

The final chapter of this thesis is a case study of the late twelfth to early thirteenth century court artist turned eccentric painter Liang Kai 梁楷. Following the preceding chapters' examinations of the agency of narrative themes and clerical inscription in the reception of Chan figure paintings, the ensuing analysis explores the agency of the ideal of the artist. Liang has come to embody two distinctive ideals. One is of Liang as an expressive and eccentric creator of Chan images, depicting wild and heterodox subjects in brush modes that challenged accepted conventions of painting practice. Extant works of this type are, for the most part, preserved in Japanese collections (figs. 6.1-6.2).<sup>422</sup> The second Liang Kai is a master of careful and meticulous depiction, who was admired by his court painter contemporaries for his 'exquisite brush' (Chinese: *jingmei zhi bi* 精美之筆).<sup>423</sup> The majority of Liang Kai's attributions that embody this ideal have been preserved through Chinese collections (fig. 6.3).<sup>424</sup>

This chapter problematises Liang Kai's dichotomous reception as either an eccentric drunken genius, or a superlative court draughtsman, through the critical examination of his historic reception in both China and Japan. The ensuing discussion will illustrate the construction and augmentation of Liang's distinctive images in his Chinese and Japanese transmissions, based on analyses of extant works attributed to Liang Kai, and of historic texts on Liang's artistic practice and oeuvre. This approach aims to reveal the complex overlap and interplay of Liang's supposedly distinctive cursive and meticulous modes of brushwork. In doing so, it proposes an alternative to the neat binary division of Liang's oeuvre into pre-and-post service at court,

---

<sup>422</sup> James Cahill illustrates the importance of Japanese collections in preserving modes of Song and Yuan brushwork used to depict Chan subjects, including Liang Kai's abbreviated brush (Chinese: *jianbi* 減筆) in a discussion written for a Shanghai Museum special exhibition of Chinese paintings from Japanese collections: Cahill 2010. For a translation of this paper, see: Cahill 2011 [Unpaginated].

<sup>423</sup> THBJ, j.4, 18,.

<sup>424</sup> For a discussion of Liang's oeuvre that focuses on works in Chinese collections, and their distinctive synergy of Liang's abbreviated brush with the plain line drawing (Chinese: *baimiao* 白描) employed by his teacher, Jia Shigu 賈師古 (active 13<sup>th</sup> century) see: Shan and Shan 2004.

acknowledging instead Liang's role as an intermediary between monastic and imperial visual cultures of the Southern Song.

The few extant paintings widely accepted as by Liang's own hand are supported by a limited body of historical documentation on his life and career. The earliest textual account of Liang's life is a short entry in the Zhuang Su's 莊肅 (active late 13-early 14<sup>th</sup> c.) 1298 text *Supplement to the Continuation of Painting* (*Huaji Buyi* 畫繼補遺), a two fascicle addendum to Deng Chun's 鄧椿 (act. ca. 1127-67) earlier *Continuation of Painting* (*Huaji* 畫繼).<sup>425</sup> Zhuang provides only a cursory account of Liang's artistic output, listing Liang among the Southern Song court painters in the second fascicle of his addendum, rather than alongside the scholar, monk and Daoist painters in his first fascicle. Writing at a time when Liang's career had only just passed beyond living memory, Zhuang identifies him as an exemplary student of Jia Shigu, who exceeded the abilities of his teacher, and whose works were well received by his contemporaries.

Xia Wenyan's 夏文彥 (1312-70) *Precious Mirror of Painting* (*Tu Hui Bao Jian* 圖繪寶鑑) of 1365 provides a fuller appraisal of Liang's career and creative processes.<sup>426</sup>

It is in Xia's prose that we have the first textual record of a dichotomous view of Liang's oeuvre, where Xia debases the cursive technique of Liang's works circulating in the late Yuan, and lauds the rare available examples of his 'exquisite brush'. With no contemporary record of Liang's life beyond the three sentences of Zhuang's *Addendum to the Record of Painting*, and only a fraction of his original oeuvre surviving, modern art historians encounter Liang Kai as an idealised artistic persona, frequently mediated through Xia's prose. Consequently, this chapter critically examines Liang Kai's instability as an historic entity. Rather than seeking to excavate an authentic identity from commentary, copying, and forgery of his oeuvre, the following discussion examines Liang's distinctive personas as the aggregate product of centuries of transmission.<sup>427</sup> Various modes of copying employed by later Chinese

---

<sup>425</sup> HJ; HJBY, j.2, 15.

<sup>426</sup> THBJ, j.4, 18.

<sup>427</sup> The distinction between copying and forgery was clearly articulated in early theories of Chinese painting set out as early as the sixth century, in Xie He's 謝赫 (act. ca. 479-502) *Six*

and Japanese painters will be examined as active agents in this process of transmission of Liang's idealised image, rather than dismissed as mendacious distractions from an authentic record. These copies provide important evidence on the value placed on Liang Kai's oeuvre through the fact of their production, and should be treated as active agents in the construction of Liang's persona as an art historical edifice within Japanese and Chinese canonical hierarchies of masters and masterpieces.<sup>428</sup>

The agency of this idealised edifice of the artist's persona over modern scholarship was evident in an exhibition of Chinese painting and calligraphy from American collections, held at the Shanghai Museum in 2012-13. Liang Kai's *Poet Strolling by a Marshy Bank* 澤畔行吟圖, from the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, shown as part of this exhibition, depicts a minute figure within a landscape. The figure is walking along a riverbank, facing vast mountains obscured by mist. This was displayed as part of the 'Buddhist and Daoist painting' 道釋畫 section of the exhibition (fig 6.4).<sup>429</sup> Originally in a fan format and now mounted as an album leaf, the painting is an exquisite performance of form and movement. The fluid, confident strokes of heavily saturated ink that describe the far shore are juxtaposed with the abrasive texture of the mountaintop. This upper register is divided from the rest of the composition by a bank of mist evoked through the reserve white technique (*liu bai* 留白), where the unmarked area of the fan's silk surface implies an obscuring bank of vapour. The dynamic asymmetry of the composition is evident across vertical, horizontal, and diagonal axes, anchored by pictorial action in the corners of the image.

In the Shanghai Museum display, this technical triumph of ink landscape painting in miniature was presented to the exhibition's international audience alongside paintings

---

*Laws*, which require artists to learn by copying established master works, as discussed in: Fong and Metropolitan Museum of Art 1992, 20.

<sup>428</sup> For a theoretical discussion on the role of forgery in shaping China's historic visual cultures, see: Hay 2008.

<sup>429</sup> The exhibition '*Hanmo Huicui: Meiguo Cang Zhongguo Wudai, Song, Yuan Shuhua Zhenpin* 翰墨薈萃：美國藏中國五代，宋，元 書畫珍品 [Masterpieces of Early Chinese Painting and Calligraphy in American Collections]' was shown at the Shanghai Museum from 2 November 2012 to 3 January 2013.

of figural subjects from the Buddhist and Daoist pantheons. These ranged from *arhats* bestowing blessings upon the poor (fig. 6.5), to meetings between Chan clerics and Confucian luminaries (fig. 5.1). The perceived persona of Liang Kai as a Chan eccentric shaped the presentation of *Poet Strolling by a Marshy Bank*, prioritising a perceived Chan identity in this painting's authorship over its visual content. The inflexible constraints of gallery display forced the curator to select a singular categorisation for this work, which should not be read as reflecting a rigid taxonomic categorisation of *Poet Strolling by a Marshy Bank*. Through associated publications, the exhibition addressed this work's relationship to the miniature landscape tradition of the Southern Song.<sup>430</sup> However, without the signature and attribution to Liang Kai, *Poet Strolling by a Marshy Bank* would almost certainly have been presented in an alternate context of display. Most likely, an unsigned version of this painting would be positioned within the rich tradition of fan painting of landscapes found in the Southern Song capital of Lin'an 臨安 (modern Hangzhou 杭州). The positioning of *Poet Strolling by a Marshy Bank* within the 'Buddhist and Daoist Paintings' section of the exhibition illustrates the importance of Liang's received identity as a Chan artist to contemporary interpretations of his extant oeuvre.

The relationship between the ideals Liang Kai has come to embody as an artist and the subject matter with which he is associated will be explored in four sections in the following chapter. The first section offers an in-depth analysis of Xia Wenyan's biography of Liang Kai, and its formative influence on Liang's subsequent reception. This analysis explores Xia's construction of a binary division in Liang's oeuvre between meticulous and abbreviated styles.<sup>431</sup> The following sections of this chapter problematise the mapping of Xia's juxtaposition of Liang's stylistic range onto his extant oeuvre by historic commentators and later copyists. This analysis combines examination of selected extant paintings with critical readings of supporting documentation on Liang's historic reception. The final section of this chapter explores interpretations of Liang's oeuvre and stylistic range in Chinese transmission. This is developed through an examination of *Eight Eminent Monks* 八高僧圖 a probable late-

---

<sup>430</sup> In the volume of essays accompanying the exhibition, the use of the typical features such as the corner composition, and the juxtaposition of the minute figure of the traveller with the majestic landscape are discussed by James Cahill in: Cahill 2012, 59.

<sup>431</sup> THBJ, j.4,18.

thirteenth-fourteenth century emulation of Liang's depiction of Chan subjects (fig. 6.6). By situating these images alongside visual and textual records from both Chinese and Japanese sources, this chapter intends to illustrate how Liang Kai came to embody a diversity of meanings for discrete audiences at different times.

*Xia Wenyan's Biography of Liang Kai in the 'Precious Mirror of Painting'*

Liang Kai, a descendent of Xiangyi of Dongping, was a skilled painter of figures, landscapes, Buddhist and Daoist subjects, and spirits and demons. His master was Jia Shigu, his drawing was fluid and graceful, [surpassing his teacher] as blue surpasses indigo.<sup>432</sup> In the Jiatai period [of the reign of Song Ningzong 宋寧宗] [1201-1204] he served as Painter in Attendance at the Painting Academy, and was awarded the golden belt. Liang did not accept it and hung it in the academy. He drank to amuse himself, and had the *sobriquet* Mad Liang. Of those in the academy who saw his exquisite brushwork there were none who did not esteem it above their own. However, those that have been passed down to our time are all coarse, in what is known as the abbreviated brush style.<sup>433</sup>

梁楷，東平相義之后，善畫人物、山水、道釋、鬼神。師賈師古，描寫飄逸，青過於藍。嘉泰年畫院待詔，賜金帶，楷不受，掛於院內。嗜酒自樂號曰：『梁風子』，院人見其精妙之筆無不敬伏。但傳於世者，皆草草，謂之減筆。

Dated by its preface to 1365, this text offers an appraisal of China's pictorial past through the lens of the late Yuan connoisseur and scholar Xia Wenyan. Written around a century after Liang Kai's death, Xia's account is a consciously historical record of Liang's life and deeds. The biography situates Liang within a conception of the past shaped by a late Yuan critic, rather than in a contemporary appraisal from his own day. As discussed above, Zhuang Su authored a terse three-line biography for

---

<sup>432</sup> I am indebted to Howard Rogers' translation of this biography for the recognition of the oblique chromatic metaphor through which Liang is said to have surpassed his teacher: Rogers 1983, 27.

<sup>433</sup> THBJ, j.4, 18.

Liang Kai in the *Addendum to the Record of Painting*. However at only 24 characters in length, Zhuang's account does little more than identify Liang's teacher, and documents his place in painting history as one of a number of talented Southern Song court painters.<sup>434</sup> By contrast, Xia's biography provides both a narrative for Liang's career, and offers commentary upon the distinctive qualities of his oeuvre.

Xia's biography is centred upon the pivotal moment when Liang leaves the academy. Liang is seen to reject the superlative honour of the golden belt in favour of what Xia presents as a life of drunken eccentricity. This refusal of imperial prestige and withdrawal from society conforms to an established cultural position familiar to Xia's elite Yuan readership: that of the eccentric recluse. In both Liang and Xia's time historic cultural luminaries such as Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 (365-427) were venerated for rejection of imperial patronage in favour of a life in withdrawal from society.

These acts of withdrawal from office were most frequently associated with a moral imperative not to serve in a corrupt regime, and thereby were still defined as an acceptable relationship to society predicated on the merits of inaction over action. Liang's circumstances do not seem to fit these conditions, as there is no mention of a moral imperative behind his exit from service. However, the ideal of the persona of the eccentric, which Liang appears to have cultivated, was not without precedent, exemplified in the strange and inscrutable behaviours of such classical figures as the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove 竹林七賢.<sup>435</sup>

Characterised by conspicuous drunkenness, and a choice of a *sobriquet* that played on the idea of madness, Xia's account of Liang's rejection of imperial honours resonated with the choices of past masters of eccentric modes of brushwork.<sup>436</sup> The Liang Kai of the *Precious Mirror of Painting* occupies a position between two worlds, that of the

---

<sup>434</sup> Zhuang's biography reads as follows: "Liang Kai: As the top follower of Jia Shigu, he was appointed to the [imperial] painting academy. His drawing was fluid and graceful, [surpassing his teacher] as blue surpasses indigo. People of his day all extolled his merits. 「梁楷」：乃賈師古上足，亦隸畫院。描寫飄逸，青過於藍。時人多稱賞之。HJBY, j.2, 15.

<sup>435</sup> For a discussion of this moral dimension of reclusion and its visual representation in the life of Tao Yuanming, including a work attributed to Liang Kai, see: Nelson 1998a.

<sup>436</sup> Drunkenness and eccentricity as biographical tropes of exceptional artists in accounts from earlier periods of Chinese painting history are discussed in: Soper 1975, 14.

eccentric recluse, and the elite circles of Southern Song academy. While Xia made a conspicuous point of Liang's withdrawal, Zhang did not mention Liang's refusal of court honours. In fact, Liang's inclusion in the *Supplement to the Continuation of Painting* was on the basis of his status as an eminent court artist. Though the *Precious Mirror of Painting* juxtaposes Liang's time at court with a later period of eccentricity, Xia does note Liang's positive reception by his court contemporaries. Offering significantly more detail than Zhuang's earlier account, Xia's cites the exquisite nature of Liang's brushwork as the quality praised by members of the academy. The term translated here as 'exquisite' (Chinese: *jingmiao* 精妙) implies an attentive hand carefully executing a complete image with a deft degree of technical skill. Xia juxtaposes this with the cursive (Chinese *cao cao*: 草草) abbreviated brush, where the description of the cursive quality is expressed through a standardised visual allusion to the flexing, unstable leaves and stalks of plants. Xia berates Liang's abbreviated style as inferior to the exquisite brushwork praised by the academy, and laments the paucity of the latter and prevalence of the former among Liang's works circulating in fourteenth century China. However, it was precisely this abbreviated brush technique for which Liang was to become posthumously venerated in Japan, inspiring a whole tradition of copyists to learn from his examples (fig. 6.7).

Liang's recurrent use of an abbreviated style of painting to depict Chan subjects is evident in his extant oeuvre. The connections of Chan figural subjects by Liang with monastic communities is demonstrated by their augmentation with inscriptions by senior clerics, such as a painting of Budai signed by Liang Kai and inscribed by Dachuan Puji 大川普濟 (1197-1253), preserved in the collection of the Kōsetsu Museum of Art, (fig. 6.8).<sup>437</sup> Further accounts of Liang's association with Chan clerics are preserved in textual records of similarly inscribed paintings.<sup>438</sup> While these extant works with demonstrable monastic associations document a connection

---

<sup>437</sup> The transmission of this work in the Ashikaga 足利 and Tokugawa 徳川 collections is discussed: Mitsui Kinen Bijutsukan 2014, 164.

<sup>438</sup> For inscriptions upon paintings by Liang Kai by senior Chan clerics preserved in textual records, see the quotation of Zhongfeng Mingben's 中峰明本 colophon to a *Chan Master Miaofeng's Nocturnal Encounter with Four Demons* 妙峰禪師四鬼夜移圖, reproduced from *Zhongfeng Guanglu* 中峰廣錄 fascicle 10, in: Shimada 1993, 499. See also Hemlut Brinker's discussion of Liang's relationship with Beijian Jujian 北磻居簡 (1164-1246): Brinker and Kanazawa 1996, 126.

between Liang and the elite prelates in and around the Southern Song capital of Lin'an, Liang's historical position should not be conflated with that of a cleric. As the evidence of his extant oeuvre and the biographies by Xia and Zhuang indicate, Liang had adopted a self-fashioned identity as an eccentric painter, whose former court credentials likely facilitated his demonstrable connections to Chan monastic communities. Liang's relationship with the monastic inscribers of his paintings shows a connection between court and cloister mediated by a professional artist. In spite of certain technical similarities, and a common corpus of subject matter, the court connections of Liang's training distinguish his production of Chan subjects from those by contemporary monk painters. Both his range of subjects, and the attention to detail in his rendition of bodily action sets Liang apart from the practice of monk painters, such as his near contemporary Muxi Fachang 牧谿法常 (13<sup>th</sup> century) and the later Yintuoluo 因陀羅 (active 14<sup>th</sup> century).<sup>439</sup>

In summary, Xia's account of Liang's career establishes two sets of juxtapositions. First, he contrasts Liang's career as a court artist with his subsequent self-fashioned identity as an eccentric. Secondly, Xia elevates Liang's more descriptive style of painting, while debasing the rapidly drawn works ascribed to the abbreviated brush style. In interpreting Xia's account of Liang's life alongside his extant oeuvre, Liang's association with Chan is seen to be one of circumstances and subject matter, rather than any formal affiliation. Notably, Xia makes no mention of a Chan influence on Liang's abbreviated brush painting, nor even of Chan monasteries as the context for his eccentric drunken lifestyle as is often presumed. While inscriptions on pictorial records of Liang's cursive painting style reveals clear associations with Chan clerics, Xia's account of Liang self-fashioning as a madman evokes another set of cultural norms from beyond the cloister. These situate Liang in relation to secular cultural ideals of reclusion, and to earlier artists and calligraphers whose expressive visuality was linked to intoxication. As such, Liang Kai can be seen to have been an artist connected with the Chan community, but whose alternate cultural and professional

---

<sup>439</sup> In the grand narrative of Japanese ink painting presented in the monumental series *Suiboku Bijutsu Taikei* 水墨美術大系 [Expansive Survey of Ink Art], compiled 1973-77 Liang Kai's oeuvre is paired with that of the monk painter Yintuoluo, preceded in the series by a volume dedicated to Muxi and Yu Jian 玉澗: Toda 1975a; Toda 1975b. For a more up to date and detailed study of Muxi's extant oeuvre see: Gotō Bijutsukan 1996.



allegiances illustrate the permeability of the borders of monastic life in the Southern Song, particularly in the production of Chan visual culture.

### *The Exquisite Brush*

The following discussion explores the extant pictorial record of Liang Kai's 'exquisite brush' technique through a close reading of *Eminent Worthy of the Eastern Fence* 東籬高士圖 (fig. 6.3), which bears Liang's signature. This work depicts the Jin dynasty scholar Tao Yuanming in meticulous brushwork with extensive colouring on silk. It has been preserved through the Qing imperial collection, included in the Qianlong Emperor's 乾隆 (1711-99, r. 1735-96) 1745 catalogue of painting and calligraphy, *Record of Treasures of the Stone Moat* (*Shiqu Baoji* 石渠寶笈), and is currently housed in the National Palace Museum, Taipei.<sup>440</sup> The painting shows the lone figure of Tao Yuanming walking along a path, beneath the evergreen branches of a lofty pine and the autumnal boughs of a deciduous tree. The pictorial protagonist holds a chrysanthemum in his right hand, and a staff in his left. A rustic straw cape is wrapped around his shoulders to ward off cold and rain, while he still wears the gauze headgear of summer to keep away the lingering irritation of flies and biting insects. The path behind him winds away from view round an overhanging rock. Ahead, a stout stone bridge crosses a brook swelled by the autumn rains. Cords from the neck and waist of his loose fitting robe stream out behind him as he makes his way forward. This is 'Tao Yuanming Returning Home' 陶淵明歸去來, a popular painting theme showing the eminent poet leaving office after a brief period of service to the Jin 晉 dynasty, heading back to his rural homestead in a gesture of moral defiance toward the corruption of his day.

The only original inscription found on *Eminent Worthy of the Eastern Fence* is the rapidly dashed signature 'Liang Kai', in the painting's lower right hand corner. The plethora of seal impressions upon the painting surface are of a later date. They predominantly document the ownership and occasions of viewing by the Qianlong Emperor, and also record the work's possession by earlier collectors. It is this provenance of transmission that receives greatest attention in the painting's entry in

---

<sup>440</sup> SQBJ j.38, 5.

the *Record of Treasures of the Stone Moat*.<sup>441</sup> In spite of the signature, this work is a possible rather than definitive product of Liang Kai's own hand, and may be a copy or emulation by a later follower of his style. Nonetheless, the asymmetric composition of the painting, and the technical features of its execution, such as the axe cut strokes (Chinese: *fubicun* 斧劈皴) and subtle use of colour, indicate a Southern Song court context for its production.<sup>442</sup> However, the Qianlong emperor, and presumably the earlier collectors whose seals appear upon the painting surface, accepted the work as an authentic example of Liang's oeuvre. Thus, *Eminent Worthy of the Eastern Fence* can be treated as indicative of an historic ideal of Liang's 'exquisite brush' in Chinese transmission.

Tao Yuanming's return home was a popular subject for the artists of the Song dynasty, rich with potential for allusions to the canonical narrative of this idealised moral exemplar. The *locus classicus* for the depictions of Tao Yuanming Returning Home is in the oeuvre of Li Gonglin 李公麟 (1049-1106), one of the preeminent scholar painters of the Northern Song. Li is believed to have depicted Tao's act of moral fortitude as a visual expression of sympathy and solidarity with his conservative associates, who were recurrently threatened with removal from office by the reformer Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021-1086). Li's work is preserved in an early Yuan copy, currently in the collection of the Freer Gallery of Art.<sup>443</sup> By Liang's time, the image of Tao Yuanming was an established pictorial trope through which artists evoked the ideal of reclusion based on moral rectitude. As a popular subject for visual expression, the creation or possession of such an image did not require the artist or recipient to have actually refused to serve the state. Instead, making, possessing and viewing images of Tao Yuanming were means to performatively participate in the idealisation of reclusion by the scholar official class. One could contribute to an elite construction of cultural identity in word and image without compromising one's position, or even without having been asked to serve as an official in the first place. As noted in the previous chapter, this subject was also inscribed by members of the Chan clergy such as Yanxi Guangwen 偃溪廣聞 (1189-1263). Guangwen's

---

<sup>441</sup> SQBJ j.38, 5.

<sup>442</sup> The attribution is discussed in: Lai and Chen 2008, 166.

<sup>443</sup> The extant copy of Li's painting, as well as Liang's work, are discussed in: Nelson 1998a, 72-4.

*encomium* celebrates the simplicity of Tao's life out of government, indicating the appeal of this ideal of reclusion in simple labours to the self-fashioning of clerical identity.<sup>444</sup> In the absence of a commentarial inscription upon the painting, *Eminent Worthy of the Eastern Fence* speaks in a purely visual language.

The technical execution of this piece fits closely with Xia's ideal of Liang Kai's 'exquisite brush'. The needles of the pine are carefully outlined in thin lines of ink over thicker outlines of green pigment. The overlap of each clump of pine needles imbues the branches with a sense of volume. The colour of these evergreens are deftly contrasted with the rich orange of the deciduous leaves below, highlighting the seasonal properties of the scene. Rapid movements of the brush shape the pointed tips of the pine's branches. The thicker main stems of the tree's limbs receive more extensive treatment, their bark coloured with brownish pigment and textured through outlines in black ink. The main trunk of the pine is expertly modelled in three dimensions, its curvature clarified through the darker ink tones of the bark around its edges. The trunk's twisting upward growth is highlighted by the juxtaposed angles of protruding gnarled knots. Rounded movements of the brush add texture to the bark, contrasted with the sharp, axe cut strokes of the overhanging rock and the boulders in the foreground. The stone formations are drawn in stark outlines, filled in with angular axe cut strokes, modelling typical of the Southern Song academy, discussed above.

The figure of Tao Yuanming is delicately drawn in fine lines, alluding to the gossamer thread strokes of the canonical master of Chinese figure painting Gu Kaizhi 顧愷之 (ca. 344-406). The smooth curved quality of line, and the sharp twists in segments of garments billowing in the wind indicate that *Eminent Worthy of the Eastern Fence* made deliberate allusions to a similar form of antiquarian visual rhetoric. Though the silk surface to the lower left of the figure of Tao Yuanming is slightly damaged and appears to have been repainted, this portion of Tao's drapery is marginal to his overall depiction. Overall, the painting's current condition retains a

---

<sup>444</sup> Guangwen's verse reads as follows: 'Tao Yuanming': Hoeing beanshoots in the morning dew, paying no heed to night and day. Where does this man of leisure come from, who has settled at the foot of the Southern Mountain? 陶淵明：和露鋤豆苗，不覺日又夜。飄然從何來，定在南山下？" YXGWCSYL j.2, in: X.1368.69: 751, a13.

clear illustration of the original brushwork and composition. Tao's face is carefully drawn, with light pigment for his skin tone. The translucent gauze of his summer hat is conveyed through a light ink wash, which creates an opaque layer atop previously painted details. *Eminent Worthy of the Eastern Fence* expresses an archetype of pictorial refinement, embodying the visual qualities of the 'exquisite brush' with which Xia Wenyan was so enamoured.

Xia's archetype of Liang's meticulous mode of brushwork is echoed in a later commentary from the seventeenth century. Ming connoisseur Wu Qizhen's 吳其貞 (1607-after 1673 CE) *Record of Calligraphies and Paintings* (*Shuhua ji* 書畫記) lists a work by Liang Kai, entitled [*Tao*] *Yuanming*. While we cannot be certain this is the same piece now preserved in Taipei, Wu's describes a painting that closely resembles *Eminent Worthy of the Eastern Fence*. Moreover, Wu's comments were included under the collected literature on Liang Kai in the *Record of Paintings from the Southern Song Academy* (*Nansong Yuan Hua Lu* 南宋院畫錄), compiled for the Qing court from 1720-33 by E Li 厲鶚 (1692-1752).<sup>445</sup> In addition to echoing of Xia's praise for Liang's refined and careful brushwork, Wu seems to hold a similarly derisive view of the artist's cursive oeuvre. Alongside Liang's [*Tao*] *Yuanming*, *Record of Calligraphies and Paintings* also lists a work by Liang Kai depicting an *Eminent Monk* 高僧圖, or possibly *Eminent Monks*. Wu dismisses this painting as a coarse emulation of the style of Tang master figure painter Wu Daozi 吳道子 (ca. 680-759). Wu's descriptions of these two paintings read as follows:

Liang Kai: *Yuanming*

Single small painting on silk, depicting [*Tao*] *Yuanming* holding a chrysanthemum, walking beneath a pine tree. It displays a crafted delicacy in its method of painting, its far-reaching vitality making it one of Kai's best works. Seen in the home of my grandnephew when crossing the great river in Jiahe on the fifteenth day of the eleventh month of the *xinmao* year [1651].<sup>446</sup>

---

<sup>445</sup> NSYHL j5, 22.

<sup>446</sup> NSYHL j5, 22.

梁楷湍明圖

小絹畫一幅，寫湍明把菊行松樹下。畫法工緻，精神迥出為楷之上作也。辛卯十一月望日過嘉禾之長水，觀於姪孫于庭家。

Liang Kai: *Eminent Monk*

Single painting on paper. The method of painting is simple and sketchy, in a veiled imitation of Wu Daozi. Family possession of Cheng Zhengyan.<sup>447</sup>

梁楷：高僧圖

紙畫一副。畫法簡畧蓋仿吳道子者。程正言家物。

While Wu's descriptions are terse, and cannot be definitively correlated with any extant works, the enduring conception from Xia to Wu of Liang Kai as a superlative draughtsman, who unfortunately digressed in vulgar expressive modes, is expressly clear. This dichotomous reading of the artist has had an enduring impact on the reception of his artistic legacy in modern scholarship. For example, the absence of this work from the stylistic case study of Liang's abbreviated brush oeuvre by Shan Guoqiang 單國強 and Shan Guolin 單國霖 is indicative of its role in constructing a court identity juxtaposed with the artistic persona of Liang Kai as 'Mad Master Liang'.<sup>448</sup>

When considering *Eminent Worthy of the Eastern Fence*'s choice of media within the extant corpus of Liang Kai attributions, there are immediate parallels with Liang's iconic *Śākyamuni Emerging from the Mountains* (fig. 2.1). Identifiable to Liang's tenure in the painting academy through its signature 'Painted before the emperor, Liang Kai' 御前圖畫:梁楷, *Śākyamuni* provides a bench mark for the evaluation of Liang's academic oeuvre. The two works also have parallels in subject matter, as both images show an historic exemplar moving into or out of reclusion, appealing to both secular and monastic prototypes of exemplary conduct.<sup>449</sup> As noted above, Yanxi Guangwen incorporated the Tao Yuanming theme into his project of self-fashioning

---

<sup>447</sup> NSYHL j5, 22.

<sup>448</sup> Shan and Shan 2004.

<sup>449</sup> This thematic parallel is noted in: Rogers 1983, 18.

through calligraphic commentary on painting. While Guangwen's verse shows clerical interest in a subject linked to moral dimensions of government service, the imperial context of Liang's *Śākyamuni* demonstrates clear court interest in Chan themes. The actions of these two paintings' pictorial protagonists both evoke ideals of reclusion. However, the heterogeneous technical qualities of their execution reveal distinctive models of brushwork within Liang's court oeuvre, or at least the idealised image of this oeuvre received in Chinese transmission. This challenges the presumption that Liang's court painting necessarily conforms to Xia's 'exquisite brush' mode.

As noted in chapter two, Liang's *Śākyamuni* makes sparing use of colour, its only polychrome embellishments found upon the figure of the Buddha, where pigment has been applied exclusively to the verso.<sup>450</sup> The remainder of *Śākyamuni Emerging from the Mountains* is essentially an ink painting, juxtaposing the sacred body of the sage with his environment. By contrast, *Eminent Worthy of the Eastern Fence* makes liberal use of colour in depicting all its subject matter, augmented with dots of turquoise-green pigment across the picture plane that lend the scroll a shimmering effect. These dots are conspicuously positioned upon the surface of the image, appearing across areas of rock, tree and path, and at times spilling out beyond the boundaries of these formal enclosures within the composition. For example, on the overhanging rock above the walking figure we see a smattering of these turquoise dots suspended in mid air, no longer explicable as moss or foliage growing upon a stone surface. The splendid suffusion of embellishment upon *Eminent Worthy of the Eastern Fence* indicates a completely distinct conception of the painting's materiality than seen in *Śākyamuni Emerging from the Mountains*, where potent but focused elements of colour coalesce solely upon the central figure.

The explicit presentation of *Śākyamuni Emerging from the Mountains* to the gaze of the Southern Song Emperor is evident in Liang's signature. By contrast, the Tao Yuanming painting is in a style associated with the visual culture of the court, but lacks the specific description of circumstances of production found on *Śākyamuni*.

---

<sup>450</sup> For a discussion of Liang Kai's *Śākyamuni Emerging from the Mountains* that contextualises this work within the visual narrative allusions of Song and Yuan Chan paintings of this theme, see pages 56-63.

Instead, the scroll documents historic viewings by subsequent emperors and elites of later periods, seen in the multiple seal impressions across the painting's surface.

*Eminent Worthy of the Eastern Fence* illustrates how the ideal of Liang's meticulous brushwork was formed in transmission, as much as in a Southern Song imperial context of creation and reception. This ideal has held an enduring value in Chinese transmission as an embodiment of Liang's academic aesthetic. While there are clear connections between *Eminent Worthy of the Eastern Fence* and Liang's court oeuvre, its exquisite brush style is only one part of the academic styles affiliated with Liang, rather than the whole picture. The following passage explores the interplay of this 'exquisite' aesthetic with Liang's cursive imagery, problematising Xia Wenyan's dichotomous juxtaposition of these two styles, and their perpetuation in later Chinese connoisseurship.

### *The Abbreviated Brush*

Xia Wenyan's contradistinction of Liang Kai's oeuvre, as paintings in either meticulously descriptive brushwork or the cursive 'abbreviated brush' mode, has been presented by modern scholars as a correlative to Liang's biographical narrative. In this popularly espoused account, a change in Liang's environment is equated with a change his artistic style. Liang's time at the imperial painting academy is associated with works striving for mimetic description. His period of eccentricity, assumed to be spent in the monasteries around the Southern Song capital of Lin'an, is paired with his kinetic monochrome paintings.<sup>451</sup> As the above comparison of *Eminent Worthy of the Eastern Fence* and *Śākyamuni Emerging from the Mountains* has sought to illustrate, meticulously drawn and lavishly coloured images are only partially representative of Liang's oeuvre of academic attributions. The image of Liang Kai as a meticulous court painter has been augmented by the commentaries generated around the Chinese transmission of his attributions. What then of Liang's abbreviated brush, and its associations with Chan circles?

---

<sup>451</sup> This biographical narrative for Liang Kai that correlates a meticulous painting style with his academic training, and equates his expressive abbreviated brush style with a later loose affiliation to Chan temples can be seen in: Brinker and Kanazawa 1996, 126.

The strongest evidence of Liang's direct associations with the monastic communities of the Southern Song capital is in his few extant paintings featuring *encomia* by Chan clerics. The only example of a painting by Liang Kai with a clerical *encomium* encountered in the course of this research project is a hanging scroll depicting the monk Budai 布袋, inscribed by Dachuan Puji 大川普濟 (1197-1253). Formerly in the collection of the Ashikaga Shogun Yoshimitsu 足利義滿 (1358-1408, r. 1368-94), Liang's *Budai* is currently housed in the Kōsetsu Museum of Art (fig. 6.8). Further examples may exist in private or monastic collections in Japan. Puji's final two abbacies were at the Southern Song capital of Lin'an, at Jingci Baoen Guangxiao monastery 淨慈報恩光孝寺, on Southern Curtain Mountain 南屏山, and at the Jingde Lingyin Chan monastery 景德靈隱禪寺, North Mountain 北山.<sup>452</sup> Though Puji's *encomium* on Liang's *Budai* does not identify a site at which either the painting or calligraphy were produced, it is most probable that Puji encountered Liang either directly, or received the painting through an intermediary in early thirteenth century Lin'an.

While there is a paucity of extant works by Liang Kai with *encomia* by Chan clerics, Liang's surviving oeuvre includes several uninscribed paintings depicting figures from the Chan pantheon. If positioned within Xia's dichotomy of Liang's brush modes, the majority of Liang's extant depictions of Chan subjects fall into the abbreviated camp, produced with rapid strokes in ink on paper. *Śākyamuni Emerging from the Mountains* is a notable exception, incorporating striking use of colour into an elaborate composition on silk. The following discussion explores two prominent examples of this correlation of Liang's abbreviated brush style with Chan figural subjects: *The Sixth Patriarch Chopping Bamboo* 六祖截竹圖 (fig. 6.1), and *The Sixth Patriarch Tearing up Sūtras* 六祖破經圖 (fig. 6.2).

Textual records of *The Sixth Patriarch Chopping Bamboo* 六祖截竹圖 (fig. 6.1), and *The Sixth Patriarch Tearing up Sūtras* in Japanese collections can be traced back to the Muromachi period 室町時代 (1392-1573). The painting's possession by the Ashikaga Shogun Yoshimitsu is indicated by the impression of his personal *dōyū* 道

---

<sup>452</sup> DCPJCSYL, in X.1369.69.



有 seal on both works.<sup>453</sup> This early documentation, alongside viable signatures and an expressive technique correlating to Xia's description of Liang's abbreviated brush mode, supports the authenticity of this diptych as an original pair of paintings by Liang Kai. Thus, the diptych is an ideal focus for the discussion of the relationship between Liang's technical approach and the religious purport of the paintings' subject matter. Both *The Sixth Patriarch Chopping Bamboo*, and *The Sixth Patriarch Tearing up Sutras*, lend potent visual expressions to Chan ideals. Their iconographic content correlates to the rhetorical construction of Chan as an anti-textual tradition, explored in chapter four in relation to Chan's distinctive ideal of sudden awakening (*dunwu* 頓悟). Without making specific reference to events recorded in a textual prototype, the actions represented in these paintings correlate with the celebration of anti-textuality and prevalence of manual labour in the Sixth Patriarch Huineng's 慧能 (638–713) hagiography. In *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* (*Liuzu Tanjing* 六祖壇經), when the illiterate Huineng was named as the fifth patriarch Hongren's 弘忍 (601–674) successor he was working in the threshing room of the monastery on Fengmu Shan 馮墓山.<sup>454</sup>

*The Sixth Patriarch Tearing up Sūtras* is a violent visual expression of these rhetorical anti-textual sentiments in Chan Buddhism. Liang's painting uses sharp, angular strokes in rapid linear movements to construct Huineng's garments that trail out behind him. These linear forms contrast with the more abrasive textures of Huineng's hair and beard, which in turn match the needles of an overhanging pine branch, rapidly dashed across the painting surface. Such parallels indicate why Xia's use of the established convention of likening a cursive style of painting to plant matter was such an effective mode of description. However, further to these generic allusions to cursive modes of brushwork, Liang has imbued the painting with a dramatic tension in capturing ongoing action. Huineng's raised finger and open mouth indicate speech that explicitly supplants the role of the torn and discarded *sūtras* in his hands and at his feet. The intensity of the gesture is amplified by Liang's attention to

---

<sup>453</sup> For a short discussion of the paintings' provenance in English, see: Little 2014, 2. For lengthier analysis in Japanese, see: Higuchi 2014.

<sup>454</sup> Yampolsky and Schlütter 2012, 128, 二.

descriptive detail, showing the creases in the folds of the page as Huineng's left hand grasps the torn text in a moment of gleeful biblioclastic reverie.

*The Sixth Patriarch Tearing up Sūtras* is an amplified expression of the Chan lineage's rhetorical claims to a distinctive mode of patriarchal transmission, distinguished by its claims to supersede the authority of the written word. As discussed in chapter four, the ideal of an extra-textual route to awakening was of performative value for the senior Chan clerics of the period, illustrating the efficacy of their pedagogical practice. Two phrases frequently used to express this sentiment are: 'a transmission outside the teachings' (*jiaowai biechuan* 教外別傳), and 'not setting up words' (*buli wenzi* 不立文字).<sup>455</sup> Liang's use of visual commentary to critique the function of text as a route to awakening, juxtaposed with an act of manual labour, has a clear parallel in the popular paired Chan painting theme of 'Reading a Sūtra by Moonlight' (fig. 6.9) and 'Mending Clothes in the Morning Sun' (fig. 6.10) 對月朝陽. In the standard composition of the first of these two image types, a monk is depicted straining his eyes to read the text of a sūtra under the dim light of the moon. The painted scene is frequently accompanied an abbot's clerical *encomium* in the upper register, commenting on the frustrations that accompany this process. Paintings of 'Reading a Sūtra by Moonlight' demonstrate an acute awareness of painting's potential for reflexive commentary on Chan's rhetorical rebuttal of the authority of text. They combine the clerical commentary upon the painting with images of a monk confounded by an impenetrable meta-text, implicitly paralleling the experiences of the pictorial subject and the scroll's viewer.

While images of 'Reading a Sūtra by Moonlight', offer parallel examples of visual commentary on text's limited capacity to convey awakening, Liang's *The Sixth Patriarch Tearing up Sūtras* takes a more dramatic approach to this theme. The image of a canonical figure in the Chan lineage gleefully destroying a sacred text deploys a powerful biblioclastic visual rhetoric, with unabashed shock value. Earlier incorporations of sūtras into Buddhist iconography had stressed not only their sanctity

---

<sup>455</sup> The early interconnected use of these phrases as part of Chan's hagiographic self representation in the 10<sup>th</sup> century *Patriarch Hall Record* (*Zutang ji* 祖堂記) are discussed in: Foulk 1999, 238-40.

as the canonical texts, but also their numinous properties as the physical embodiment of the words of the Buddha. In a painting by twelfth century artist Zhou Jichang 周季常 (act. second half of 12<sup>th</sup> century), a group of *arhats* demonstrate the efficacy of the bibliographic manifestation of the Buddha's teachings over the sacred texts of Daoist priests in a trial by fire (fig. 6.11).<sup>456</sup> While the Daoist scrolls are consumed by the flames, the Buddhist *sūtras* remain unharmed, emanating rays of golden light to underscore the miraculous nature of the event. The Buddhist texts occupy an axial position in Zhou's composition, comparable to the central deity in frontal presentations of Buddhist icons (fig. 2.13). In Zhou's image, the physical object of the canonical record of Śākyamuni's teachings is equated with the presence of the Buddha. By contrast, in Liang Kai's painting, the implicit efficacy of the patriarch's bodily action supplants the *sūtras*' function as a route to enlightenment. As the agent of their destruction, and the focus of the iconic moment of the painting, Liang's Huineng expresses an alternate mode of elevated understanding through antinomian behaviour.

While Huineng's destruction of sacred text does not have an exact corollary in the Sixth Patriarch's hagiography, Liang's iconic presentation of this act of biblioclasm has precedent in Chan hagiographic references to iconoclasm. It echoes a famous incident from the biography of Danxia Tianran 丹霞天然 (739-824), represented in the later work of the Yuan monk painter Yintuoluo (fig. 3.4).<sup>457</sup> The painting shows Tianran burning an image of the Buddha to keep warm while a guest at the Huilin monastery 慧林寺. In Yintuoluo's work another monk challenges Tianran over his actions, to which Tianran responds that he is burning the Buddha to obtain the relics left after cremation. When the monk objects that it is impossible to obtain relics from

---

<sup>456</sup> This set of paintings was produced between 1178 and 1188 for a Tiantai Buddhist monastery near Fujian. The circumstances of their production are discussed in: Fong and Metropolitan Museum of Art 1992, 343-5. While ten of this set of 100 scrolls are now in North American Museum collections, eight in Boston and two in the Freer Gallery of Art, the majority remain in the Daitokuji monastery in Kyoto. The Five Hundred Arhats' modern history of separation between Japan and the USA is the subject of the final chapter of Gregory Levine's monograph on the Daitokuji: Levine 2005, 287-314.

<sup>457</sup> This painting is explored as part of an in depth analysis of the definition and delineation of the historic genre of 'Chan Encounter Paintings' (*Chanhui tu* 禪會圖) in: Shimizu 1980, 8.

an image, Tianran offers a pointed rejoinder, asking what then is the problem with burning this Buddha image!<sup>458</sup>

Like the pairing of ‘Reading a *Sūtra* by Moonlight’ (fig. 6.9) with the manual labour of ‘Mending Clothes in the Morning Sun’, Liang’s diptych pairs a pictorial commentary on the merits of not relying on the written word with an image of a mundane task. *The Sixth Patriarch Chopping Bamboo* shows Huineng suspended in a visual moment pregnant with potential. His right knee is turned out from his body to counter balance the coming blow from the machete held in his right hand. The patriarch’s eye focuses on a point just above the join between the second and third segment of the bamboo, where the stem has least flexibility. The bamboo is resting at a slight diagonal, to allow for an oblique cut with the machete that will not get lodged in the vertical fibres of the plant. Liang’s splayed brush describes the patriarch’s bristling hair and beard, and sharp angular strokes shape the folds in Huineng’s garments. The trunk of the adjacent tree is depicted in rapid, dry strokes. As in *The Sixth Patriarch Tearing Up Sutras*, the cursive depiction of organic matter shows the suitability of Xia Wenyan’s use of an established botanical metaphor to describe Liang’s abbreviated brushwork. Though cursive, the pictorial moment is not a loosely described, amateur treatment of the visual moment. Liang’s abbreviation cuts away extraneous trappings to leave only the key components of a complex action. Liang has very deliberately instrumentalised the body of the patriarch, drawing conspicuous attention to Huineng’s impending bodily movement. Paired with the tearing up of *sūtras*, in which the patriarch is similarly animated through a tense description of his emphatic gesture and open mouth, Liang’s diptych makes a clear point of the iconic quality of exemplars’ deeds.

---

<sup>458</sup> The *Song Biographies of Eminent Monks*’ account of the encounter reads: “Later on reaching the Huiling monastery it was freezing cold, so [Tian]ran burnt the wooden image of the Buddha. Objecting [to his treatment] of the image, people chastised him. [Tianran] responded that he was conducting a cremation to obtain the relics. [The people at the monastery] responded: “How can there be [relics] in wood? [Tian]ran then replied: “If that’s the way of things, why scold me?” 後於慧林寺遇大寒，然乃焚木佛。像以禦之，人或譏之。曰：吾茶毘舍利。曰：木頭何有。然曰：若爾者，何責我乎？SGSZ, j.11, in: T.2061.5:, 773, b25-27.

While the meaning of the biblioclasm in *The Sixth Patriarch Tearing up Sūtras* is relatively explicit, the significance of *The Sixth Patriarch Chopping Bamboo* is somewhat opaque. An often commented upon interpretation of the action is that it represents the moment of Huineng's awakening, prompted by the auditory stimulus of the machete striking the resonant hollow bamboo.<sup>459</sup> This synaesthetic evocation of a moment of awakening through visual allusion to the resonant capacity of bamboo mirrors the awakening narrative of the Tang monk Xiangyan Zhixian 香巖智閑 (799-898/9). Zhixian is depicted in the fourth scene of *Eight Eminent Monks*, a painting signed by Liang Kai in the Shanghai Museum discussed below and in chapter four (fig. 6.6e).<sup>460</sup> While there is precedent for this type of action within the corpus of the Chan canon, Huineng's hagiography offers no account of an awakening when chopping bamboo. Instead *The Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch* recounts his enlightenment occurring after hearing an oral teaching on the *Diamond Sūtra* by the fifth patriarch Hongren.<sup>461</sup> Nonetheless, a seventeenth century Japanese response to Liang Kai's painting recounts Huineng's awakening as a response to the sonic stimulus of cutting bamboo. This an interpretation is expressed in an *encomium* by Zen cleric Takuan Sōhō 沢庵 宗彭 (1573-1645) upon a copy of Liang's composition, signed by Japanese artist Kano Tan'yū 狩野 探幽 (1602-1674) (fig. 6.7).<sup>462</sup> Sōhō's verse opens with the following couplet:

One strike of a knife vanquishes all thoughts,  
Green jade of bamboo scattered over the earth, mountains, and rivers.<sup>463</sup>

一刀兩斷沒商量，大地山河撒碧琅。

Sōhō's verse explicitly cites the act of cutting the bamboo as a stimulus for awakening, in a compelling extension of Liang's visual drama into a specific religious

---

<sup>459</sup> Fontein and Hickman 1970, 17.

<sup>460</sup> For a discussion of the Zhixian scene from *Eight Eminent Monks*, and the role of visual narrative and related hagiographies in shaping Chan ideals of sudden awakening embodied in historic exemplars, see chapter four, pages 149-158.

<sup>461</sup> Yampolsky and Schlütter 2012, 132-3, 四—五.

<sup>462</sup> For a brief outline of this painting's content, situating it within the backgrounds of the artist and inscribers careers, see: Metropolitan Museum of Art 2008.

<sup>463</sup> Translation from: Metropolitan Museum of Art 2006.

teaching on Huineng's enlightenment. Tan'yū's painting is far more liquid than its prototype, the strokes are a wet amalgamation of fluid forms coalescing into a blurred representation of the patriarch's body. A similarly liquid quality can be seen in Chinese works from Japanese collections, traditionally attributed to Liang Kai, exemplified by *Budai Watching Fighting Cockerels* 布袋雞骨圖 in the collection of the Fukuoka Art Museum (fig. 6.12). The technical qualities of *Budai Watching Fighting Cockerels* make its association with Liang Kai quite problematic. The painting shows an almost uniform dark saturation in the tonality of ink for the figure of Budai, contrasted with the opacity of the fighting cockerels. This dualistic juxtaposition of ink tones makes a more pointed contrast of tonality than seen in more stable attributions to Liang Kai, likely reflecting an interpretation of Liang's abbreviated brush by a Yuan follower of his style.<sup>464</sup>

There is a basis for interpreting liquid ink-play as a significant form of abbreviation within the image of Liang constructed through Chinese transmission, seen in the fluid forms of the *Splashed Ink Immortal* 潑墨仙人圖 in the collection of the National Palace Museum (fig. 6.13). In his lecture series 'A Pure and Remote View', the late James Cahill acknowledges the *Splashed Ink Immortal's* spontaneous use of ink, but also notes its lack of defined structure. In the context of this informal lecture he describes the *painting* as "not remotely up to the level of the ones in Japan which are really done by Liang Kai". While Taiwanese scholar Yan Yamei 嚴雅美 has written a spirited defence of the painting's proximity to Liang Kai through comparisons to his other attributions, asserting that "this work is not a copy, but must be the product of one of Liang's immediate followers", Cahill's appraisal illustrates the ongoing contestation of its authenticity.<sup>465</sup>

While there is precedent in some of the extant attributions to Liang Kai for Tan'yū's cultivated aesthetic of reduced mark making, the Kano painter's brush edits out the crisp details of bodily action that characterise his explicit prototype. In Liang's *Sixth Patriarch Chopping Bamboo* the plant's stalk is positioned at an astutely observed

---

<sup>464</sup> The identification of this work as the product of a Yuan follower of Liang, and its significance as a prototype for Miyamoto Musashi's 宮本 武蔵 (1584-1645) depiction of the same subject is discussed in: Itsuō Bijutsukan and Fukuoka-shi Bijutsukan 2013, 46.

<sup>465</sup> Cahill 2010-2014; Yan 2000, 75.

angle, showing both familiarity and concern with the spatial and physical dynamics of the act his brush was describing. Tan'yū's bamboo stands straight upright. Instead of focusing on the dynamics of movement in the scene it leads the viewer's eye toward Sōhō's lyrical commentary on the pictorial action. Both Tan'yū's painting and Sōhō's verse offer compelling commentaries of significant value for understanding later Japanese reception of Liang's oeuvre. However, for the art historian of Song China, Sōhō's and Tan'yū's text and image are extrapolations that depart from the evidence available from Liang's earlier work.

While we cannot be certain that the pictorial action of *The Sixth Patriarch Chopping Bamboo* was intended to represent a moment of profound spiritual transformation, we can safely assert that the diptych is an articulate visual expression of Chan's self representation as an extra-textual lineage. By pairing the mundane labours of Huineng chopping bamboo with the dramatic gesture of the destruction of canonical texts, Liang created a visual equivalence between these two types of action. This elevates the mundane chopping of bamboo into a visual discourse over the purpose of a spiritual life, and the mechanisms through which one develops as a religious practitioner. In short, whether or not the specific moment the painted Huineng cuts the bamboo is read as an auditory stimulus for awakening, this menial task of manual labour is presented as an integral part of the conduct of an elevated spiritual exemplar.

In both *The Sixth Patriarch Tearing up Sutras* and *The Sixth Patriarch Chopping Bamboo* the cursive quality of the paintings' brushwork belies the complexity of their pictorial modelling. This combination of technical detail and accomplishment with cultivated brevity reveals a more complex image of Liang Kai's output than is implied in Xia Wenyan's dichotomous distinction of Liang's abbreviated and exquisite brush modes. The diptych's integration of complex movement into condensed form captures significant modes of action, in one case a potent symbolic gesture, and in the other a mundane domestic task, pregnant with potential. In pairing these acts together, Liang creates a visual equivalence between the mundane and the profound. Though there are no hagiographic precedents for these specific incidents, the visual rhetoric of their construction corresponds closely to the recurrent emphasis on dramatic gesture and posture in figure paintings of Chan figural subjects from the period. As discussed in earlier chapters, these conventions for the depiction of a pantheon in motion create a

visual culture that stresses charismatic action over iconic stasis. The available evidence on Liang's painting does not permit us to apply Sōhō's reading of Huineng's labours as an experience of awakening for the Southern Song context of Liang's original. Lacking any interpretive intercession from clerical *encomia*, *The Sixth Patriarch Tearing up Sutras* and *The Sixth Patriarch Chopping Bamboo* can be read within a visual tradition of allusions to exemplary models of behaviour, prevalent in thirteenth and fourteenth century China. While Tan'yū's copy shows how later artists interpreted Liang's abbreviation through a reduction of descriptive detail, Liang Kai's diptych was dependent upon its carefully observed representation of action for the construction of meaning. *The Sixth Patriarch Tearing up Sutras* and *The Sixth Patriarch Chopping Bamboo* use a distinctively abbreviated but descriptive visual language to identify exemplary Chan actions and insights with unassuming circumstances. They correspond to the themes of a wide corpus of Chan narratives, familiar to the paintings' medieval Chinese viewers, without necessarily needing an explicit hagiographic prototype for the visual moment.

### *The Copyists Brush*

The shared cursive style, monochrome media and hanging scroll format of Liang Kai's *Sixth Patriarch Chopping Bamboo*, and *Sixth Patriarch Tearing up Sūtras* is consistent with the broader corpus of his extant depiction of Chan subjects preserved in Japan. However, there is a smaller body of extant material preserved through Chinese transmission, which illustrates an alternative conception of Liang Kai's Chan oeuvre. Foremost among the corpus of Chan works associated with Liang in Chinese collections is the long handscroll *Eight Eminent Monks*, held in the Shanghai Museum.<sup>466</sup> This painting is executed in ink and colours upon silk. Its eight separate scenes each show an exemplary monk, the majority of whom can be identified with the Chan tradition, if not to a specific lineage. The second, third and fifth scenes are signed 'Liang Kai', the signatures embedded within the composition upon the surfaces of rocks and trees. The painted scenes are followed by unsigned calligraphic prose inscriptions, which provide textual narratives to accompany the preceding

---

<sup>466</sup> An album leaf of Budai in the collection of the Shanghai Museum is a notable further examples of a Chan affiliated subjects attributed to Liang Kai preserved in Chinese collections, (fig. 6.14).



pictorial action. Some of these texts are quoted directly from hagiographic compendia, while others are either original compositions, or reproduce excerpts from now lost versions of the exemplars' hagiographies. The inscriptions accompanying these paintings have been transcribed and translated in the list of illustrations for this chapter. Where a hagiographic prototype for the text has been identified it has been cited.

The range of subjects in *Eight Eminent Monks* is an exceptional resource for the study of Song and Yuan Chan visual culture. Some scenes contain what appear to be the only extant examples of Song-Yuan period depictions of their subjects. For example, the scene of Xiangyan Zhixian is the only Chinese rendition of that subject encountered in this project's research on visual narratives of sudden awakening.<sup>467</sup> Likewise, the scene showing the monk Yuanze and scholar Li Yuan's encounter with a pregnant woman is also a rare example of its subject. While there are other extant works showing Yuanze reborn as a young ox-herd, the depiction of Yuanze as an old monk is not so widely reproduced.<sup>468</sup> The further six scenes in *Eight Eminent Monks* show patriarchs familiar from other Chan figure paintings, or preserve rare, possibly unique, representations of subjects marginal to the Chan pantheon.

In many Chinese language publications on Liang Kai, *Eight Eminent Monks* is treated as exemplary of his early oeuvre. The value placed on this work is attested both in scholarly discussions of the painting, and in the formats of their publication. Volumes on Liang Kai published in Mainland China frequently feature a scene from *Eight Eminent Monks* as a cover image (fig. 6.15-6.16).<sup>469</sup> Published opinion upon this work presents a consensus that it is an early example of Liang Kai's oeuvre, developing an approach to Chan subject matter that sits between his courtly aesthetic and abbreviated brush mode.<sup>470</sup> The following discussion offers an alternative reading of this painting, suggesting that it is most likely a late thirteenth or fourteenth century

---

<sup>467</sup> Discussed in chapter four, see pages, 149-158.

<sup>468</sup> Discussed in chapter three, see pages 124-131.

<sup>469</sup> Shan and Shan 2004, 6-7, 96-7, Xie 1986.

<sup>470</sup> For a concise initial study of *Eight Eminent Monks* and its subject matter in Chinese, which asserts the authenticity of the piece, see Fraser 2010, 212. A more in-depth study by Fraser was forthcoming in *Arts Asiatiques* at the time of this thesis' submission for examination, but was not available for consultation in preparing this research.

work that seeks to emulate Liang's style. This proposal will be explored in three stages. First, a comparative analysis of the technical execution of drapery in *Eight Eminent Monks* and Liang's *Śākyamuni Emerging from the Mountains* aims to show that the Shanghai scroll is the work of a copyist or later emulator. Second, this discussion illustrates two of *Eight Eminent Monks*' hagiographic excerpts which correlate with prototypes that post-date Liang's career. The third section of this analysis explores similarities in form and function between *Eight Eminent Monks* and Yuan didactic narrative handscrolls, exemplified by the anonymous *Four Acts of Filial Piety* 四孝圖, in the collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei (fig. 6.17). This combination of visual, lexographic, and contextual analysis of *Eight Eminent Monks* aims to problematise readings of the work as a painting from Liang Kai's early oeuvre. As an alternative to this interpretation, the following discussion highlights *Eight Eminent Monks*' exceptional value in illustrating a posthumous ideal of Liang's artistic practice, perpetuated and developed in China over the century after his death.

*Eight Eminent Monks* opens with the first patriarch Bodhidharma, gazing at the wall of the Shaoshi 少室岩 cliff at the Shaolin 少林寺 monastery (fig. 6.6b). As the scene unfolds we see the future second patriarch Huike 慧可 (487-593), at this stage still known as the monk Shengguang 神光. The scene is followed by an excerpt from the hagiographic narrative of this encounter between Bodhidharma and his disciple. The text corresponds with the reported speech of a dialogue between the two protagonists from Bodhidharma's biography in the *Jingde Era Record of the Transmission of the Lamp* (*Jingde Chuangdeng lu* 景德傳燈錄).<sup>471</sup> As discussed in chapter three, this encounter between Bodhidharma and Shengguang was of crucial importance to Song and Yuan Chan's hagiographic narrative of lineage transmission, making it a highly suitable image with which to open this serial representation of selected exemplars from the Chan pantheon.<sup>472</sup>

---

<sup>471</sup> JDCDL, j3 T.2076.51: 219, b20-23.

<sup>472</sup> For further examples of this subject, and a discussion of the textual versions of these events see pages 109-120.

The technical execution of *Eight Eminent Monks*' first scene provides an informative insight into the probable attribution of the work. The lower hem of Bodhidharma's red robe is spread out across the rock upon which he sits in meditation. The edges of the garment curve and pool with the fluid movements of the brush. However, when examined against the expert control of line seen in Liang's *Śākyamuni Emerging from the Mountains*, the draughtsmanship of the *Eight Eminent Monks* Bodhidharma's robe shows certain shortcomings. In Liang's *Śākyamuni*, the modelling of the body under the garment and the sense of its position in space are expertly drawn. A cold wind wraps the cloth around the Buddha's right thigh, the pooling of the fabric illustrated by the line's increased thickness at the apex of each curve between Śākyamuni's legs. By contrast the lower hem of Bodhidharma's robe appears suspended above the surface of the rock on which it rests. There is no visible integration of the edge of the garment into its surrounding space. Moreover, the red outlines of the folds in Bodhidharma's garment extend beyond the border of the hem at several points (fig. 3.11). While only a minor slip of the hand, it is not consistent with the level of control seen in the preparatory fine line drawing by academic painters of Liang's standard. Absent from *Eight Eminent Monks*, this technical mastery of line, and an acute awareness of its potential to convey a body in space, is seen in both *Śākyamuni Emerging from the Mountains* and the two paintings of the Sixth Patriarch discussed above.

The discrepancy between the technical accomplishment of *Eight Eminent Monks*, and Liang's recognised original works such as *Śākyamuni Emerging from the Mountains*, is often explained by listing the former among Liang's early oeuvre. However, there is no contextual evidence to support such an argument in a dated colophon or an identifiable seal upon *Eight Eminent Monks*. Moreover, as discussed in chapter four, the text accompanying scene four's depiction of Xiangyan Zhixian's is a verbatim reproduction of an excerpt from the *Collated Essentials of the Five Lamps* (*Wudeng Huiyuan* 五燈會元) of 1252.<sup>473</sup> This direct correspondence indicates that *Eight Eminent Monks* post-dates Liang's early career by over half a century.

---

<sup>473</sup> For Xiangyan Zhixian's biography, see: WDHY j.9, X1565.80: 190, c24-191.

The seventh scene's depiction of the narrative of the awakening of Louzi Heshang 樓子和尚 (Master Tavern Monk) also has a hagiographic prototype in the *Collated Essentials of the Five Lamps*, rather than in earlier texts such as the *Jingde Record* (fig. 6.6h). However, the prose inscription accompanying the Louzi scene expands upon the *Collated Essentials of the Five Lamps* prototype, adding specific details of the monk's geographic origins and family and given names that were declared unknown in the 1252 record.<sup>474</sup> The text accompanying the *Eight Eminent Monks* Louzi is therefore possibly an original composition, which has incorporated further details as the Louzi narrative was augmented over time. Alternatively, it may replicate the text of another iteration of the Louzi narrative from an expanded compendium, even later than the 1252 *Collated Essentials of the Five Lamps*.

The painted scene depicts the monk prostrating before a tavern. The edge of the drinking den's ground floor wall is just visible at the top right of the composition, next to its banner that blows in the wind toward Louzi by the base of two trees. The monk is venerating the tavern, as he has just overheard a line from a ballad sung by one of the patrons, which has stimulated a profound religious insight. Two passers by turn to stare at Louzi in confusion. The accompanying prose offers the following narrative:

The given name of the monk Tavern Master was Shan. He was a native of Jinpingjiang, and a member of the Yang clan. Early in his life he idled about in markets and towns. One day, hearing the *dharma* in the Chengtian temple led him to a realisation. He immediately entered the monastery and accepted full ordination. [Once] stumbling upon a tavern he heard someone singing: "As you are so heartless, I give up." Prostrating himself before the tavern he said: "If it were not for this tavern, then I would not have understood this matter!"

---

<sup>474</sup> WDHY J.6, in: X.1565.80: 138, c8-10. For a full translation see appendix 6.1.

樓子和尚名善，津平江人，姓楊氏。初浮浪於肆市，一日至承天寺聆法，有省，即出家受具。偶至酒樓聞歌，曰：「你既無心我便休！」樓前拜云：「非此樓則不知有此事。」

In Louzi's *Collated Essentials of the Five Lamps* hagiography, this event is explicitly identified as a stimulus for sudden awakening. Having achieved this transformation through the sonic stimulus of a song from a tavern, he is thus known as Tavern Master (Louzi). Listed in the *Collated Essentials of the Five Lamps* as an 'unspecified dharma heir' (*weixiang fasi* 未詳法嗣), alongside the monk *Yushanzhu* 郁山主 (act. 11<sup>th</sup> century), Louzi's awakening is not linked to any pedagogical relationship.<sup>475</sup> Nonetheless, it conforms to the Chan ideal of awakenings occurring through extra-textual stimuli, in unexpected places. In this case, it is the double entendre of the ballad that prompts the awakening. The line "As you are so heartless, I give up," could also translate as, "as you lack defiled thought, I can take my ease." The *Eight Eminent Monks* scene directs Louzi's gaze toward the tavern, the source of his awakening. However, the structure is not made visible to the painting's viewer. The accompanying and associated texts tell the scroll's audience that the activity in the tavern has stimulated Louzi's awakening. Yet, like the adjacent figures in the composition, the viewer's attention is drawn to Louzi's eccentric actions at the centre of the scene. As he bows toward the tavern that sits just above the picture plane, this eccentric monk's awareness both literally and figuratively transcends the borders of the audience's perception.

The dating of the textual prototype for the Zhixian scene to the 1252 *Collated Essentials of the Five Lamps*, and the elaboration of a narrative prototype from the same text in the Louzi scene, undermine the identification of *Eight Eminent Monks* with an early thirteenth century date. The following discussion explores an alternative dating for the work to the Yuan period, based on a comparative analysis with the anonymous Yuan dynasty narrative handscroll painting *Four Acts of Filial Piety*. Both works are in ink and colours on silk, showing serial narrative scenes followed by unsigned section of prose. They are drawn in a similar deft and meticulous hand, but

---

<sup>475</sup> For a discussion of visual and textual versions of Yushanzhu's narrative of sudden awakening, see chapter four, pages 159-70.

do not match Liang Kai's virtuoso brushwork seen in either *Śākyamuni Emerging from the Mountains* or *The Sixth Patriarch* diptych. Further to their technique and format, *Eight Eminent Monks* and *Four Acts of Filial Piety* share a common theme in their subject matter. Both paintings serialise exemplary narratives on idealised conduct of historic exemplars.<sup>476</sup> Their similarities in style, format, and subject matter indicate these two works date from approximately the same period of the late thirteenth to fourteenth century.

The common narrative functions of the two scrolls can be seen in a comparison of two scenes: the *Louzi* scene from *Eight Eminent Monks*, and *Wang Xiang and the Fish in the Ice* 王祥冰魚 from *Four Acts of Filial Piety* (figs. 6.17b-c). Both paintings describe stories from earlier dynasties, canonised in textual narratives. The texts which follow the visual narratives both appear to be original compositions adapted from hagiographic prototypes, though it is also possible that exact correlations with external texts recording these versions of the narratives will emerge through later research. The textual narrative alongside *Wang Xiang and the Fish in the Ice* frames the protagonist as a paradigm of filial conduct, recounting Wang's self-sacrifice in providing for his mother. The inscription presents the story in prose as follows. Wang's ill mother expresses a desire for carp to cure her sickness. In the depth of winter, Wang makes his way to the local lake, where he is unable to break the ice. Imploring heaven and weeping, he lies on the ice in a vain attempt to melt it with the heat of his body. In response to his filial conduct, the ice breaks, and two carp leap out of their own accord, which cure his mother's ailment once eaten. The narrative is then summarised in verse.<sup>477</sup>

The core message of the Wangxiang scene is that such filial self-sacrifice elicits a spontaneous response from the natural world. This reciprocal responsiveness of heaven to the acts of man (*tianren ganying* 天人感應) was part of a cosmic world-

<sup>476</sup> Clarissa von Spee discusses the didactic elevation of filial self sacrifice as an exemplary model in a scene from *Four Acts of Filial Piety*, showing figures reading a stele commemorating Cao E 曹娥 (d. 108). While the figures read how Cao E threw herself into a river to retrieve the body of her drowned father Caoyu 曹盱, the ghost of Cao E looks on: von Spee, 221-3.

<sup>477</sup> For a full transcription and translation of the inscription, see notes accompanying fig 6.17c.

view, in which the moral dimension of human actions were believed to elicit spontaneous responses from the natural world. In this case, Heaven's response to Wang's actions was the gift of the carp, compelled to leap from the water by his tears. Like the Louzi narrative in *Eight Eminent Monks*, the Wangxiang scene provides a framework to venerate an abstract ideal. In the Wangxiang scene that ideal is the demonstrable benefits of filial conduct. The Louzi scene is more enigmatic, extolling the efficacy of Chan awakening in one of its more idiosyncratic manifestations.

Though the subject matter of their respective narratives differ, both paintings use a common structure of visual language to highlight the significance of a single moment in illustrating their central ideal. The *Eight Eminent Monks* scene depicts Louzi in the moment immediately after his transformative awakening. He kneels before the tavern, hands clasped, and eyes looking upward toward the source of his transformation. The pictorial narrative in the Wang Xiang scenes is centred on the moment of Heaven's response to Wang's filial piety. The protagonist lies semi-naked upon the frozen lake, turning towards the carp as they emerge from the cracked ice. The artists have also included onlookers for both events, adding to the theatricality of each scene through the presence of an audience. In the Wangxiang scene, the bystanders' reverent gestures dictate how the viewer should respond to the image in the painting. The inclusion of Daoists, Confucian officials, and passing tradesmen stresses that this expectation of reverence was universally applicable to all creeds and classes. The icy wind shown through the movement of the branches emphasises the extremity of Wang Xiang's self-sacrifice and therefore the depth of his filial piety, deploying an image absent from the textual narrative. Moreover, the wind's movement away from Wang and toward the gathered onlookers also focuses the composition on Wang's action, as the wind appears to emanate from his prostrate figure. In the Louzi scene the audience is more perplexed than awed. Two well-dressed gentlemen turn to look at this odd cleric, bowing before a house of sin. The pointing figure has his back to the viewer, while his companion arches his eyebrows and purses his lips in a moment of utter confusion at this inexplicable behaviour. Their incomprehension serves as a reminder to the viewer that the Chan lineage and pantheon may appear eccentric, but that eccentricity often conceals profound insights.

*Louzi Heshang* and *Wangxiang and the Fish in the Ice* both illustrate paradigms of ideal action through a symbolically charged scene, contextualised by an adjacent text. The ideologies that underpin these two works are dramatically different. One advocates the potential for spiritual awakening in unexpected circumstances, and the other venerates conspicuous feats of filial self-sacrifice. However, the paintings' common media, techniques, formats and approaches to visual narrative locate them in a common system of making and viewing paintings. This parallel of both form and function illustrates the role Chan figure painting played in the development of thirteenth to fourteenth century Chinese narrative painting. The inclusion of Liang Kai's signatures on three of the scenes in the scroll illustrates the cultural capital attached to his name in this period. Thus, *Eight Eminent Monks* illustrates a sustained interest in Liang's Chan oeuvre in the century after his death, preserving possibly unique Song-Yuan period representations of Chan narrative subjects such as Zhixian and Louzi.

### *Conclusions*

The preceding discussion has problematised the binary division of Liang Kai's painting modes into meticulous court works, and expressive Chan painting processes, illustrating how a binary conception of Liang's oeuvre was formed through historic transmission and commentary. The origins of this dichotomy were identified in Xia Wenyan's biography of Liang Kai, written around a century after his death, where Xia lauds Liang's 'exquisite brush', and derides his cursive 'abbreviated brush'. Chinese reception of Liang's meticulous style was examined through *Eminent Worthy of the Eastern Fence*, a depiction of Tao Yuanming in a landscape, signed 'Liang Kai' once in the collection of the Qing Qianlong emperor. Close analysis of this painting illustrated the visual qualities of the exquisite aesthetic elevated by Xia, in a work probably by a close follower of Liang Kai affiliated to the Southern Song painting academy. Through a comparative analysis of *Eminent Worthy of the Eastern Fence* and Liang's *Śākyamuni Emerging from the Mountains*, the above discussion illustrated the diversity of styles and formats that came to embody Liang's court oeuvre in Chinese and Japanese transmission. This was augmented by examination of textual commentaries by Ming-Qing transition period connoisseur Wu Qizhen, which



showed the continued relevance of Xia's critical dichotomy of Liang's oeuvre in later periods.

The ideal of Liang's abbreviated brush mode was then explored through a case study of two of Liang's works on a common subject *The Sixth Patriarch Chopping Bamboo* and *The Sixth Patriarch Tearing Up Sutras*. The analysis of these two paintings illustrated Liang's agency in creating visual expressions of Chan ideals not directly connected to textual precedents, but which drew on parallel themes of non-reliance on text and iconoclastic behaviour in Chan hagiography and iconography. Japanese reception and commentary on Liang's representation of Chan exemplars in action was contextualised through an analysis of Kano Tan'yū's loose copy of *The Sixth Patriarch Chopping Bamboo*, and its accompanying *encomium* by Zen prelate Takuan Sōhō. Such copies illustrate the continuity of value placed on Liang's oeuvre in Japan, as well as the process whereby later understanding of Liang's abbreviated brush mode became synonymous with liquid, free forms. Comparison with Liang's later emulations and contested attributions in Chinese collections showed a similar tendency to supplant the kinetically charged descriptive detail of the abbreviated brush with looser, more liquid modes of abbreviation.

Sōhō's commentary explicates a specific visual narrative for Tan'yū's copy of *The Sixth Patriarch Chopping Bamboo*, contradicting the account of the *Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch* to identify this act of mundane labour as the moment of Huineng's sudden awakening. While such interpretations enrich understanding of Liang's Japanese reception, there is insufficient evidence from the Song period to extend this interpretation to the historic context in which Liang produced *The Sixth Patriarch Chopping Bamboo*. As discussed in chapter one, it is important to separate later Japanese commentaries on Chan figure paintings from these works' earlier Chinese contexts of production and reception. The distinctions between these Chan and Zen visual cultures can be easily overlooked if Japanese Zen art is read as a direct continuation of its Chinese predecessor Chan. Instead of reading Liang's image through the commentary of a Japanese cleric written four centuries after the painting was made, the above discussion contextualised the visual rhetoric of Liang's diptych within the broader corpus of Chan figure painting from thirteenth and fourteenth century China. By situating Liang's Chan oeuvre within the context of Song and Yuan

visual culture, which this thesis has demonstrated made extensive use of pictorial action in constructing and communicating meaning, the above discussion sought to reconstruct the framework through which Liang Kai's Chan images were initially viewed. *The Sixth Patriarch Chopping Bamboo* and *The Sixth Patriarch Tearing Up Sutras* illustrate Liang's active participation within a thirteenth century discourse of Chan visual narrative. Liang's choice to juxtapose two dramatic pictorial moments articulate a Chan perspective on the primacy of action as a soteriological instrument, contrasted with the secondary position of text.

The final section of this chapter proposed a reappraisal of the dating and attribution of a prominent painting of Chan subjects bearing Liang Kai's signature: *Eight Eminent Monks*. The painting's technical execution and the dating of texts incorporated into the scroll bring its attribution to Liang Kai into serious question. Overt similarities with the content, format and function of fourteenth century Yuan didactic narrative handscrolls suggest a probable late thirteenth to fourteenth century date. The signatures are therefore more likely to connect the work to a follower of Liang, rather than to the master himself. As an illustration of Liang's conception in the century after his death, *Eight Eminent Monks* remains highly relevant to discussions of Liang Kai's historic reception in China. Moreover, the scroll preserves several rare examples of subjects known to have been popular in Chan visual culture from textual records of abbots' *encomia* on paintings, but of which few examples survive today.

By situating the extant corpus of Liang's attributions within the visual and verbal commentaries produced in both Chinese and Japanese sources, this chapter has sought to illustrate how Liang Kai came to embody a diversity of meanings for discrete audiences at different times. Works which copy, emulate, and possibly even mendaciously forge elements of Liang's oeuvre have been invaluable to this analysis. These works by later followers both highlight the distinctive qualities of his presumed original works, and inform understanding the changing interpretations of Liang Kai's legacy in different times and places. The diversity of these later works, and their relationship to the textual record of Liang's historic reception, illustrate the historical contingency of both any contemporary understanding of Liang's person, and the dual ideals of abbreviated Chan figure painting and meticulous courtly styles into which his oeuvre has been split. Rather than attempting to mask a 'true image' of Liang Kai,

the various images constructed through historic transmission can be fruitfully read as successive incarnations of the master.