Clouds and Water</i>	Handscroll, ink on paper.			Osaka Sogen 5-55	Listed in Cahill, <i>An Index of Early Chinese Painters and Paintings</i> , p. 72, as later imitations.
Anonymous, <i>Dragon in Clouds</i>				Metropolitan Museum of Art, 18.124.7	Listed in Cahill, <i>An Index of Early Chinese Painters and Paintings</i> , p. 72, as an imitation.
Anonymous, <i>Dragon in Clouds</i>				Metropolitan Museum of Art, 23.142.1	Listed in Cahill, <i>An Index of Early Chinese Painters and</i>

					<i>Paintings</i> , p. 73, as an imitation.
Anonymous (originally attributed to Chen Rong), <i>Dragons in a Landscape</i>	Long handscroll, ink on paper,	Has inscription and one seal of Chen Rong, however it is widely regarded as a copy, probably from the 17th century.		Freer Gallery (19.173)	Listed in Cahill, <i>An Index of Early Chinese Painters and Paintings</i> , p. 73, as "A close copy." Discussed in Ho, <i>Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting: The Collections of the Nelson Gallery-Atkins Museum, Kansas City, and the Cleveland Museum of Art</i> , p. 80. Includes a scene of entwined dragons same as the Nelson Gallery scroll. Same composition as the scroll in the Fujita Museum, Osaka "Six Dragons"
Attributed to Chen Rong, <i>Twelve Dragons Issuing from the Mist in Cavernous Rocks and over the Rushing Streams</i>		after the master's design, signed.		Princeton University (formerly Dubois Morris Collection)	Siren, <i>Chinese Painting: Leading Masters and Principles</i> , v. 2, p. 44. Listed in Cahill, <i>An Index of Early Chinese Painters and Paintings</i> , p. 73, no image.
Anonymous (Attributed to Chen Rong), <i>Cavernous Rocks and Rushing Torrents; Dragons Issuing from Clouds</i>	Section of Handscroll	Poem with signature of the painter		Toyo IX, Baron Yokoyama	Listed in Siren, <i>Chinese Painting: Leading Masters and Principles</i> , v. 2, p. 44, no image. Listed in Cahill, <i>An Index of Early Chinese Painters and Paintings</i> , p. 72, with comment

					"Good Yuan-Ming work," no image.
Anonymous (Attributed to Chen Rong), <i>Dragons in Clouds</i> , dated to Ming dynasty	Two sections of a handscroll			Toyo IX, Count Sakai	Listed in Siren, <i>Chinese Painting: Leading Masters and Principles</i> , v. 2, p. 44, no image. Listed in Cahill, <i>An Index of Early Chinese Painters and Paintings</i> , p. 72, with comment "Ming?" No Image.
Anonymous (Attributed to Chen Rong), <i>Dragons in Clouds and Water</i> , dated to Ming dynasty				Kokka 550 / formerly Suzuki Collection	Listed in Siren, <i>Chinese Painting: Leading Masters and Principles</i> , v. 2, p. 44, no image. Listed in Cahill, <i>An Index of Early Chinese Painters and Paintings</i> , p. 72, as "Imitation of Ming date," no image. Two sections probably from same picture as the minor handscroll in Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, "Four Dragons in Midst and Clouds."
Attributed to Chen Rong, <i>Two Dragons in Clouds and Mist</i> , dated to Yuan dynasty				Metropolitan Museum of Art (29.100.531)	Siren, <i>Chinese Painting: Leading Masters and Principles</i> , v. 2, p. 44. Listed in Cahill, <i>An Index of Early Chinese Painters and Paintings</i> , p. 73, no image. Section of same composition as the minor

					picture in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (14.50)
Attributed to Chen Rong, 五龍圖 [Five Winding Dragons] a.k.a. <i>Five Winding Dragons Interlaced in a Knot</i>	Handscroll, ink on paper	1 colophon and 16 seals: 13 seals of Chang Heng (1915-1963); 1 colophon, dated 1948, and 2 seals of Wang Shixiang (Wang Shih-hsiang); 1 seal of Liu Dingzhi (Liu Ting-chih) (20th c.) No signature or seal of the artist.	34.4 x 59.6 cm	Nelson Gallery, Atkins Museum, Kansas City (48-15)	Siren, <i>Chinese Painting: Leading Masters and Principles</i> , v. 2, p. 44. Reproduced in Kei, <i>Chūgoku kaiga sōgō zuroku</i> [Comprehensive Illustrated Catalog of Chinese Paintings], A28-007. Listed in Cahill, <i>An Index of Early Chinese Painters and Paintings</i> , p. 73, who notes as an "old and fine painting." Ho, <i>Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting: The Collections of the Nelson Gallery-Atkins Museum, Kansas City, and the Cleveland Museum of Art</i> , p. 82. Has almost identical composition of fighting dragons to long scroll of of eleven dragons now in the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington (19.173)
Anonymous (Listed as Chen Rong), 六龍圖卷 <i>Six Dragons on Rocky Cliffs, Amidst Waves and Clouds</i> ,	Handscroll, ink on paper		34.2 x ?	Fujita Museum, Osaka	Image reproduced in Kei, <i>Chūgoku kaiga sōgō zuroku</i> [Comprehensive Illustrated Catalog of Chinese



dated to Southern Song dynasty					Paintings], JM14-023. Listed in Cahill, <i>An Index of Early Chinese Painters and Paintings</i> , p. 72, as an imitation.
Attributed to Chen Rong, <i>Dragon Amid Rocks and Waves</i>	Handscroll	Qianlong seals		Ogawa Collection, Kyoto	Listed in Cahill, <i>An Index of Early Chinese Painters and Paintings</i> , p. 72, no image, noted damage by burning and repaired.
Attributed to Chen Rong, <i>Five Winding Dragons Amidst Clouds</i>	Section of a handscroll, ink on paper			Bunkacho	Listed in Cahill, <i>An Index of Early Chinese Painters and Paintings</i> , p. 72, no image, different composition from the Nelson Gallery scroll
雲龍圖 [Dragon in Clouds]	Hanging scroll, ink on silk	Signed		廣東省博物館 Guangdong Provincial Art Museum	Image reproduced in <i>Zhong Guo Gu Dai Shu Hua Tu Mu</i> , v. 13, p. 13 (粵1-0002). Listed in Cahill, <i>An Index of Early Chinese Painters and Paintings</i> , p. 72, no image, authenticity is questioned. See also Su Gengchun 蘇庚春, "Chen Rong 'Yun Long Tu' zhou" 陳容雲龍圖軸 [Chen Rong's "Dragon in Cloud" Hanging scroll]. <i>Wen Wu</i> 文物 12 (1978): 81.

APPENDIX B

LIST OF ADDITIONAL PAINTINGS ATTRIBUTED TO CHEN RONG

MENTIONED IN HISTORICAL TEXTS

Title	Format	Signed/Seals	Measurements	Source
雲海起蛟 [Dragon Rising in a Sea of Clouds]				National Palace Museum 國立故宮博物院, ed., <i>Bi Dian Zhu Lin – Shi Qu Bao Ji Xu Bian</i> 秘殿珠林 – 石渠寶笈續編
六龍圖 [Six Dragons]				National Palace Museum 國立故宮博物院, ed., <i>Bi Dian Zhu Lin – Shi Qu Bao Ji Xu Bian</i> 秘殿珠林 – 石渠寶笈續編
題陸曜劉逸圖 [Painting inscription on <i>Lu Yao Liu Yi</i> ]				National Palace Museum 國立故宮博物院, ed., <i>Bi Dian Zhu Lin – Shi Qu Bao Ji Xu Bian</i> 秘殿珠林 – 石渠寶笈續編
十四龍 [Fourteen Dragons]				Yu Kan 虞堪, <i>Dao Yuan Yi Gao</i> 道園遺稿, 卷2, SKQS
雙龍圖 [Pair of Dragons]				Gu Sili 顧嗣立, <i>Yuan Shi Xuan</i> 元詩選 (Qing dynasty), 初集, 卷30, SKQS
九龍戲珠 [Nine Dragons Playing with the Pearl]				Gu Sili 顧嗣立, <i>Yuan Shi Xuan</i> 元詩選 (Qing dynasty), 初集, 卷38, SKQS
出海龍圖 [Dragon Coming Out of the Sea]				<i>Ming Hongwu Zhi Chongzhen</i> 明洪武至崇禎, 武功集, 卷1, SKQS
雙龍戲珠圖 [Pair of Dragons Playing with the Pearl]				Hu Qiyu 胡祇遜, <i>Zi Shan Da Quan Ji</i> 紫山大全集, 卷4, SKQS
群龍雲會圖 [Group of dragons gathering in cloud]				Bian Yongyu 卞永譽 (1645-1712). <i>Shi Gu Tang Shu Hua Hui Kao</i> 式古堂書畫彙考
龍起滄溟圖 [Dragon rising from the dark blue sea]				Bian Yongyu 卞永譽 (1645-1712). <i>Shi Gu Tang Shu Hua Hui Kao</i> 式古堂書畫彙考
群龍圖 [Painting of a group of dragons]				Bian Yongyu 卞永譽 (1645-1712). <i>Shi Gu Tang Shu Hua Hui Kao</i> 式古堂書畫彙考

雲漢為霖圖 [The Milky Way as continuous heavy rain]				Bian Yongyu 卞永譽 (1645-1712). <i>Shi Gu Tang Shu Hua Hui Kao</i> 式古堂書畫彙考
戲龍圖 [Playful Dragon]				Bian Yongyu 卞永譽 (1645-1712). <i>Shi Gu Tang Shu Hua Hui Kao</i> 式古堂書畫彙考
孤松圖 [Lonely Pine Tree]				Bian Yongyu 卞永譽 (1645-1712). <i>Shi Gu Tang Shu Hua Hui Kao</i> 式古堂書畫彙考
虬松圖 [Young Dragon Pine]				Bian Yongyu 卞永譽 (1645-1712). <i>Shi Gu Tang Shu Hua Hui Kao</i> 式古堂書畫彙考
墨竹圖 [Ink Bamboo]				Bian Yongyu 卞永譽 (1645-1712). <i>Shi Gu Tang Shu Hua Hui Kao</i> 式古堂書畫彙考
騰蛟圖畫 [Galloping Dragon Painting]	Ink on silk			Jin Yuan 金瑗, <i>Shi Bai Zhai Shu Hua Lu</i> 十百齋書畫錄 (Kangxi, Qing dynasty)
水墨龍畫 [Ink Dragon Painting]	Ink on silk			Jin Yuan 金瑗, <i>Shi Bai Zhai Shu Hua Lu</i> 十百齋書畫錄 (Kangxi, Qing dynasty)
十二龍圖一卷 [Twelve Dragons Scroll]				Gao Shiqi 高士奇 (1645-1704). <i>Jiang Cun Shu Hua Mu</i> 江村書畫目.
雲龍圖軸 [Dragon in Cloud]	Hanging scroll			Pang Yuanji 龐元濟 (Qing dynasty). <i>Xu Zhai Ming Hua Lu</i> 虛齋名畫錄 [Record of Famous Paintings in the Studio of Emptiness].
墨龍神品 [Ink Dragon Masterpiece]	Ink on silk, scroll	An inscription located in the bottom left corner of the painting, dated to Daoguang 道光 reign, year <i>ding wei</i> 丁未 (1907), fourth month, 19th day.	H: 3尺5寸 x W: 1尺5寸2分	Pang Yuanji 龐元濟 (Qing dynasty). <i>Xu Zhai Ming Hua Lu</i> 虛齋名畫錄 [Record of Famous Paintings in the Studio of Emptiness].
墨龍卷 [Ink dragon scroll]	Hanging scroll		H: 6尺8分 x W: 2尺3分	Pan Zhengwei 潘正煒 (Jiadao, Qing dynasty). <i>Ting Fan Lou Shu Hua Ji</i> 聽帆樓書畫記.

<p>墨龍卷 [Ink dragon scroll]</p>	<p>Hanging scroll</p>	<p>Seal located at the bottom end of the scroll by Chen Rong (Suo Weng), unconfirmed if authentic</p>	<p>H: 6尺6分 x W: 1尺2寸8分</p>	<p>Pan Zhengwei 潘正煒 (Jiadao, Qing dynasty). <i>Ting Fan Lou Shu Hua Ji</i> 聽帆樓書畫記.</p>
<p>仿陳容九龍圖一卷 [After Chen Rong's Nine Dragons scroll], dated to 乾隆丁亥 Qianlong, year ding hai</p>		<p>Inscription discusses Chen Rong's <i>Nine Dragons</i> scroll, also notes JinTingbiao's copy of Chen Rong's <i>Nine Dragons</i> scroll</p>		<p>Hu Jing 胡敬 (Qing dynasty), <i>Guo Chao Yuan Hua Lu</i> 國朝院畫錄. Also in National Palace Museum 國立故宮博物院, ed., <i>Bi Dian Zhu Lin – Shi Qu Bao Ji San Bian</i> 秘殿珠林 – 石渠寶笈三編</p>

