Lin Yutang

THE CHINESE THEORY OF ART

Translations from the Masters of Chinese Art

THE CHINESE THEORY OF ART
by Lin Yutang

This volume is intended as a source book on the Chinese theory of art and as an aid to a fuller appreciation of the goal of Chinese painting and its trends and development. The main work consists of translations from the writings by Chinese artists and art critics on problems and techniques, style and taste. Through these translations Western art students will better understand what the Chinese artists were trying to do, and why and how they did it.

Dr. Lin presents the Chinese theory of art as a whole, historically, and shows the successive development of styles and schools. He traces the development of Chinese art from the earliest literary reference to painting in Confucious to the vital essays of Shih-t'ao and Shen Tsung-chi'en more than twenty centuries later. The author's selections cover every aspect and subject matter, including the Six Canons of Chinese painting, while the scope of the book is widened further by the inclusion of important essays on collecting and connoisseurship, on the pricing and appraisal of paintings, and on calligraphy.

In his Introduction, Dr. Lin has provided a comprehensive survey of his subject, and after each selection he furnishes the reader with a corresponding historical background, as well as with information on the artist and school concerned, and explanations of any obscure passages in the original.

There are twenty-four illustrations in this volume, several charts, a table of dynasties, a checklist of over 200 artists and an index, making this

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THE CHINESE THEORY OF ART

Books by LIN YUTANG

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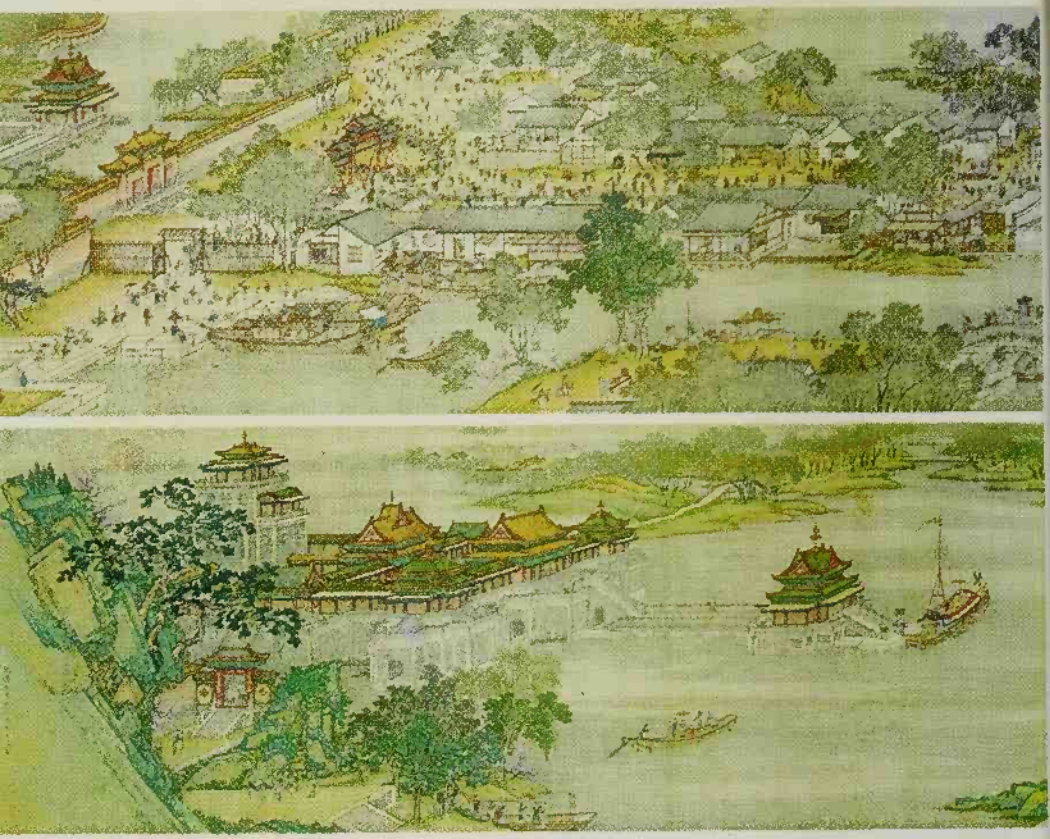

Views of the River at Chingming

Two sections of long horizontal scroll, copied by court painters under Chien-lung from an earlier Sung work. (Eighteenth century)

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Introduction

Introduction

I

THE PRESENT VOLUME is intended as a source book on the Chinese theory of art, and as a help to a fuller appreciation of the goal of Chinese painting and its trends and development. The main work consists of translations from writings by Chinese artists and art critics on problems and techniques, style and taste. It is hoped that through these translations Western art lovers will better understand what the Chinese artists were trying to do, and why and how they did it. I have kept in mind, however, the necessity for separate introductions to the pieces and of including information on some of the artist's background so that each piece will fall into place in a general perspective.

There have been many scattered quotations in English from Chinese art comments, but Western students of art have to cull these from different sources, in regard to this or that particular scroll or artist. I believe the Chinese theory of art should be presented as a whole historically and showing the successive development of styles and schools. This is not to say that there are not many excellent general works on Chinese art, and articles in bulletins on special periods and artists, notably the work of Victoria Contag and Alexander Soper. There is a place, however, for a fuller overall presentation. The only work which covers the field is *The Chinese on the Art of Painting*, by Osvald Sirén. It is my opinion that Sirén's translations are cumbersome, hard to digest, and sometimes miss the point.*

* 'I have tried to respect these [Chinese linguistic] peculiarities as far as possible and not to strain the Chinese mode of presentation into more definite intellectual formulas. Certain passages in my translations may thus appear somewhat vague or indefinite, but they are hardly more so than the original texts which often leave room for various interpretations. In rendering them into English I have sought to retain their tone and terminology rather than to sacrifice anything to an easy literary form.'
– Introduction to *The Chinese on the Art of Painting*.

The choice of a single wrong word in translation may throw a whole paragraph into obscurity. Granted that Chinese literary concepts are often strange to Western students and the expressions baffling, it should be remembered that they are perfectly *clear* to the Chinese, and it is the duty of the translator to convey their meaning clearly.

In particular, I may remark here in passing that Western translators often have the habit of dissecting the Chinese pictographs, and of taking each syllable by itself, not knowing the use of bisyllabic words. How far off the mark such a translation can be may be shown by the real meaning of some such Chinese words: *shen-ch'i* (spirit and force), adj., conceited; *shen-ch'ing* (spirit and condition), n., facial expression; *ch'i-hsiang* (force and image), n., appearance, impression on onlooker; *ku-ch'i* (bone and force), n., force of personality, backbone of character; *ch'ien-wan* (1,000 and 10,000), adv., please, please! (See note on Selection No. 7, the translation of the word for 'tone and atmosphere'.)

There is a wealth of material in the field of Chinese writings on art. Much of it, however, is given in bald general statements, without precise details. Moreover, the majority of these say the same thing. Chinese writers on art have the habit of quoting the ancients as a way of displaying their familiarity with ancient sayings. As they all agree with the same ancient tradition, they tend to agree with one another. Thus the works of many are repetitious. I can name at least a dozen such treatises on art which repeat each other, with only an occasional insight or contribution from personal experience. It would be a waste of the reader's time to translate them all without exercising a judicious choice. I believe the editor's responsibility here is to select firstly those comments that are historically important, and secondly those that present a special aspect of a problem, or are particularly precise. I have, throughout this work, tried to include the maximum variety; even in statements by renowned artists like Huang Kung-wang, I have kept only those that are not repetitious. But if space has been saved in this way, it has been devoted to those essays that are remarkable in point of view or in treatment, such as the great essays of Shih-t'ao (No. 22) and Shen Tsung-ch'ien (No. 23). I believe one learns more about the taste and technique of Chinese paint-

ing from reading Shen's one long essay than by reading half a dozen others confined to broad general statements.

The essays are chronologically arranged, the century in which a selection was written being indicated at the head. By following the editorial comments preceding or following each selection, one may get a fair idea, historically, of the development of Chinese art. For this purpose, I have given rather extended comments, especially from No. 13 onwards, dealing with gaps not covered by the selections themselves. For instance, there are no selections from the Northern School. The impressionistic Southern School, consisting entirely of scholars, wrote a great deal about their art, while the great masters of the Northern School like Ma Yüan, Hsia Kwei and Tai Chin, wrote almost nothing. I cannot but feel that the Northern School deserves a better deal than is given by the orthodox, established impressionists (Southern School). I have consequently filled in such gaps to give a more balanced picture. On the other hand, the opinions of the prolific Tung Ch'i-ch'ang are not represented here for reasons given in the comments.

It may be a good idea for the reader to go through the selections in reverse sequence, starting from the modern period at the end and then going back to the ancient period, for a proper historical perspective. It may also be useful to supplement this by an intensive study of the good, representative illustrations and highly intelligent text of James Cahill's *Chinese Painting*.*

II

The first four brief selections are mainly of historical interest in their references to art work in the early centuries after Confucius. A more connected story is given in Selection No. 9, covering the period from the earliest times to A.D. 841, which is continued in No. 12, for the period 689–1074.

For the most part, portrait work predominated down to the Tang Dynasty. The period of the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries saw a great impetus given to work on religious motifs from the introduction of Buddhism, as attested by the great number of stone sculptures at Yünkang and Lungmen, as well as the

* Editions of Albert Skira, 1962. American distribution, World Publishing Company.

profuse frescoes, almost all religious, in the caves of Tunhuang.* Ts'ao Pu-hsing (third century) and Chang Seng-yu (fourth century) are described in Chinese history as the first artists to have been influenced by Hindu art. Chang is said to have introduced ink-shading, relying relatively little on the contour lines in his so-called boneless paintings. This ink-shading was carried on through the later centuries in art academy paintings of birds and animals and in the so-called Northern School of Li Sze-hsün, while the Southern School started and maintained the use of vigorous or soft texture lines. Owing to the perfection of calligraphy and the artist's familiarity with brush-work, this overwhelming emphasis on rhythmic lines has remained the characteristic of the dominant Southern School, and of almost all Chinese painting. It gave rise to the inordinate preoccupation of Chinese artists with texture lines. Interest was centred on the contour lines (*kou-leh*) and the texture lines (*ts'un*), whereas the perfectly obvious use of ink-shading in the Western sense was not thought of until the time of Mi Fei (eleventh century). This explains the unrealistic lines of rocks and mountain involutions, somewhat obtrusive to the modern eye. The strict adherence to classic tradition, to the 'ancient method', acted as a bane upon a more varied and original development. Because Tung Yüan put dots on the contours of hill crests, and everybody wanted to copy the style of Tung Yüan, all hills in Chinese landscapes for a long time ended up with dots on their crests – an obviously wrong and stultifying situation. In this sense, Mi Fei's brave statements are of great significance: 'Tung Yüan's mountain tops are not good' and 'Kuan T'ung's mountains are crude'.

For a fascinating period of almost three hundred years (A.D. 317–588) China was divided into North and South, owing to the invasion of northern barbarians. (North and South Dynasties 386–588). It was almost axiomatic that great art development coincided with political instability in China and, in a few

* There are over 20 caves of large size at Yünkang (fifth century), covered with carvings in stone and containing giant Buddhas, some over 25 feet high. Since 1942–3, the frescoes at Tunhuang in north-west China have attracted great attention and intensive study by Chinese artists. There are over 330 caves, all filled to the ceiling with paintings. These contain over 70 caves of frescoes and statues of the Northern Wei and Sui periods (fifth and sixth centuries), and over 200 caves containing works of the following centuries (Tang, Five Dynasties and Sung).

outstanding cases at least, man's best creative energies were devoted to art because of the hopelessness of the political situation. This was true of the politically unstable North and South Dynasties. It was true of the equally unstable Five Dynasties (and Ten Kingdoms) in the first half of the tenth century. It was true of the short-lived Mongol (Yüan) Dynasty when the great masters of the impressionistic school lived. Again, the Manchu invasion and the coming of the Manchu Dynasty was responsible for two of the most original geniuses of art, who lived a recluse life, Shih-t'ao and Pata Shanjen.

With North China occupied by barbarians, the cultured old Chinese families moved down across the Yangtse in the area around Nanking and Hangchow and indulged in their soft, luxuriant way of life. In the South, Emperor Liang Yüan-ti (sixth century) was a great lover and patron of art, exactly as later in the Five Dynasties period, Hou-chu, Emperor of Nan-tang, patronized great artists like Ching Hao, Kuan T'ung and Tung Yüan. They loved art, but lost their empires. The calamity which overtook the poet-painter Emperor Hui-tsung of Northern Sung with the collapse of the Northern Sung Dynasty repeats the same story of emperors who were good artists but bad rulers. Nantang Hou-chu (reigned 962–978) was also a poet and an extraordinary calligraphist; Ch'en Hou-chu, last tragic ruler of Ch'en (reigned 583–588) was a poet too.

In a very special sense, the fourth to sixth centuries saw the beginning of Chinese art criticism. This period marked great aesthetic awareness in the South. While in the North, sculpture and portrait work with religious motifs left their mark, in the South, the great Wang Hsi-chih (321–379) represented the height of calligraphy for all ages. Shen Yüeh (441–513) formulated the tonal pattern of what was later called 'Tang poetry'. Chung Yung (around 500) wrote his famous classic on poetic criticism, while Hsieh Ho (fl. 490) of South Ch'i enunciated what have often been called the 'Six Canons' of painting (No. 7). A phrase used by Hsieh Ho meaning 'rhythmic vitality' has been accepted through the ages as the first law of Chinese art.

Again in the turbulent first half of the tenth century (Five Dynasties), the typical landscape art of China was born through the influence of Ching Hao and Kuan T'ung. There had been landscapists in the Tang Dynasty, to be sure, but the Five

Dynasties and the ensuing Sung Dynasty were to see the full development of their art. In a way, Li Ch'eng (*c.* 916–967) was the most consummate artist among them; he had a more harmonious and rational composition and a more realistic perspective. The artists of the following century (eleventh), like Kuo Jo-hsü (No. 12) and Mi Fei (No. 14), apparently regarded Li Ch'eng more highly than Tung Yüan. But the staggering techniques of Tung Yüan and Chü-jan seem to have won a more permanent influence by their sheer effect.

Again it must be remembered that the turbulent Five Dynasties had brought the art of painting nature, birds, animals and insects to perfection through Hsü Hsi in Nantang, and Huang Ch'üan and his son in Szechuan, the two centres of art. Portraits of men and women were well represented by Chou Wen-chü in Nantang (936–975). The rebirth of landscape and nature painting in the Sung Dynasty (eleventh and twelfth centuries) seems to have coincided with the death of portraits. Good portrait work stopped almost entirely in the Sung Dynasty, and at the same time the painting of birds and animals gained the ascendancy. Gone were the days of Ku K'ai-chih, Lu T'an-wei and Wu Tao-tse. Under Emperor Hui-tsung, the painting of birds, flowers, geese and royal park animals was greatly stimulated.

Another reason for this change was the rise of the '*literati*' school, under the influence of Su Tung-p'o, which introduced the concept of painting as a scholar's quick play with the brush and influenced its development deeply. Clearly, the 'four gentlemen' – bamboos, orchids, the plum and the chrysanthemum – could be painted in a few rapid strokes. Scholars then began to occupy themselves with these 'four gentlemen'. While devoted artists perfected their art in landscapes, it was realized that portrait work required many more years of training and practice. Tung Ch'i-ch'ang said he could never paint a portrait. As a matter of fact, few of the artists could. This gave rise to the present phenomenon that, while Western viewers of Chinese art are usually overwhelmed by the profusion of mountain-scapes and other forms of nature, the oriental visitor to a modern art gallery is confronted with an overwhelming display of nude forms and human flesh.

The charts on pages 16–17 may be of use to the reader in plotting the general development of Chinese art.

The curves, which are only approximate since they are not based on the quantity of paintings produced, show the rise and fall of each genre of painting, as represented by its most eminent artists. A rather broader selection of representative artists follows:

Portraits and Buddhas: Ts'ao Pu-hsing, Ku K'ai-chih, Lu T'an-wei, Chang Seng-yu, Wu Tao-tse, Chang Hsüan, Chou Fang, Chou Wen-chü, Liu Sung-nien, Li Kung-lin, T'ang Yin, Ch'iu Ying.

Landscape (*North and South School*): Ku K'ai-chih, Tsung Ping, Chang Seng-yu, Yen Li-pen, Wang Wei, Li Sze-hsün, Wu Tao-tse, Ching Hao, Chü-jan, Li Ch'eng, Tung Yüan, Fan K'uan, Li Kung-lin, Mi Fei, Li T'ang, Ma Yüan, Hsia Kwei, the Yüan masters*, Shen Chou, Wen Cheng-ming, Tung Ch'i-ch'ang, Wang Yüan-ch'i.

Expressionists (literati *school*): Chang Tsao, Wu Tao-tse, Wang Hsia, Wen T'ung, Su Tung-p'o, Mi Fei and his son, Ni Tsan, Ch'en Ch'un, Liang K'ai, Hsü Wei, Ch'en Hung-shou, Shih-t'ao, Pata Shanjen, Chin Nung, Cheng Hsieh, Ch'i Pai-shih, Hsü Pei-hung.

Plants and Animals: Yen Li-pen, Tai Sung, Han Kan, Pien Lüan, Hsü Hsi, Huang Ch'üan and son, Su Tung-p'o, Wen T'ung, Ts'ui Po, Emperor Hui-tsung, Ch'ien Hsüan, Lu Chih, Yün Shou-p'ing.

III

The development of the various schools and styles is important. First, a word about the so-called Northern and Southern Schools. This division has more or less been accepted, although no one has quite defined what constitutes the established and orthodox Southern School. I do not regard the distinction as of vital importance, since the boundary is hard to establish and has been blurred by Tung Ch'i-ch'ang's own examples (Tung originated the terms). The Southern School is, like the 'orthodox' church, a name to play with. With Professor Yü Chien-hua, author of the *History of Chinese Painting* (in Chinese), I share the view that the Northern School has been underrated for the simple reason that the proponents of the Southern School were

* See No. 16.

more articulate and the Northern School artists like Ma Yüan and Hsia Kwei wrote very little. They just created marvellous tonal pictures.

Briefly, the Northern School's tonal pictures are easier on the eye, at least for a modern viewer, than the Southern School's riot of clear rhythmic dots and lines. Surface and mass are indicated in both, but with different techniques. The Northern School relies more on shading, in the Western sense, while the Southern School emphasizes the contour and texture brushstrokes. In practice, texture lines and ink overlays are used by both schools. As Shen Tsung-ch'ien says (No. 23, section 3), 'The Southern School mostly uses break-ink, while the Northern School uses splash-ink. But both ways give luminous results.' (Break-ink may be explained as 'fissure lines' used to 'break' the surface of an object, such as a rock.) The Southern School begins with thin ink lines, the Northern School with a thin ink base.

This nomenclature of North and South was created by Tung Ch'i-ch'ang around the year 1600, in the sense, as he said, that there was a division of the Ch'an (Zen) sect into North and South. However, Tung made Wang Wei the father of the Southern School, even though he lived in the late Ming period when the works of Wang Wei (eighth century) were no longer accessible. If he meant that Wang Wei injected the flavour of Chinese poetry and made painting a particular recreation of the cultivated literary man, the thesis may hold. At one point, Tung mentioned *literati* paintings in enumerating the artists of the Southern School, but from the point of view of painting technique, according to all records Wang Wei painted fine, sensitive lines, with added light shading, rather akin to the delineations of the Northern School. The story of the painting of the Kialing Valley under T'ang Ming-huang seems to point to Wu Tao-tse, not Wang Wei, as master of the rhythmic line: Li Sze-hsün took over a month, while Wu Tao-tse finished in one day. Tung's statement that 'Wang Wei first used ink-wash and changed the method of contour lines' is not entirely accurate. He further confuses us by including Kuo Chung-shu (*chieh-hua*, drawings of buildings by foot-rule) among the Southern School, which justifies Professor Yü Chien-hua's statement that he merely followed his 'personal likes and dislikes' as basis for his

opinion.* Tung, like Bernard Berenson, held a dominating position in his time as a connoisseur, and was apt to be pompous.

What happened was that Tung Ch'i-ch'ang wrote at a time when the Southern School was in vogue. A host of artists, especially the Yüan masters (Huang Kung-wang, Chao Meng-fu, Ni Tsan, etc.), had developed the landscape art through sparse texture strokes, done with a relatively dry brush, and the *literati* school, which used swift, powerful or graceful strokes, had furthered an impressionistic technique with clear 'break-ink' lines (similar to the bold outstanding lines in Cézanne's '*Les Roches de Fontainebleau*'). This was the mode that was popular and highly valued. Mi Fei had further developed his own use of ink-splash technique, with the texture strokes playing a minor role. Mi Fei's vapoury trees were highly impressionistic. He no longer approved of Tung Yüan's or Kuan T'ung's grotesque hilltops. But the impressionists were the dominant school. The creation of the term 'Southern School' as late as A.D. 1600 caught on. The Academy painters, and all artists who preferred delineation of fine details and tonal surfaces in place of deliberate, obvious texture strokes, were looked down upon as being near, or very near, the work of professional artists (*tso-chia*) or artisans.

It is in fact often difficult to assign a label to a first-class artist. Each has his individual style, as each man has his own signature. It is not possible, for instance, to classify T'ang Yin as North or South. Shen Tsung-ch'ien (No. 23) regards among painters whom one need not 'assign to North or South' Ching Hao, Kuan T'ung, Li Ch'eng, Fan K'uan, Wu Chen, Shen Chou and Wen Cheng-ming. The distinction is less useful than might be thought from the popular usage of the terms. There is

* 'Tung was the last leader of the Wu School; he could also be called the consummation of the *literati* school of painting. He proposed the division of Northern and Southern Schools. Arbitrarily, he regarded the painters he liked as the Southern School and those he personally disliked as the Northern School. His division was based on personal likes and dislikes, without foundation in fact, and is moreover unscientific in method. . . . But once the theory was started by Tung, it was considered a closed case. For several centuries it was regarded as sacred, and no one has dared to point out the falseness of the theory. Is this not strange?'

– *Chung-kuo Huihua Shih*, Bk. II, p. 132. Commercial Press, Hong Kong, 1962.

no great artist in whom there is no subtle merging of brush- and ink-work (*pi-yung* and *mo-hua*).

What is important is how the artist conveys a sense of surface and mass and, in general composition, how he distributes empty space and solids and movements and rhythm, to give a sense of cohesion. Some achieve it by texture strokes, others by delicate shading. The questions of texture strokes (*ts'un*), of which there are about twenty classes, and whether the artist's brush touches the paper perpendicularly (*chung-feng*) or at an angle (*p'ien-feng*) are minor questions of technique. Shih-t'ao (No. 22), the great rebel in art, reminds us that the important thing is that the texture strokes should have a relation to the surface of rocks or soil or bark depicted, and *all else is irrelevant.*

In the matter of giving surface, I think the word 'tonalist' may well be used to refer to the superb work of Hsia Kwei and Ma Yüan. Both were in the Sung Academy of Art and were therefore regarded as 'Academy painters' (with implied contempt). Tung Ch'i-ch'ang called them 'Northern School', adding 'they are not what we should learn from'. It is not really so simple. The sublimation of a scene, the exclusion of non-essential background, the use of rich, rhythmic strokes, the liberal ink-wash (including colour) and the extraordinary sense of surface and solidity through sparing use of texture strokes, all these combine to produce a harmonious and satisfying tonal picture which in Hsia Kwei and Ma Yüan is very distinctive.

On the whole, the tonalists may be said to begin with Mi Fei. They consistently use a wet-brush technique, indicating distant hills by a pale wash of different strength. The object of this type of painting seems to be to establish a pervading mood and atmosphere. Ma Yüan, Hsia Kwei and Ni Tsan later achieved this tranquil atmosphere by a sparing use of brushstrokes; T'ang Yin, on the other hand, made more liberal use of texture strokes. But equally there is an effort to achieve a well-modulated surface with a pale, red-buff water-colour. All gradations in the combination of brush-stroke and ink-spread are possible.

As the French Impressionists used bold contour lines, as distinct from the 'boneless' work of Renaissance painters, I generally use the term 'impressionist' to denote the work of the Southern School. A special development of the impressionists

was the *literati* school ('scholars' painting,' *wen-jen-hua*, *shih-jen-hua*), called 'expressionists' in this book. The term 'expressionist' is accurate and appropriate because, according to Su Tung-p'o and Ni Tsan, the object of drawing is merely to 'express one's mood or feeling' (*hsieh-yi*), and the painting need not be a slavish copy of reality. Such work should be done quickly, on the inspiration of a moment, and usually takes for its subject a bamboo grove, some rocks, or perhaps a diagonal twig of plum-flowers. The primary thing is the joy of brush rhythms. Thus, in this type of bamboo painting or plum painting, it is very easy to judge the brush-stroke from the point of view of line, rhythm, strength and grace. But the painting must have strong and graceful strokes or it is not a painting at all.

The idea began with Su Tung-p'o (No. 13) in the eleventh century:

> 'To judge a painting by its verisimilitude
> Shows the mental level of a child.'

But this type of rapid, rhythmic brush-work was as old as Chang Tsao (fl. 750), and the ink-splash was the innovation of Wang Hsia (*alias* Wang Mo, d. *c.* 800).* It will be seen that there was a great deal of originality and creative activity in the eighth century (Wu Tao-tse, Li Sze-hsün, Wang Wei, Chang Tsao, Wang Hsia). In the eleventh century (Northern Sung), Su Tung-p'o and Mi Fei were friends, and gave art a great impetus by moving in the *literati*, expressionist direction.

The direct influence of this school culminated in the art of Shih-t'ao and Pata Shanjen, and in a contemporary, Ch'i Pai-shih (1863–1957), who died at the age of ninety-four.† The extraordinarily vibrant brush-work is also seen in the horses of Ju Pei-on (Hsü Pei-hung, 1896–1953).‡ Thus the *literati* or expressionist school played an extremely important role in the

* Mi Fei is said to have used crumpled-up paper rolls, splayed ends of sugar-cane, lotus stalks and other articles in place of the regular brush. Wang Hsia occasionally used bare fingers. Mi Fei's son, Mi Yu-jen, was said to have been influenced by Wang Hsia.

† In his young days, Ch'i Pai-shih took Wu Ts'ang-shih, a painter of flowers, for his master.

‡ Ju Pei-on studied art in Paris and successfully combined better Western knowledge of animal anatomy with a masterful control of the Chinese brush.

history of Chinese painting, and it is still vital today. The school was usually associated with noted poets, such as Hsü Wei (1521–1593) and Cheng Hsieh (1693–1765). Much of the work of the 'eccentrics' of the eighteenth century was of this type. It relieved the monotony of the Ming artists, such as the four Wangs, when the artists of the impressionists had copied themselves to death. One landscape of Wang Hui looks very much like another. Painting by the 'ancient method' had almost become painting by formula. Fresh inspiration was wanting. More detailed notes and comments on the trends of development will be found in the main body of the work, beginning with No. 13.

IV

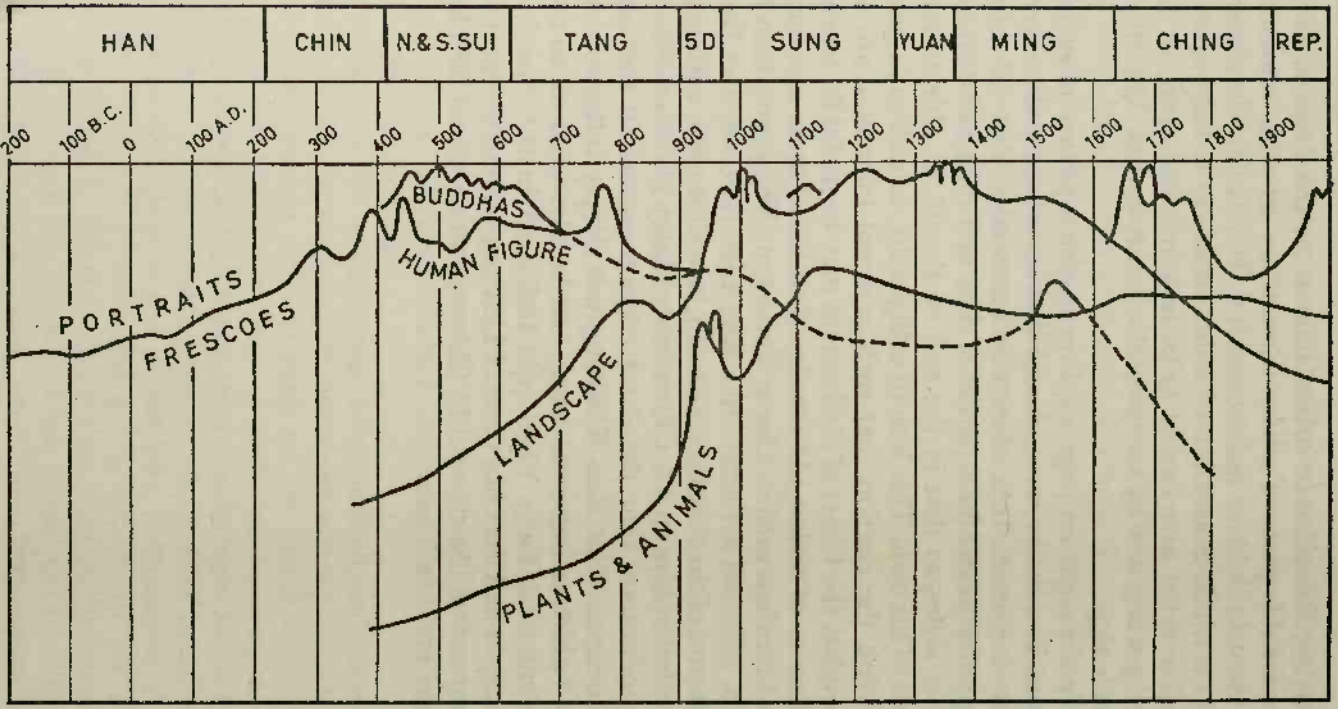
The question of the influence of artists on one another is always interesting. Chinese records are especially rich in such information. It is usually said that such-and-such an artist *shih* another artist. Literally, *shih* means 'take for master' or, in English, 'study under' another person. In actual usage, it means only 'model oneself or one's style upon', there being usually no teacher-pupil relationship. As a result, it would be simpler to say that such-and-such an artist 'derived' from another, but with the understanding that he deliberately copied and tried to imitate a certain artist, ancient or contemporary. Artists often speak of themselves as deliberately choosing another ancient artist for their model. This involves an intensive study of the master's style and technique.

The worship of the ancients was unquestioned and always taken for granted. Copying an ancient model was a part of the training of the student artist as early as the fourth century, so much so that Hsieh Ho (No. 7) included 'copying and transferring' as the sixth important point of technique. Actually, it should not be included among the six elements of painting, along with brush-work, tone and atmosphere, composition, etc. Ching Hao (No. 10) omitted this point entirely in his 'six essentials' of painting. But the emphasis on 'copying' was overwhelming. It was as if the artists in Paris should not be sitting with palette in hand on the Seine, or painting from nature in Fontainebleau, but should be spending their time exclusively

copying Renaissance artists indoors at the Louvre. It was a remarkable piece of advice when some art critic reminded the student to 'look at *real* mountains'. It was equally remarkable that a whole generation of artists could try to hold up *one* particular artist as a model to be imitated and aped, as Huang Kung-wang was by seventeenth-century artists. The effect was deadening.

In the chart on page 18, I try to give a picture of such influences. It must be remembered that an artist should never copy just one artist. It is always recommended that the beginner copy one model for a period of time and then move on to copy other styles, so that in the end he should be able to create a style of his own. This is so in calligraphy, as well as in painting.

With the caution that such personal influences are always complex, the Chart of Derivations may be useful for tracing the influence of certain old masters. It is based upon statements by art historians such as Chang Yen-yüan (No. 9) and Kuo Jo-hsü (No. 12), and art critics like Kao Lien (No. 18) and Hua Lin ('Secrets of the Southern School'), as well as upon various charts of relationships in Yü Chien-hua's *History of Chinese Painting*. It is understood that the chart cannot express all the complex influences. Thus Kao K'o-kung was deeply influenced by Mi Fei (which is indicated here), but he also went on to copy Li Ch'eng and Tung Yüan (not indicated in the chart). Chao Meng-fu had lines like those of Li Kung-lin, but perspective and composition like those of Li Ch'eng, and a sense of life like Hsia Kwei and Ma Yüan.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BUDDHAS
HUMAN FIGURE
PORTRAITS
FRESCOES
LANDSCAPE
PLANTS & ANIMALS

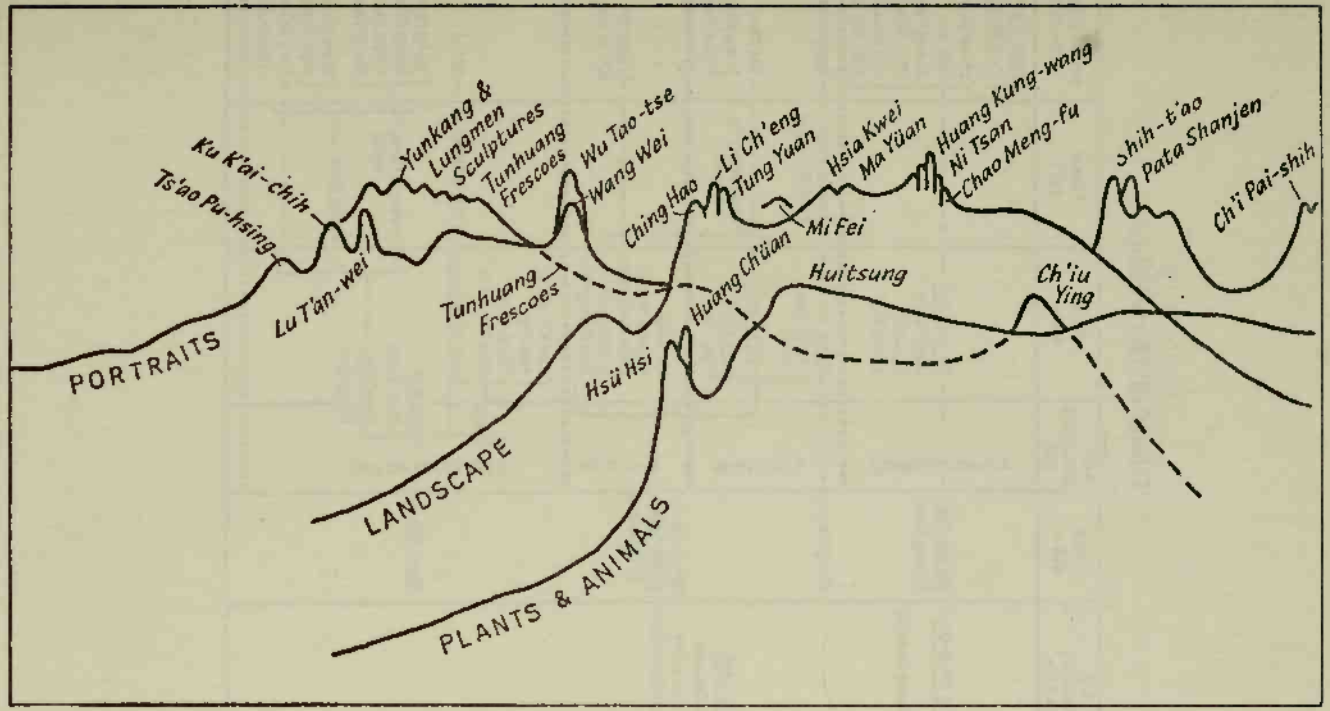
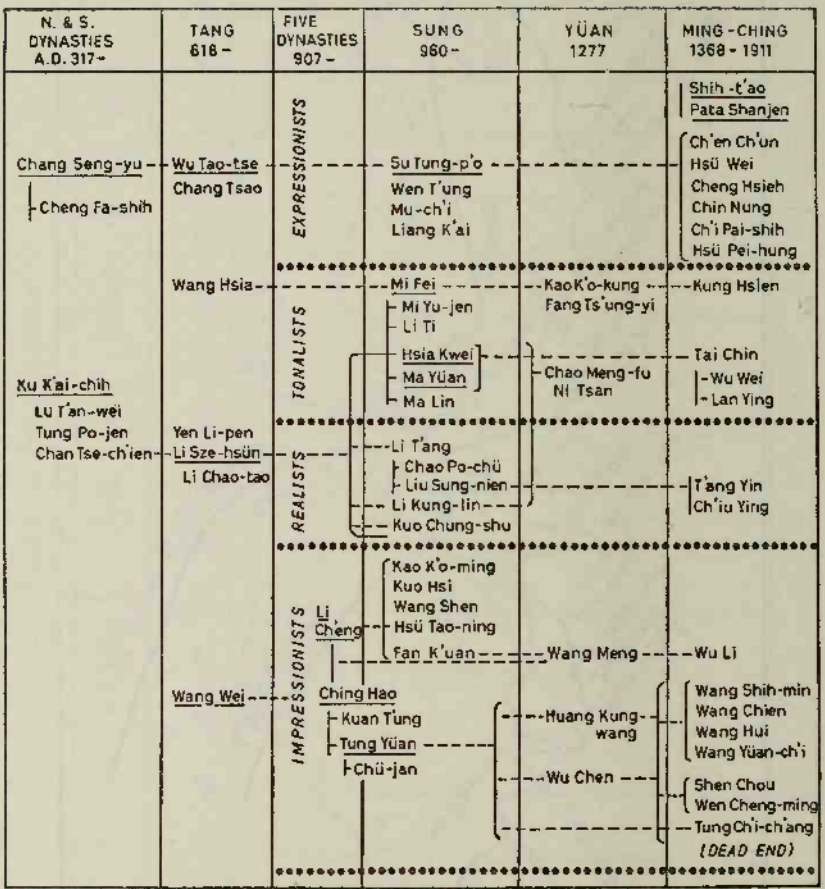

Ku K'ai-chih
Ts'ao Pu-hsing
Lu T'an-wei
Yunkang &
Lungmen
Sculptures
Tunhuang
Frescoes
Wu Tao-tse
Wang Wei
Ching Hao
Li Ch'eng
Tung Yuan
Hsia Kwei
Ma Yüan
Huang Kung-wang
Ni Tsan
Chao Meng-fu
Shih-t'ao
Pata Shanjen
Ch'i Pai-shih
Mi Fei
Huitsung
Ch'iu
Ying
Huang Ch'üan
Hsü Hsi
PORTRAITS
LANDSCAPE
PLANTS & ANIMALS

Chart of Derivations



Selections

Note: In the following selections themselves, comments intended to clarify the meaning of the original text have been set in brackets; all other comments are in parentheses.

I

SIXTH CENTURY B.C.

Confucius

551–479 B.C.

'Powder Applied Last'

TSE-HSIA SAID, 'What does this line [in the *Book of Poetry*] mean? It says, "How winning her smiles! How attractive her eyes! And the white (*su*) makes up the pattern."'

Confucius replied, 'In the art of painting, the white powder is applied last.'

'Do you mean that the rituals should come last?'

'Oh, Ah-shang, you have suggested a point here. You are worthy to discuss the *Book of Poetry*.'

– *Analects*, Bk. III

[This is the earliest literary reference to painting, both of a lady's face, and of the art of painting, apart from the section on the painting of colours in *K'ao-kung-chi*.* In the poem, the *su* (white powder) refers to the lady's make-up (*hsien*), which is interpreted as giving pattern to the whole. That was what Confucius meant. The disciple made a surprising remark, by suggesting that the principle of *li*, or rituals, was no more than veneer giving form to social intercourse and conduct, but depended on a basis of moral order. Confucius was impressed. In the Chinese art of painting, white was often applied, as by Chang Seng-yu and Mi Fei, to give a softened tone overlaying the brush-strokes, especially in the depicting of mists.]

* Section on 'Ministry of Public Works', Chou-li, probably fifth century.

2

FOURTH CENTURY B.C.

Chuangtse

fl. c. 314–275 B.C.

'The Unbuttoned Mood'

KING YUAN OF SUNG was having a painting session. All the artists had come; they bowed and remained standing, licking their brushes and preparing the ink. Half were still outside. One artist came late, sauntering in. He made the usual bow, but did not join the others in line and went straight inside. The king asked someone to see what he was doing. He had stripped off his gown and was seated bare-bodied. 'There's a true painter!' said the king.

– Chapter on '*T'ien Tse-fang*'

[The phrase *chieh-yi pan-p'o* (seated unbuttoned) has become a common idiom for describing the untrammelled mood of an artist at work. Chuangtse was the well-known Taoist philosopher and great prose writer.]

3

THIRD CENTURY B.C.

Han Fei

?–234 B.C.

'Easy to Paint Ghosts'

SOMEONE WAS ENGAGED to paint bamboo panels for the ruler of Chou and took three years to complete them. When they were completed, the king saw that it looked simply like splotches of lacquer on plain bamboo and was angry. 'Please,' said the painter, 'have a wall of ten panels made with an eight-foot window in it. Place the painting against it at sunrise and then look at it.' This the ruler of Chou did, and he saw myriad forms of dragons, snakes, animals and chariots, all complete. He was then greatly pleased. This shows that although the bamboo painting was no mean achievement, it served the same purpose as plain or lacquered panels.

– Chapter on *Waich'u*

[Han Fei was a utilitarian.]

A friend was doing some painting for the ruler of Ch'i.
'What are the most difficult things to paint?'
'Dogs and horses.'
'And what are the easiest?'
'Ghosts. One recognizes dogs and horses for one sees them

every day and it is difficult to make them seem like real ones. Nobody has seen ghosts and therefore it is easy.'

– Chapter on *Waich'u.*

[Han Fei was a well-known philosopher of the Legalist School. The idea that it is easier to paint ghosts than dogs and horses was also found in *Huai-nan-tse* (second century B.C.) and in later authors at the turn of the second century A.D. (Chang Heng, etc.). Before the invention of paper, books were written on bamboo strips. The use of lacquer was well known in the Chou Dynasty. Chuangtse in the preceding selection was an 'officer of the lacquer garden'. Oil painting was not developed in China, but Emperor Hui-tsung of the Sung Dynasty was reported to have once used lacquer for the eye of one of his birds, so that the eye stood out shining above the silk.]

4

THIRD CENTURY A.D.

Ts'ao Chih

fl. A.D. 227

Inspiring Portraits

PAINTING IS A DEVELOPMENT of the bird script (a type of archaic script). The Empress Ma Ming-teh (*c.* A.D. 60) was beautiful and good in character, and was much loved by the emperor. Once she went along to the gallery with His Majesty. As they passed before a portrait of the two queens of Emperor Shun, Oh-huang and Nü-ying, the emperor said jokingly, 'Too bad I couldn't marry such women as my queens.' As they went farther and came to the portrait of Emperor Yao, she pointed to it and said, 'Too bad I couldn't marry such a man as my husband.' I have seen numerous paintings. They depict things from the beginning of the universe and foretell events to come.

– Quoted *Yü-lan*, 750

People who look at the paintings are inspired by a feeling of worship when seeing portraits of the ancient three *huang* and five *ti* rulers*, but profoundly saddened when they see those of the tyrants, the last rulers of the Three Dynasties. It makes one grind one's teeth to see the usurpers and rebels, but one stands

* Legendary founders of the Chinese state. They were followed by *huang-ti* rulers, or emperors. (See also note on page 44.)

lost in admiration before the great scholars. One looks up to the honest martyrs, and sighs with regret at the dissolute sons and disloyal ministers. One looks askance at the adulterers and jealous women, but gives one's respect to the good queens. Thus it is seen that portraits serve to teach one something.

– Quoted *Yü-lan*, 751

[Ts'ao Chih was a most gifted member of the extraordinarily gifted family of Ts'ao Ts'ao, who founded the Wei Dynasty, one of the Three Kingdoms. He was a fine poet and his father was also a great calligraphist. The remark of Empress Ma was a subtle repartee. Beginning from the Han Dynasty, palaces and temples provided the strongest incentive for the development of frescoes and portrait work.]

5

FOURTH CENTURY A.D.

Ku K'ai-chih

c. A.D. 345–411

Notes for a Landscape

[The following is interesting because of its antiquity and because of the position of the writer as a great painter of human figures and of landscapes, the first whose work has come down to this day. The reader will imagine himself looking at the hand-scroll in three sections, beginning from the left side representing the east.]

When the sun shines upon a mountain, its back should be shown in shadow. I will have a glorious cloud to the west, shining against the east. On a clear, bright day, the sky and water should be all blue, with bits of white above and below reflecting the sun. I must make clear the distances of the hills on the west, which start to rise from the east; half-way as it goes up, five or six purple rocks, shaped like frozen clouds, straddle the rounded mount in an upward direction, so that they seem to form the twisting movement of a dragon. A tall peak carries it straight up, while below spread the minor crests, so that the eye is led upwards. Then rises another peak of granite. It faces the sharp peak towards the east, and towards the west it leads into a reddish bluff standing by a sharp drop over a gully. In painting this reddish bluff overhanging the gully, I must show its

terrifying grandeur. A Taoist master (*t'ien-shih*) sits there forming a group with the shadows of the rock on which he is sitting. Down in the gully some peach-trees on its banks will be appropriate. The master will be depicted as thin and bony, but with a distant look, his face towards the disciples, pointing to the peaches from his elevated position. Among the group, two disciples will be seen peering down over the cliff, perspiring with fright as shown on their faces. There will be Wang Liang answering questions calmly, and Chao Sheng (?), happy and alert, looking down at the peach-trees. There will be also Wang and Chao running [?],* one hidden around the western edge of a rock, his skirts showing, while the other is in full view. Inside the house, there is a pervasive atmosphere of coolness. In painting human figures, make them seven-tenths of their height when they are seated. The dresses and colours will be faint; this is because the men are seen at a great distance in these high mountains.

Middle section: To the east, the abrupt vermilion bluff and its shadowed side must be shown as a series of broken layers rising upwards, with a lone pine at its top, facing the cliff where the master is sitting across the chasm. This chasm can be depicted as very narrow, the reason being that its interior space will be given a special atmosphere of pure solitude untouched by the outside world, for this is the abode of the gods. A marble pavilion may be placed on the second peak, showing a stone structure on the left perched high over the top. Towards the west, a road is shown leading towards Yün-t'ai. On the left the abrupt stone structure stands on a rocky foundation overhanging empty space. The rocks must convey the feeling of weight and solidity. These rocks spread over the brink of the chasm on the east.

Farther west, rocks and streams appear again. Through a void they are connected with a hill crest farther down and the stream flows on temporarily hidden and reappears towards the east. Below are strong rapids which fall into an abyss. The reason one flows east and the other west is to make the picture natural.

On the north and west sides of Yün-t'ai, there may be a

* The text is incomprehensible here. The translation is based on Yü Chien-hua's carefully edited version. Probably a word 'servants' has been dropped, or in Ku's archaic language, 'running' could refer to 'runner' or 'attendant'.

picture. Over the winding range appear two round stone columns, looking like a monumental gate leading to a mausoleum. On the rocky top is a solitary phoenix, poised with its feathers done in fine detail, spreading its wings and tail, overlooking the gully.

In the last section, there is a reddish-brown bluff. There should be a Buddha's head (?) like lightning. This bluff faces the cliff under the phoenix on the west of Yün-t'ai to form another gully, with a clear stream coming out at the bottom. A white tiger, crouched on a rock, will be painted outside the cliff walls. Beyond, the picture drops abruptly.

There are altogether three sections of the mountain. Although these cover a great distance, the composition must be tight, to fit with the situation. Birds and animals can be put in as may seem fit. In the stream below, all reflections are reversed. Make a bank of mist on the foothills, stretching upwards from about one-third at the bottom, so as to cut across the picture.

'*Hua Yün-t'ai-shan Chi*' – Quoted in *Li-tai Ming-hua Chi*

[Thanks to *Li-tai Ming-hua Chi*, this interesting text has been preserved, as well as another work by Ku K'ai-chih, *Comments on Great Artists of Wei and Chin*. The *Comments* on the whole are rather critical, Ku writing like a professional artist himself, suggesting what might have been done. Ku was known for his 'three incomparables': incomparable in painting, in genius and in stupidity. Once he had a box of his works entrusted to a great collector of art, Huan Hsüan. Huan opened the box from the back, stole some of his works and declared that he had never opened the seal. Ku took it simply: 'These works are so gifted with life they must have become spirits and flown away.' Ku wrote in a quaint idiom; sometimes common words were put together so as to suggest some archaic usage, and some of the passages have defied the best exegesis.

Apart from the above-mentioned *Comments* and an interesting paragraph on technical points, very matter-of-fact, by Ku K'ai-chih, this is the only extant piece of writing concerning the practice of art coming from the three great masters of the Six Dynasties (Ku K'ai-chih, Lu T'an-wei and Chang Seng-yu, fourth, fifth and sixth centuries respectively). As such it is

important as showing the artist's design and conception of a painting. These three masters, together with Chan Tse-ch'ien, developed human figure and landscape painting in the pre-Tang period.

For copies of Ku's remarkable art, see Cahill, pp. 14 and 27. Both in style and design, it was certainly outstanding.]

6

FIFTH CENTURY A.D.

Tsung Ping

A.D. 375–443

The Enjoyment of Painting

THE SAGE POSSESSES TAO and deals with things accordingly, while wise men keep their hearts pure to enjoy material forms. For mountains and rivers have a material form, and yet intrigue the spirit. That was why Huang-ti, Yao (ancient emperors), Confucius and Kwang-ch'eng, Ta-wei, Hsü Yu and Ku-chu (recluses) all enjoyed travels to the mountains of Kung-tung, Chü-ts'e, Miao-ku, Chi-shou and Ta-meng. It is also said that the mountains and waters are enjoyed by real men and the wise men.* The sages follow the Tao in spirit and the wise men comprehend it. The mountains and waters flatter the spirit and the real men enjoy them. Are not the two much the same thing?

I treasure memories of Lu-shan and Heng-shan and remember the gorges of King-chow. But despite my age, my spirit remains young. I regret that I cannot materialize myself and stand over the waters of Shih-men. Therefore I have taken to painting forms, arranging colours and constructing clouds over mountains. We see that a truth perceived by someone long, long ago can be understood by those coming a thousand years after, and that a concept or idea suggested by a few descriptive

* Mencius said the real men *(jen)* enjoy the mountains, while the wise men enjoy the waters.

lines can be found within the covers of a book. How much more should this be true of form represented by form and colour represented by colour, recalling past experiences that pleased our eyes and filled our past days?

Take a giant mountain like the K'un-lun, and consider the small size of the pupils of our eyes. Place something an inch before the eyes and they cannot see it. But placed a few miles away it can be encompassed by the small pupil no longer than an inch. This is because the farther away an object is, the smaller it appears. Take a distant view over a piece of silk, and the forms of the K'un-lun and Lang-chung mountains can be perceived within a square inch. A vertical height of three inches can represent a thousand fathoms, while a horizontal stretch of several feet can stand for the distance of several hundred miles. Thus it is that the onlooker is not hampered by its size, but is only concerned as to whether the forms and shapes are skilfully drawn. This is only natural. In this way, all the delicacies of the Sung and Hua mountains, and the beauties of this universe can be recaptured in a painting. For that which meets the eye and calls forth response from the heart as the true forms of things will also meet the eye and call forth response from the heart of the onlookers if the representation is skilful. When this spiritual contact is established, the true forms are realized and the spirit is recaptured. Is it not as good as seeing the mountains themselves? Moreover, the spirit has no form of its own, but takes form in things. The inner law of things *(li)* can be traced through light and darkness. If these things are skilfully represented, they are truth itself.

Therefore in my leisured life, having put my mind in order, I wipe a wine-cup or strum the *ch'in* (lute), and sit alone looking at a painting. Without leaving the crowded human habitations, I roam and wander in the solitary wilds of nature. There the mountain peaks soar aloft and the clouds and forests spread deep and far away. The sages and wise men are reflected from ages long ago, and all the interesting aspects of this life are absorbed into the mind. What more do I want? I am enjoying myself and if I do that, what more can I ask?

– 'Preface to Landscape Paintings'
Quoted in *Li-tai Ming-hua Chi*

[There are two pieces written by celebrated artists of this period – the above selection and one by Wang Wei (not Wang Wei of the Tang Dynasty) – on the same theme, almost identical in sentiment. This piece has been described by art historians as heralding the birth of landscape painting, which has dominated every other genre of painting in Chinese history. This sheer enjoyment of nature is Taoist, associated with the poet and recluse who spurn the allurements of office and wealth. Tsung Ping himself refused an official appointment. He was a contemporary of T'ao Yüan-ming (A.D. 365–427), the poet who best represented this sentiment of joy and contentment in simple country life.

Coupled with this development of landscape was the rise of art criticism, and an awakening of aesthetic consciousness during the fourth and fifth centuries. Political invasion by northern barbarians who ruled over the north coincided with a degree of high culture and art south of the Yangtse, chiefly around the Shanghai-Nanking region. Wang Hsi-chih, the Prince of Calligraphists, lived 321–379; Shen Yüeh (441–513) established the forms of the 'Tang poem'; Hsieh Ho (fl. 490) established the 'Six Techniques' of painting, and Chung Yung (early sixth century) formulated the criteria of appreciation of poetry.]

7

FIFTH CENTURY A.D.

Hsieh Ho

fl. A.D. 490

The Six Techniques of Painting

(Preface to *Ku Hua-p'in Lu*)

[This is the most influential paragraph ever written on the art of Chinese painting. Its 'six techniques' have remained to this day the criteria for Chinese art criticism.]

The *Hua-p'in* (*Criticism of Painting*) is a book grading the skill and excellence of paintings. Paintings all teach us something about human conduct and past events. An age long past can be brought back before our eyes from its silence and obscurity. Few there are who can master all the six technical factors, but from ancient times till now, there have been artists who are good in some one aspect. What are these six techniques? First, creating a lifelike tone and atmosphere; second, building structure through brush-work; third, depicting the forms of things as they are; fourth, appropriate colouring; fifth, composition; and sixth, transcribing and copying. Only Lu T'an-wei and Wei Hsieh mastered all six. But there are individual differences in skill, and the laws of art apply to all ages. I have graded them according to their excellence, taking cognizance of their age, and have written this brief introduction. I have

not tried to trace the origins of art. It is said that [art] came from the immortals. But nobody has seen them.

– Hsieh Ho of South Ch'i, *Ku Hua-p'in Lu*

[In view of the extreme importance of the six criteria of painting, especially the first, which became the sole, undisputed goal of art in China, a few notes are necessary.

The above brief paragraph serves as an introductory note to a list of twenty-seven artists (in some editions twenty-nine), divided into six grades, with brief comments by the author. The *Hua-p'in* is a special form of art book, grading different artists, of which there are many later examples. It is interesting to note that Lu T'an-wei was said to be 'in a class by himself', and 'beyond all praise'. ('He was top of the best. I have nothing to say, but for the present classify him among the Grade I.') The other three of first grade are Ts'ao Pu-hsing (third century), Wei Hsieh (fourth century) and Chang Mo. Ku K'ai-chih was placed in Grade III, an assignment disputed by Yao Tsui of Ch'en Dynasty (sixth century), a great admirer of Ku. Several 'sequels' to this book were compiled in the immediately succeeding centuries.

Hsieh Ho himself was described as an artist excellent in detailed realism.

It should be noted that the word *fa*, sometimes translated as 'canon', is used loosely, referring to the elements of a painting, and that the sixth has nothing to do with painting itself. Copying of models was included only because a great deal of it was being done, or occupied an artist's time. It should be further noted that in spite of the importance of the 'six techniques', the author merely names them, without further elaboration.

The significance of the Hsieh Ho formula is that creating 'tone and atmosphere' has been regarded by all Chinese artists as the first object of a painter's art. Chen Heng-ko, our contemporary, considers that the first and second factors, brushwork giving structure, are all-important, and the rest merely follow as a matter of course.

The first 'law' of Chinese painting, subscribed to by all artists in their profession, describes the main goal of painting. It

consists of four characters, or two bisyllabic words – *Ch'i-yün Sheng-tung*. (Atmosphere alive, or lifelike.) These four characters have troubled many translators into English.

(1) Osvald Sirén: *Resonance of the Spirit; Movement of Life.* ('Early Chinese Painting', Vol. 1, p. 32)
(2) Herbert A. Giles: *Rhythmic Vitality* ('Introduction to History of Chinese Pictorial Art', p. 29)
(3) Friedrich Hirth: *Spiritual Element: Life's Motion* ('Scraps from a Collector's Notebook', p. 58)
(4) Raphael Petrucci: *La consonance de l'esprit engendre le mouvement (de la vie)* ('Philosophie de la Nature dans l'Art de l'Extrême Orient', p. 89)
(5) Taki Seiichi: *Spiritual Tone and Life-movement* ('Kokka', No. 244)
(6) Laurence Binyon: *Rhythmic Vitality, or Spiritual Rhythm expressed in the movement of life* ('The Flight of the Dragon', p. 12)
(7) Benjamin March: *A picture should be inspired and possess life itself* ('Linear Perspective in Chinese Painting'. *Eastern Art*, 1931, p. 131)

Of the seven, the Japanese (No. 5) hits it most closely. The currently used translation by Giles, 'rhythmic vitality', expresses it correctly. But many fail or are confused because of lack of understanding of Chinese grammar. As the Chinese use it, *ch'i-yün* is a bisyllabic word, a noun meaning *tone and atmosphere; sheng-tung* is another bisyllabic word, an adjective, meaning *fully alive, moving, lifelike.* The whole phrase means 'a vital tone and atmosphere'. It suggests a successful creation of tone and atmosphere that is moving and alive, and by all Chinese criteria this tone and atmosphere, rather than verisimilitude, is the goal of a painting. The meaning is never ambiguous to the Chinese. Further mystification about the Chinese words is persiflage. The French translation of *'engendre le mouvement'* is entirely off the mark, for *sheng* is not a verb here. (How we need a Chinese-English dictionary!) The translation by Sirén is a form of 'monosyllabitis' which affects many sinologists and other translators lacking familiarity with the usage of Chinese words and phrases. Fascinated by the pictographs, they like to chew up

each character by itself (Ezra Pound, Florence Ayscough) as if every modern English word (e.g. 'breakfast') should be interpreted and translated according not to its usage, but to etymology. Sirén's translation of the fourth factor ('appropriate colouring') as 'according to the species, apply the colours' is typical of this method, and reflects the masochistic pains which these scholars love to exhibit as a result of their work. Even if the word *yün* should be taken apart and shown to have a 'sound' element in the pictograph, *tone* is still the word to be used here, and not *resonance*, since the subject is painting. One must say that 'resonance of the spirit' hardly means anything in English. Elsewhere, Sirén translates the simple word for 'natural' (*tse-jan)* as 'self-existing'. A translation like 'the *self-existing* pictures' (*Chinese on the Art of Writing*, p. 232) is totally uncalled-for, even though it helps to give an impression of Chinese 'quaintness'.

Like words in any language, the meaning of a Chinese word is never quite the sum of its components. One causes confusion only by taking the words apart. I give here a few examples, involving the words, *ch'i, yün, shen, ku, hsiang, feng, shui*, etc.:

ch'i-yün (atmosphere and tone) = tone and atmosphere
ch'i-hsiang (atmosphere and form) = impression (on a spectator)
ch'i-li (atmosphere and strength) = energy
ku-ch'i (bone and atmosphere) = backbone of character, personality
ku-chia (bone and frame) = skeleton structure
shen-yün (soul and tone) = facial expression
feng-yün (wind and tone) = charm of woman, poetry
feng-ko (wind and patterns) = style of composition
ko-tiao (patterns and melody) = style
feng-t'ou (wind and head) = power of political, social position, strength of attack
feng-shui (wind and water) = necromancy
shan-shui (hill and water) = landscape
jen-wu (men and things) = human figures

This chewing up of a Chinese character will not do. The word

fa in 'six *fa*' simply refers to the six technical aspects of painting. It has been variously translated as the six 'methods', 'principles', 'laws' and 'canons'. It has even been stretched to have a Buddhist meaning, connected with the word *dharma*, which it has nothing to do with.]

8

EIGHTH CENTURY A.D.

Wang Wei

A.D. 699–759

Formulas for Landscape

(Shanshui Lun)

[The following, generally ascribed to Wang Wei, the 'founder' of the Southern School, contains some important observations on composition and certain maxims for landscape painting, which are often quoted. The ascription to the famous poet and painter is not certain, but it is more likely than the ascription to Ching Hao (see No. 10), as is made by some editors. What is certain is that these represent well-known formulas for painters handed down from generation to generation in the Tang period. They are partly rhymed.]

In painting landscape, the concept [of rhythmic forms] should lead the brush along. Ten-foot hills, one-foot trees, one-inch horses, and tenth-of-an-inch men. Distant faces do not show eyes; distant trees do not show branches. Distant hills do not show rocks, but are half seen like eyebrows; distant waters do not show ripples, but reach towards the clouds on the horizon. These are certain formulas.

The lower parts of hills are blocked off by clouds; rocky bluffs are blocked off by streams. Building structures are blocked off by trees and pathways are blocked off by men. A

rock should be shown with three sides, and a road should be shown in its two points [of issue and exit]. For trees, notice the top forms; for water, notice the path of the wind. These are certain principles.

In regard to landscape – the flat hilltops are called *tien*; a connected range is called *ling*; a cleft in the hill line is called *hsiu*; a sharp cliff is called *ai*; an overhanging rock is called *yen*; a rounded hilltop is called *luan*; a narrow valley with rocks is called *ch'uan*; a closed-in ravine is called *huo*; a running brook between two hillsides is called *chien*; what looks like a hilltop in a range but stands out higher is called *ling*;* what stretches far out in a flat plateau is called *pan*. These are some general basic terms.

In viewing a landscape, first look for the general impression *(ch'i-hsiang)*, and next for the clarity or density of tone. The main 'host' and accompanying 'guest' hills must have a mutual relationship ('greeting gesture'). A number of lofty peaks should be shown in their majesty. Too many of them will confuse; too few will make the picture slack. Just the medium, with distances shown and distinguished. Distant hills should not join up with hills in the foreground, nor distant waters be connected with those nearby. Temples and huts may be placed in a recess mid-hills; a small bridge can well stand over a steep embankment. Mountain paths may be graced with surrounding woods; an ancient ferry may stand where the shore ends. Where the water ends, there may be misty woods; where it expands over a great distance, sailing boats may be placed. Old trees may stand on an overhanging rock, showing gnarled roots and twining creepers. Near a cliff on the bank, the rocks slant and the water forms eddies.

In regard to trees: the distant ones are flat and sparse, while those in the foreground should be tall and well shaded. Leaves go with soft young branches, and leafless trees show the hard, stiff branches. Pine boles show scaly marks, while the bark of

* *Ling* in third tone is the first-mentioned range of hills. *Ling* in second tone is the bulging hilltop. These are two entirely different characters. This shows the appalling inadequacy of Wade transcription, as it is never advisable to stuff a running text with superscript figures *(ling*^{2} *ling*^{3}*)*. The National Romanization easily distinguishes the two: *ling* and *liing* (double vowel for the third tone).

cypresses shows twisting lines. On soil, a tree trunk goes straight up and the roots are long; on rocks, it twists and bends oddly. Very old trees have many sharp twists and seem half dead, while winter forests should be sparse and desolate.

When it rains, the sky and earth are merged together. Windy days without rain are shown by the bending branches; on rainy days that are not windy, the treetops are weighed down, pedestrians are shown carrying umbrellas and fishermen wear their waterproofs. When the rain has stopped and it has cleared up the sky is blue. On a light, misty day, the hills are especially green. A setting sun sends slanting rays.

In the early morning, all the hills seem to understand the day's coming, covered with light stirring mists, while a declining moon pales in the sky. At sunset, the hills are crowned with a red disc, the boats lie on a river-bank or islet with their sails down; people going home for supper quicken their pace, while the door in the cottage fence is half open.

In spring, the mists may spread over the landscape while chimney-smoke hovers in the air. There are long stretches of white clouds, and the water is dyed blue and the hillsides take on a suggestion of green. In summer, tall trees block out the sky, and the green waters are still; waterfalls descend from great heights, and a lonely pavilion stands over the water nearby. In autumn, the sky is pale like water; here and there stand clusters of deserted trees, while cranes fly over the autumn waters and reed-covered islets and sandbanks. In winter, snow covers the land, woodcutters are passing by with their loads, and fishing boats are tied up along the shore, while the currents are low and the sandy banks are flat. Landscape painting should always take into consideration the seasons. Some titles could be: 'Locked up in Clouds and Mists', 'The Clouds Returning to Nestle in Ch'u', 'Autumn Sky on a Clear Morning', 'A Broken Tombstone in an Ancient Cemetery', 'Spring Colours in the Tung-t'ing Lake', 'Lost in an Unknown Place', etc.

The hilltops should vary; so should the treetops. Trees are the dress for the hills; hills are the frame for the trees. There should not be too many trees which may otherwise block off the view of the hills; the hills should not line up in disorder, but should rather help to bring out the spirit of the trees. One who can do these things may be said to be a good landscape artist.

[The authoritative *Sze-k'u T'i-yao* doubts that the author of this composition was Wang Wei, on purely stylistic grounds. This is the habitual weakness of the editors of *Sze-k'u T'i-yao*. Not even a great poet always writes in a sonorous style when he is making notes on painting technique. See note for No 10.]

9

NINTH CENTURY A.D.

Chang Yen-yüan

fl. A.D. *847*

Record of Famous Paintings to A.D. 841

(Li-tai Ming-hua Chi, dated 847)

[Our knowledge of Chinese art history in the ancient period owes more to this work than to any other known to exist. It consists of seven books of comments on ancient painters, including those of the Tang period, down to the year A.D. 841, and preserves for us many important writings by the artists which would be otherwise irretrievably lost (e.g. Nos. 5, 6, 7 in this book). These are preceded by three books dealing with art topics in general, translated below. The work is regarded as masterly and authoritative, and shows that thoroughness which comes from a deep knowledge and love of the subject.

I consider a knowledge of this work by Chang Yen-yüan as basic, not only in historical information, but also in respect to interpretation of the spirit of Chinese painting. This selection, and those by Shih-t'ao (No. 22) and Shen Tsung-ch'ien (No. 23) are basic for understanding the Chinese psychology of art. I have therefore given them the full space they deserve.]

1. *The Origin of Art*

Painting completes culture, helps human relations, and explores the mysteries of the universe. Its value is equal to that

of the Six Classics and, like the rotation of the seasons, stems from nature; it is not something handed down by tradition. When the ancient rulers received the mandate to rule from heaven, inscriptions on tortoise-shells and drawings presented by dragons appeared. Such omens have always appeared since the days of Yu-ch'ao and Sui-jen.*

These events have been recorded in jade and gold albums. Fu-hsi obtained the hexagrams from the Yung River, which was the beginning of books and painting; Huang-ti obtained [drawings] from the Wen and Lo rivers, and Shih-huang and Ts'ang Chieh made the pictographs.† The star Wen-ch'ang has pointed rays and is the lord of literature. Ts'ang Chieh who had four eyes looked up at the celestial phenomena and copied bird footprints and tortoise-shell markings, thus fixing the forms of written characters. Nature could not conceal its secrets, hence it rained millet; the evil spirits could not conceal their forms, therefore the ghosts wailed at night.‡

During this period, writing was not different from pictures in substance, but the first forms were crude. Writing grew from the need to express ideas, and painting grew from the desire to represent forms. This was the intention and purpose of nature and of the sages.

In the development of writing, there were six styles, namely, *ku-wen* (archaic script), *ch'i-tse* (rare characters), *chüan-shu* (seal script), *tsuo-shu* (*li-shu*, clerk's script), *miu-chüan* (ornamental seal script) and *niao-shu* (bird script) – the last being characters looking like a number of birds' heads§ used in banners. This last is

* Mythical figures at the dawn of history. Yu-ch'ao, meaning 'have nests', represents the period of tree-nesting people, and Sui-jen, drilling men, represents the period after the discovery of fire. Fu-hsi and Huang-ti in the next sentences belong to Chinese prehistoric legend. Huang-ti's reign is given as 2698–2598 B.C. For the Chinese in general, Huang-ti's rule of a hundred years symbolizes the emergence of a civilization and culture. The birth of arts, crafts, sericulture, writing and painting was usually ascribed to this period. Hence Huang-ti usually stands for the beginning of 'history'.

† Ts'ang Chieh is accepted as the inventor of Chinese writing.

‡ This legend of spirits crying at night for the creation of writing by Ts'ang Chieh expresses the idea that human ingenuity had the secrets of creation. Cf. the legend of Prometheus.

§ Actually like birds and worms. Another related form not mentioned here is the 'tadpole script', the strokes being like tadpoles.

in the category of drawings. Yen Kuang-lu (384–456) says: 'The purposes of drawings are three: one, to picture *li* (the inner law of things), as in the hexagrams; two, to represent ideas, as in writing; and three, to draw forms, as in drawings.' The official in *Chou-li** taught the six principles of formation of characters, and the third, called 'picturing forms' *(hsiang-hsing)*, suggests the idea of drawing. We thus see that writing and drawing were closely related, although given different names.

When painting was done on silk in the reign of Emperor Shun (2255–2206 B.C.) there was the beginning of the art of painting. Patterns were shown, and a better likeness was obtained. Rituals and music developed and there grew up a culture. In consequence, the emperors ruled with forms; ceremony and literature and poetry flourished.

The *Kuang-ya* (book of synonyms) says: 'To paint means to make a likeness.' The *Erh-ya* (another book of synonyms) says: 'To paint means to give form.' The *Shuo-wen*† (second century A.D.) says: '[The character] *hua* means boundary, like drawing the boundaries of fields and farms.' The *Shih-ming*‡ says: 'To *hua* is to *kua* (hang, overlay), i.e. to overlay forms of objects with colour.' Thus the carvings on bronze vessels showed the good and evil spirits, and the drawings on insignias and royal emblems set the mark of law and authority. The display of wine cups solemnized the worship at the ancestral temples, while the field measurements (maps) established the boundary lines. Loyalty and filial piety were honoured at the Yün-t'ai Hall, and deeds of valour were commemorated at the Lin-ko Terrace. People looking at the portraits were inspired by the good men and reminded of those who were wicked. The portraits thus celebrate the successes and failures of past history. Biographies narrate events, personal actions and songs celebrate the beauty and valour of men, but they do not allow us to see their personal appearance. Hence the paintings. Lu Chi (third century) expresses this idea when he says, 'The rise of paintings is like that of sacrificial hymns and songs, to celebrate great deeds. Language is best for narrating events, and painting is best for

* Oldest extant Chinese work on State ritual (Chou Dynasty).

† First Chinese etymological dictionary.

‡ A curious thesis which attempted to explore the relations of different words by their similarity in sound.

portraying forms.' Ts'ao Chih well says:* 'People who look at the paintings are inspired by a feeling of worship when seeing portraits of the ancient three *huang* and five *ti* rulers, but profoundly saddened when they see those of the tyrants, the last rulers of the Three Dynasties. It makes one grind one's teeth to see the usurpers and rebels, but one stands lost in admiration before the great scholars. One looks up to the honest martyrs, and sighs with regret at the dissolute sons and disloyal ministers. One looks askance at the adulterers and jealous women, but gives one's respect to the good queens. Thus it is seen that portraits serve to teach one something.'

When the Hsia Dynasty came to an end through the tyrant Chieh, court historian Chung escaped to Shang with the plans and drawings.† At the collapse of Shang under the tyrant Chou, the director of archives, Chih, went over to the House of Chou with the drawings. Prince Tan of Yen presented [maps as a ruse of surrender] to the Ch'in Emperor who accepted them without question. Hsiao Ho first entered [Ch'ang-an] and the first emperor of Han was thereby enabled to conquer the city. Such drawings are a nation's treasure, and a means for the control of peace. That was why the palaces of the Han Emperor Ming had frescoes (on historical subjects) painted, and the schools of Shu (Szechuan) had wall portraits (of the Confucian scholars) for moral inspiration. Empress Ma‡ expressed her envy on seeing the portrait of Emperor Yao, while Shih Leh (fl. *c.* 330), a Hu barbarian, asked for a display of the portraits of good men. Far from being merely a pastime like chess, the art of painting belongs among the cultural activities of a country. I hate Wang Ch'ung's§ stupid remark: 'What we see in portraits are ancient people, that is to say, dead people. So we would be seeing dead people. It is more important to learn what they said and did than to see their portraits. Their ideas and teachings are contained in their books, much more than can be learned from paintings on walls.' Such [unimaginative]

* See No. 4.

† The word *hua* here could refer to paintings, but more probably to maps, plans, and various drawings.

‡ See No. 4.

§ Wang Ch'ung (fl. A.D. first century) was China's first iconoclast, an important original essayist and philosopher, independent of all schools. He questioned everything, including life after death.

remarks are like those critics who scoff at Confucianism. It is like feeding people through their ears (hearsay) and playing music before cows.

2. *The Fate of Different Collections*

It is possible to record the origin of paintings from Ch'in and Han Dynasties (third century B.C. to second century A.D.). There were excellent painters in the Wei and Chin periods (third and fourth centuries) and many master artists appeared in the North and South Dynasties (fifth and sixth centuries). In this last period, there appeared masters like Ts'ao Pu-hsing, Wei Hsieh, Ku K'ai-chih and Lu T'an-wei, and later Tung Po-jen, Chan Tse-ch'ien, Sun Shang-tse and Yang Tse-hua. The families of Chang Seng-yu and Cheng Fa-shih were highly honoured in the Sui period (589–617) while the brothers Yen Li-pen and Yen Li-teh came at the beginning of the present (Tang) dynasty (seventh century). These are some of the outstanding artists, generally well known, and one need not mention all the distinguished painters here.

The Han Emperor Wu (140–87 B.C.) had historical archives to keep the books and paintings, and the Han Emperor Ming (A.D. 58–75) was a lover of art and founded a special art gallery. He also established the Hung-tu College as a great art centre where all the artists of the country converged. During the rebellion of Tung Chuo (A.D. 189), and the flight to Shang-yang, the paintings and silks were used by the soldiers as wraps for baggage. Over seventy cartloads were carried in the westward flight, but during the rainy journey half of them were spoiled or abandoned. Again there were many good collections in the Wei-Chin period, but they all went up in flames during the barbarian invasion (about 316).

[The year 316 marks the end of the Western Chin Dynasty and the beginning of Eastern Chin. From now on till 589, China was plunged into chaos and a succession of short-lived dynasties. The land north of the Yangtse was under barbarian

rule in a bewildering struggle for power, until it was unified under Northern Wei in 439. The Southern Dynasties ruled south of the Yangtse, under Eastern Chin, Sung, Ch'i, Liang and Chen, but rebellions and *coups d'état* by powerful generals were fairly common, as will be seen in the following paragraph.]

The rulers of Sung, Ch'i, Liang and Ch'en were all lovers and collectors of art. But during the invasion of the Chin capital by Liu Yao (316) many were destroyed. Again Huan Hsüan (rebellion in 398) was a greedy collector who wanted to possess all the masterpieces. When he dethroned the Chin emperor (403) the entire imperial collection fell into his hands. Ho Fa-sheng says in *The Restoration of Chin*, 'Liu Lao-chih sent his son Ching-hsüan to offer surrender; Hsüan was delighted and had the calligraphy and paintings displayed and examined.' At the defeat of Huan Hsüan, the Sung King Kao-tsu first asked Tsang Hsi to go to the palace and carry them out. The Kao ruler of Southern Ch'i was an excellent connoisseur. He had the old masters recorded and graded according to their excellence and not according to age. There were 348 scrolls in 27 packages, containing the works of 42 artists, marked in 42 grades, from Lu T'an-wei to Fan Wei-hsien. He enjoyed looking at them in his leisure hours. The Liang Emperor Wu was an art enthusiast and started to build his collection. [His son], the talented Emperor Yüan, was himself a good painter. All the rare pieces went into his palace. During the rebellion of Hou Ching (548) Prince Kang several times had dreams of Ch'in Shih-huang wanting to burn all the books once more. And indeed several hundreds in the palace collection were burned. When the rebellion was quashed (551) all the paintings were removed to Kiang-ling (Nanking), but then the capital fell to General Yu Chin of Western Wei. Emperor Yüan was prepared to surrender. He collected the calligraphy, paintings and books, in all 240,000 scrolls (*chüan*), and asked a court secretary Kao Shan-tao to have them burned. The emperor himself was going to jump into the fire and be burned together with his art works, but was pulled back by palace maids. The famous swords of Wei and Yüeh were dashed against the columns and broken. The emperor said, 'I, Hsiao Shih-ch'eng, have come to this day!

This is the end of art and culture.'* General Yu Chin was able to save over 4,000 scrolls from the ashes and carry them back to Ch'ang-an. Therefore we read in the poem '*Kuan wo sheng*' ('On My Life') by Yen Chih-t'ui (531– after 591): 'A million people were made captives, and thousands of books went up in flames. This is an unprecedented disaster, with all the treasures of a culture destroyed.'

In the reign of T'ien-chia (A.D. 560–565), the ruler of Ch'en tried hard to collect the dispersed treasures, and was able to obtain a good number of them. When Ch'en was destroyed by Sui, the staff secretaries to the commander-in-chief, Pei Chü and Kao Ying, were ordered to take charge of them and were able to secure over 800 scrolls. The Sui Emperor had two libraries built behind the Kuan-wen Hall in the Eastern Capital, the one to the east, called Miao-kao-tai, containing calligraphy, and the western one, called Pao-chi-tai, containing ancient masterpieces of painting. The Sui Emperor Yang had the collection with him on his trip to Yangchow. There was a shipwreck midway, and the greater part was lost.

Upon the death of this Sui emperor (618, beginning of Tang period) the collection fell into the hands of General Yu-wen Hua-chi. It was taken from him by Tu Chien-teh, at Liao-ch'eng. What had been left behind at the capital fell into the hands of Wang Shih-ch'ung. In the year 622, when these two generals were captured, the collections of both capitals and those taken by officers at Yangchow came into the hands of the present royal house. Sung Chun-kwei, a secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, was ordered to ship them up the Yellow River, destined for the capital (Ch'ang-an). At the Ti-chu Rocks the ship sank and only 10 to 20 per cent survived. (*Original Note:* At the beginning of the present dynasty, only 300 scrolls were in the palace, and those included the treasures from the preceding dynasties.) Emperor Tai-tsung (627–649) loved these art works and scoured the country for valuable pieces. During the reign of Wu Tseh-t'ien (684–704), Chang

* The idea here is that while the north was overrun by the barbarians, the south represented a highly developed Chinese art and culture. But the northern Wei rulers were adopting Chinese customs and even Chinese family names.

Yi-chih* petitioned to have all the artists of the country come to restore the palace collection of pictures. The artisans did their very best to make exact copies, each according to his speciality, and have them mounted as before. Chang then took the originals for himself. When Yi-chih was killed (705), the collection fell into the hands of Hsüeh Chi, a junior imperial tutor. Upon Hsüeh's death, the collection was in the possession of Fan, Prince of Chi. The latter at first failed to report his find, was frightened and burned [some of] them. All the collections of Hsüeh, of Prince Fan, Shih Ch'üan-kung and Wang Fang-ch'ing were eventually returned to the imperial palace. During the rebellion of An Lu-shan (755) many were lost or just disappeared. Later Emperor Shu-tsung did not care too much for art works, and gave them freely to members of the royal house; some of these who did not care for art sold them to all sorts of people. Thus, many fell into the hands of private collectors – by chance, as we say. During the political crisis of Teh-tsung (783), many again were lost. What a miserable story!

Such is the recurrent dispersal and destruction of art in wars, by fires, and by shipwrecks throughout the ages; more and more were lost as the years passed by. When a ruler happened not to give much thought to the preservation of art, the search for lost art was not made, and the general run of men outside the connoisseurs could not determine the quality of the works. Thus the cheap and commonplace were preserved and valued along with the genuine and valuable. Alas! people nowadays seldom care for the arts, and art has declined. Few artists can paint a fly looking so real as to be mistaken for a real one,† and we see only those who end up by painting [a tiger] like a dog.

My family has for generations kept collections of paintings [here follow details about his father's and grandfather's collections] – I have taken advantage of the leisure hours to make this record, making comments to show their special lines. I have also consulted art histories and records to supplement what I know. There is *Shu Hua Chi* by Sun Ch'ang-chih of Later Han [should be Later Wei] and also art criticism by Liang Emperor Wu,

* Chang belonged to the male harem of the Empress Wu. He was her great favourite and was head of the harem.

† Reference to Ts'ao Pu-hsing's skill. His fly was mistaken for a real one.

Yao [Tsui] of Ch'en, Hsieh Ho, the monk Yen-tsung of Sui, and officials of Tang [Li Ts'e-chen, Liu Cheng and Ku K'uang]. Pei Hsiao-yüan wrote the *Hua Lu* and Tu Meng wrote *Hua Shih-yi Lu*. These are mostly superficial, consisting only of a few pages. The worst is that by the monk Yen-tsung, a work of little value, besides containing many copyist's mistakes and omissions. There were, for instance, such good artists as Hsieh Hsi-yi of Sung and Ku Yeh-wang of Ch'en, who were not mentioned in these records. Many are the omissions in the more recent periods. The reason is that their paintings have not come down to us, and the authors failed to make a broad survey. As a matter of fact, this has happened to many heroes and good men who are forgotten by posterity and not to painters and their art only.

It is two hundred and thirty years since the founding of the [Tang] Dynasty. All kinds of art flourished, to be met with on every hand, especially in the reign of Ming-huang (713–755). I do not confine myself to the great masters only; artists excellent in a particular line are also to be included. There are over 370 artists included here, covering the period from Shih-huang (mythical inventor of painting) to the first year of Huei-ts'ang (841). They have been carefully selected, arranged, and a fair estimate has been made of their value. I have surveyed the whole complicated field, and given my honest opinions, based on my personal insight. It is my hope that perhaps someone in the future can take up the work where I leave off. Date: the first year of Tachung (847).

3. *Lists of Artists* (Omitted)

4. *On the Six Techniques*

Hsieh Ho in ancient times said: 'What are the six techniques? First, creating a lifelike tone and atmosphere; second, building structure through brush-work; third, depicting the forms of things as they are; fourth, appropriate colouring; fifth, composition; and sixth, transcribing and copying.' I may venture the following comments:

The old masters were sometimes able to change the physical likeness to point up the individuality *(ku-ch'i)*: they looked for

something in painting that went beyond mere realistic likeness. This is something difficult to explain to the common people. Modern paintings often fail to make the tone and atmosphere come alive, although they may succeed in verisimilitude. If one aims at catching the lifelike atmosphere, the likeness is implicit. The paintings of the earliest period showed an economy of line and atmosphere of serene and natural elegance, as is seen in those of Ku K'ai-chih and Lu T'an-wei. In the later period, the details were delicate and beautiful, such as those of Chan Tse-ch'ien and Cheng Fa-shih. The moderns are brilliant and try to be everything, while pictures of today are chaotic and meaningless, the work of artisans.

Of course, one must aim at likeness in painting a subject, but this likeness consists in the basic individuality *(ku-ch'i)* and both basic individuality and formal likeness come from the artist's conception of the subject and are based ultimately upon brush-work (form of lines). That is why a good painter is usually a good calligraphist.

However, the ladies of ancient days really had delicate fingers and strapped-in chests; ancient horses had a more pointed mouth and smaller body; ancient edifices were more simple and severe, and ancient dresses were ample with flowing lines. So the ancient drawings differ from the modern not only in attitudes and charming gestures, but in the subjects themselves. As to buildings, trees, and rocks, carriages and furniture, there is no life-movement involved, nor a specific atmosphere to communicate; what is needed is attention to direction and proper placing of lines. Ku K'ai-chih says correctly: 'Among the subjects of painting, the most difficult is human figures, next landscape, and next dogs and horses. The buildings are unchanging forms which are easy to do.' As to the gods, spirits and human figures, there is life and movement involved, and they must be given the correct mood and expression. If only a formal likeness is captured, and the tone and atmosphere is lacking, or if there are good colours but the brush-stroke lacks strength, the painting will leave something to be desired. As Han Fei says,* 'It is easier to picture ghosts and spirits, and more difficult to portray dogs and horses, because everyone has seen the animals but ghosts and spirits can be of weird shapes.'

* See No. 3.

In regard to composition, this factor is an all-important essential. It is not easy to discuss the masters from Ku and Lu down, because few of their works have survived. But Wu Tao-tse may be said to be a master of all six techniques in his ability to portray everything and he penetrates nature as if his hand were guided by a god. Therefore he has a rich and strong tone, which seems almost to leap out of the silk. His brush-strokes are free and untrammelled, just daubed on the walls, and yet the details are correct under close examination. That is why he is so extraordinary.

The matter of transcribing and making copies is merely a minor part of the artist's work. But painters today are contented with copying the superficial likeness, without catching the spiritual tone, or they apply the colours but without attention to the brush-work. How can such work be called painting?

Alas! the art has declined these days. Ku Chün-chih of Sung (fifth century) had his studio in a high loft and used to pull up the ladder after him so that his people at home seldom saw him. He painted on clear days, but stopped painting when the sky was overcast. The painters today mix dust with their ink and mud with their colours. They don't paint; they merely dirty the silk. Good artists have always been men of cultivated families, unconventional spirits and noble characters who outshone their fellow men and left a name for posterity. Art is not something which the man in the street can attempt to achieve.

5. *On Landscape, Trees and Rocks*

I have seen all the famous art works that have come down from the Wei-Chin period and are still extant. In landscapes, the peaks stand serrated in fine lines. Some waters are narrowly confined, and sometimes the human figures are larger than the hills.* Mostly they are adorned with trees and rocks. The trees are planted like stretched out fingers and arms.† It seems to me that ancient painters aimed at showing what they each excelled in, and did not follow the vogue of the day. The Yen Li-pen

* Later this disappeared from a change of level perspective to a 'high perspective'. The trees in the foreground are tremendous in Ching Hao (tenth century).

† As in Ku K'ai-chih's 'The Lo River Goddess' (see illustrations).

and Yen Li-teh brothers were outstanding artists at the beginning of Tang. Yang Tse-hua and Chan Tse-ch'ien concentrated on buildings, and gradually added or changed the surrounding trees and rocks. In their rocks, they made sharp cutting lines like ice-cracks or axe-strokes. In their trees, they delineated the outlines and leaves like carving, and painted many plane-trees and willows. There was an abundance of colours and the paintings seemed to suffer from over-elaboration. Wu Tao-tse (Tao-hsüan) was given powerful brush-strokes by God and from childhood seemed to understand the divine mystery. He often painted freely strange rocks and rapids on temple walls; you feel you could actually touch them. He also portrayed the landscapes of Szechuan. The art of landscape underwent a change first under Wu, and Li Sze-hsün and his son completed it. The forms of rocks were exquisite in Wei Ou, and reached the highest development in Chang T'ung.* T'ung could use a stiff, blunt (splayed) brush, and sometimes covered paint with his palm; there were subtle variations and yet the whole thing seems entirely spontaneous, done at one stroke.

There are, besides, Wang Wei, distinguished for his weight and depth;† Secretary Yang,‡ for his dash and abandon; Chu Shen, for his delicate shading; Wang Tsai, for his fine lines, and Liu Shang, for his verisimilitude. There are many others, but none surpassed them. . . .

6. *Influences*

[This book deals with the influence of artists on their followers, in the formation and development of particular styles. The word

* Chang Tsao, *alias* Wen-t'ung (eighth century). Chang Tsao, a contemporary of Wang Wei, but much less well known, was really the creator of a style that led to the expressionistic school.

† In the author's account, Wu Tao-tse looms much larger than Wang Wei, who was later considered the father of the impressionistic Southern School. But careful study shows that Wu Tao-tse, Chang Tsao and Chang Seng-yu were all masters of the free brush style, and Chang Seng-yu influenced Wu Tao-tse, according to this author. Chang Tsao painted very rapidly in a riot of amazing strokes, according to a witness's account by Fu Tsai (fl. *c.* 750).

‡ Possibly Yang T'ing-kuang, a distinguished contemporary of Wu Tao-tse.

used, *shih*, means 'to learn from', or 'to take as one's master', but the relation is not necessarily that of teacher and disciple, and they might not have lived at the same period.

There is a profusion of names in this section, omitted in the translation. What seems important is the relationship of some of the better-known artists, which I outline as follows:

Ts'ao Pu-hsing (third century) – Wei Hsieh (fourth century) – Ku K'ai-chih (fourth century) – Lu T'an-wei (fifth century).

Chang Seng-yu (sixth century) – Cheng Fa-shih (sixth century) (favourite pupil) and Wu Tao-tse (eighth century).

Ku K'ai-chih, Lu T'an-wei and Chang Seng-yu seem to exert the most powerful influence. The section continues:]

They all were influenced by others, or tried to imitate each other. Some broke out on independent lines of development, and some were not direct disciples. Sometimes the followers excelled their masters, and while the style seems to be the same, there is a difference in quality and treatment. For instance [the sixth century artists] T'ien Seng-liang, Yang Tse-hua, Yang Ch'i-tan, Cheng Fa-shih, Tung Po-jen, Chan Tse-ch'ien, Sun Shang-tse, Yen Li-pen can all be traced back to [the influence of] Ku K'ai-chih, Lu T'an-wei and Chang Seng-yu. T'ien excels in country scenes, Yang (Tse-hua) in horses and figures, Ch'i-tan in court scenes, Fa-shih in gay parties, Tung in buildings, Sun in female figures and evil spirits. Yen Li-pen is a complete master of the six techniques and never misses his subjects. What is meant by these individual excellences is that they were good all around, but excelled in some particular. Everybody admires Chan's buildings, but people do not know that Tung shared the reputation with Chan in the same generation, and Chan's buildings were actually inferior to those by Tung. Li Ts'e-chen makes a remark to which I can subscribe: 'In buildings, Tung reaches the limit, while Chan excels in horses. Tung has his horses, too, to compare with those by Chan, but Chan's buildings cannot compare with those by Tung. . . .

7. *On the styles of Ku, Lu, Chang and Wu*

Someone asked me what I think of the brush-strokes of Ku K'ai-chih, Lu T'an-wei, Chang Seng-yu and Wu Tao-tse. My reply is this: Ku's brush-work is tight and strong and continuous. It goes back and forth and he seems to do it with ease. The strokes are done very rapidly. The idea goes before the brush and when the work is done, the idea (concept of rhythm) remains. Thus a unity of atmosphere is achieved. In ancient days Chang Chih (Later Han) used to learn the rapid running script from Ts'ui Yüan and Tu Tu; he modified it and thus created the modern cursive style – in which all lines are formed together into a single line, the movement carrying the line from one character to another and even into the next line. Only Wang Hsien-chih (Wang Hsi-chih's son) seemed to understand this: he made the beginning of a line continue the movement of the preceding line. This is called 'one-line calligraphy' *(i-pi-shu)*. Later, Lu T'an-wei also did this kind of script, continuous in line [in his drawings]. We see thus that calligraphy and painting had the same technique. Lu's style is delicate, sharp and gracefully luminous, extremely charming. His name stood out in the (Liu-) Sung period (420–478) without an equal. Chang Seng-yu made his dots, dashes and cutting and brushing strokes, according to Madame Wei's *Pi-chen-tu* (chart of stroke movements in calligraphy). Each dot and each stroke had a special kind of charm. They jab and stab and cut like sharp swords in a fine array. This again shows the identity of lines between calligraphy and painting.

In the present dynasty, Wu Tao-tse is unprecedented and inimitable. He learned the brush-stroke from Chang Hsü (eighth-century master of cursive style). Again we see the identity between the two genres of art. As Chang Hsü was called the 'Madman of Calligraphy', so Wu should be called the 'Sage of Painting'. His gift seems to come straight from nature, inexhaustible. He skips his dots or breaks off strokes while others are intent on careful building up. He breaks loose from the conventional modes while the others only want to catch a faithful likeness. His bent bones and cutting swords, and his columns and beams were done without a ruler. His hair and curly whiskers seem to stand out alive and moving, issuing

from the skin with a great deal of force. He must have had a secret which we are not privileged to share. A painting several fathoms wide sometimes starts from an arm or a foot. The giant forms are strangely fascinating while the lines of body and limbs are tightly formed. He seems to do better than Chang Seng-yu.

Someone may ask, How could he draw bows and knives and columns and beams without a ruler or guiding line? The reply is that he did it by full concentration of his mind. Nature seems to work through his brush. This has been described as the idea going ahead of the brush so that when the strokes are completed, the concept remains. Every excellent skill is accomplished this way [by full concentration of mind and spirit], as has been known in the parables of the butcher and carpenter [of Chuang-tse].* Others trying to wield the same axe for the master butcher would probably hurt their hands. One's mind is distracted and confused, and it would be hardly possible to draw a circle with the left hand and a square with the right. Drawings by rulers are dead, while drawings by such complete concentration of mind and spirit are real drawings. Dead paintings only fill the walls like cheap whitewash, while with a real painting every single line is alive. A man who thinks deliberately how to paint misses it by so doing, while one who deliberates on his brush-lines achieves a drawing without trying. His lines flow naturally, spontaneously, in an inexplicable manner, far beyond what can be achieved by rulers and guiding lines.

Again it is asked, 'With full concentration, the result is compact and harmonious. But suppose a mistake is made. What is one to do?' I say that the drawings of Ku and Lu are compact and well formed, without leaving missing lines. The beauty of Chang and Wu is that, with a couple of strokes, the forms already stand out. There are skips and leaps in his lines, which seem to be missing.† The lines are not complete, but the fundamental rhythm is there. One must realize that there can be two different styles, the rapid and the carefully formed. My interlocutor nodded and left.

* In the parable of the butcher, the butcher concentrates, and being thoroughly familiar with the joints, never 'sees a cow whole'. Hence his blade is never blunted, etc.

† This is technically known as *chien-pi*, 'abbreviated strokes'.

8. *On Grading Paintings*

The myriad forms arise from the interpenetrating influence of *yin* and *yang* (the female and male principles). The universe accomplishes its work without words. The plants do not wait for the colouring materials to blossom; the snows and clouds do not depend on lead powder to appear white; the hills are green and the phoenix has splendid plumage without human artifice. Therefore to give the impression of fine colours by ink is a satisfactory achievement, while full attention to the colours takes away from the forms of things. Most to be avoided in painting objects is this preoccupation with surface likeness and colours; the work is elaborate, but loses in spontaneity. One's concern is not that a drawing is incomplete, but rather that it be complete *(liao)*. If then it is already complete, why complete it? For it is then not [really] incomplete. If one does not know that it is already complete *(liao)*, one really does not understand *(liao)*.*

After the loss of *naturalness*, one strives to be *masterly*; after the loss of mastery, one strives for *exquisiteness*; unable to be exquisite, one strives for *delicacy*, and the danger of delicacy is that one becomes *elaborate*. Of the first grade, those that are natural are the best, the masterly the second, and the exquisite the third. Of the second grade, the delicate are the best, while the elaborate are the second. I have established these five ranks to comprise the six techniques, covering all the good qualities. Of course, one can make hundreds of gradations, but it would be hardly worth while trying. Unless one's spirit is mature and one has a wide knowledge, with a special sensitivity of mind and heart, it is difficult to discuss art.

9. *On Pricing and Appraisal*

Someone once said to me, 'Chang Huai-huan in times past wrote a book entitled *Shu Ku (Appraisal of Calligraphy)*, which went into the different grades of qualities in great detail. Why don't you write a *Hua Ku (Appraisal of Paintings)*?' This is my reply:

Calligraphy and painting lie in different fields and the two should not be lumped together. In calligraphy or books, one

* *Liao*, a pun here – a rather well-written line.

can base the price on the number of words, but this is impossible with paintings. Besides, the famous works of the Han Dynasty and Three Kingdoms have mostly all perished. One learns of their existence by hearsay, but seldom has a chance to examine them. If such works are still extant they generally belong to the national archives. A work by Ku K'ai-chih, Lu T'an-wei or Chang Seng-yu, preserved intact, would be priceless. Even a scrap is carefully treasured. Compared to the field of calligraphy, Ku and Lu would be of the same value as the calligraphy of Chung Yu (third century) and Chang Chih (second century), while the work of Seng-yu might be comparable [in price] to the calligraphy of Wang Hsi-chih. But there is this difference: a piece of calligraphy is done in a few minutes, while a painting perhaps takes months. Therefore calligraphy is found in greater quantity, as it always has been.

We can divide the past into three periods, to estimate their value. Han, Wei and the Three Kingdoms would be the Early Ancient Period (second century B.C. to third century A.D.) . . . [lists of artists follow] – the period of Chin and Sung (fourth and fifth centuries) would be the Mid-Ancient period . . . [lists of artists] – the period of Ch'i, Liang, Northern Ch'i, Later Wei, Ch'en, Later Chou (North and South Dynasties, sixth century) would be the Late-Ancient Period . . . [names of artists] – Sui (589–617) and early Tang (seventh century) would be the Modern Period . . . [names of artists]. The Early Ancient paintings are simple; we know of their names, but have no means of seeing the works. The Mid-Ancient Period produced a mixture of simplicity and elegance and the works of this period, such as those of Ku K'ai-chih and Lu T'an-wei, are highly valued. Those of the Late-Ancient Period are easier to evaluate and distinguish, and they appeal more to the modern taste. Some of the Mid-Ancients, like Ku and Lu, can realize the same price as the Early-Ancients. Some of the Late-Ancients, such as Chang Seng-yu and Yang Tse-hua, can reach the price of the Mid-Ancients. Some of the moderns, such as Tung Po-jen, Chan Tse-ch'ien, Yang Tse-hua and Cheng Fa-shih, can command the price of the Late-Ancients. Modern artists whose works are priced like those of the Late-Ancients are Yü-ch'ih Yi-seng, Wu Tao-tse and Yen Li-pen. There are hundreds of grades among the second class. I mention only those commonly known.

Any collection must have famous scrolls by Ku, Lu, Chang and Wu before it can be said to 'have paintings'. It is like saying of a library that it must have as the absolute essentials the Nine Classics and Three Histories. Ku, Lu, Chang and Wu are like the classics, and Yang, Cheng, Tung and Chan are like the histories. The other miscellaneous artists are like the philosophies. A collector should be able to evaluate a scroll in his hands, estimate its price and be generous with money. For such collectors a screen by Tung, Chan, Cheng, Yang, Sun (Shang-tse), Yen or Wu would be worth 20,000 [pieces of silver], and the next class would be worth 15,000. A fan by Yang Ch'i-tan, T'ien Seng-liang, Cheng Fa-lun, Yü-ch'ih Yi-seng, or Yen Li-teh would be worth 10,000. These are prices for the better-known artists, and the others vary according to the grades. There are works jointly done by artists,* and in such a case, the middle-grade artist's picture would be equal in value to one by an artist of the first grade; sometimes the work of a first-class artist not in his best period might be had for the price of a middle grade. But the third grade cannot fetch the price of the first grade even though it is a 'co-operative effort'. The connoisseurs will judge a piece's worth on the spot. For instance, Chang Chih is known for his cursive script, but his scripts in regular or *li* style may not be considered of great value. I have seen the '*Yo-yi*' in small *k'ai* style, and the writings of Yu (Shih-nan) and Ch'u (Shui-liang). Wei Ou is known for his horses, and his pictures of human figures are not necessarily worth much. I have seen paintings of human figures which can match those by Ku and Lu. The large and small paintings differ in brush-work, and the good ones differ in style. Wang Hsi-chih (the great calligraphist), for instance, paints in different styles, and his pieces in half-cursive or cursive styles differ in quality, dependent upon the moment of writing. Paintings are like calligraphy, and there is no hard and fast rule to go by. Pei Hsiao-yüan (in his *Records of Public and Private Collections*) did not know painting and his comments are worthless.

Everything depends on how much a person likes a painting: it may be worth the price of gold and jade, or considered worthless depending on one's tastes. A definite price cannot be laid down.

* For instance, the rocks by one artist, the bamboo by another – in the same picture.

10. *On Verifying, Collecting, Purchasing and Enjoying Paintings*

Most students of calligraphy also know something about painting, and there have always been many collectors of art objects. But many collectors cannot tell the value of their paintings, or knowing their value, do not know how to enjoy them. Those who do enjoy them frequently do not know how to take care of them, or they fail to catalogue them properly. These are common faults of collectors.

During the reigns of Tseng-kuan (627–649) and K'ai-yüan (713–741), the emperors were brilliant men and the scholars were lovers and connoisseurs of art. The order was issued to collect national treasures, and these art works came in great quantities so that the imperial libraries were filled with valuable books and scripts. Some who offered treasures to the government received official posts and those responsible for the search for valuable treasures were richly rewarded. There were also many private collectors who were proud of their collections, and inevitably there were some good works among them.

The quality of each collection depends much on wise selection, for the bad are mixed with the good. If the collector does not understand such things, even modern works are often spoiled, while in a proper climate even ancient pieces are well preserved. There are masterpieces of the Chin and Sung periods which look like new; after several hundred years the paper and colours are still in good condition. What is the reason? In the interval between the K'ai-yüan and Tien-pao reigns, how many relics of the past were destroyed or just disappeared because they were not kept properly? For gold is produced in mountains and pearls in the seas in inexhaustible supply. But paintings are easily spoiled with the passing of time, and the artists cannot come back to life to recreate them. Is this not a pity? Some handle the paintings roughly, or do not roll and unroll them properly, causing damage by friction. Some do not know how to keep them in good packages, or just lose them. Thus the genuine pieces become gradually rarer and rarer. Is this not deplorable?

Paintings and scripts should be entrusted to none but those who love them. One should not hold the pieces near a fire, nor look at them in windy places, or during meals, or while spitting,

or having forgotten to wash the hands. Once Huan Hsüan loved to show his paintings and scripts to his guests. One of them, who was not an art lover, touched a painting while eating a pancake and caused a big blemish on the piece. Hsüan was stunned for a minute, and thereafter demanded that those who wished to look at them first wash their hands. A big, flat table should be provided in such homes and be dusted clean before unrolling the scrolls on it. In the case of big scrolls, a stand should be made on which to hang them. Frequent unrolling and exposure of scrolls prevents damage from damp.

I learned from my early youth to take charge of scrolls, keep them in order and enjoy them. Such labours occupied me day and night. Every time a new piece came into our collection, I would spend a whole day putting it in good order and then admire it. If a good piece was on the market, I would sell my old clothes and forgo my meals to obtain it. My family and the servants often laughed at me: 'Why are you fussing all day over such an idle occupation?' and I would reply, 'If I do not keep busy at such an idle occupation, how can I enjoy this limited life?'

[The following sections are not translated:

11. *On colophons and signatures.*
12. *On official and private seals in the various ages.*
13. *On mounting and labelling.*
14. *On the frescoes at the temples of both capitals and in the country.*
15. *List of famous paintings by unknown artists.*

More of this sort of information is found in No. 14, by Mi Fei.]

10

TENTH CENTURY A.D.

Ching Hao

fl. A.D. 920

A Conversation on Method

(Pifa Chi)

[We are now in the important tenth century, which saw the full development of the typical Chinese landscape art. In the time of the Five Dynasties (907–959), there developed a grand style of landscape painting which assumed a new importance and has dominated Chinese painting ever since. Of those in the tenth century, Ching Hao and his disciple Kuan T'ung were the earliest, followed by Tung Yüan, Chü-jan, Li Ch'eng and Fan K'uan in the first decades of the Sung Dynasty. The names of Ching–Chü–Li–Tung thus stood for the height of landscape painting, a group largely similar or related in style, whom the later Yüan and Ming masters claimed to follow and imitate. Ching lived through the change of dynasty from Tang to Later Liang. He took his poetic name Hung-ku-tse from the place mentioned in the opening sentence.]

I have several acres of land at Hung-ku in the Tai-hang Mountains, where I live as a farmer. One day I went up the Shencheng Mount to take a look. After a while I found myself under the shadow of some great rock formation opening up like

a gate. The path was covered with moss and dripping dew and there was a variety of strange-looking rocks steeped in a vapoury atmosphere. I went straight ahead and found there was a great growth of giant pines, some of whose trunks were of considerable girth. The bark was covered with green moss, and the scaly trunks rose straight up to a great height reaching towards the skies. Where a group of them formed a grove, the air was pleasant with a sense of life and growth. Others stood aloof happily by themselves. Sometimes the twisting roots were exposed, and sometimes a tree overhung a torrent. They decked the banks and followed the river, breaking into cliff fissures and spreading out the green moss. I was pleasantly surprised and took my time enjoying it all.

Next day, I went again, taking the painting brush with me. I must have done several ten thousand [*sic*] copies before I caught the spirit.

The following spring I met an old man at Stone Drum Rocks.*

He asked me what I was doing and I told him.

'Do you know the painting technique *(pi-fa)*?' asked the old man.

'No, old sire. I am an uncultured peasant. How would I know about painting technique?'

'Do you know what I want to reveal to you?'

I was both embarrassed and surprised.

'Well, you are a nice young man. You will learn. There are six essentials in painting: First, spirit *(ch'i)*, second, mood and atmosphere *(yün)*, third, thought *(sze)*, fourth, the scene *(ching)*, fifth, the brush-work *(pi)*, and sixth, the ink-work *(mo)*.'

'*Hua* means *hua*,'† I said. 'To paint is to give the external appearance. We just want the true likeness. Why all this?'

'I am sorry, you are mistaken. *Hua* means just *hua*. There is an external appearance which may not be mistaken for the true reality *(chen)*. Take the appearance as appearance and the reality as reality. Unless this is understood, one will draw a mere likeness, but *not* capture the real essence.'

* The fiction of meeting some unknown strange man or immortal in disguise was common in Taoist literature.

† '*Hua* (fourth tone) means *hua*(second tone).' – In National Romanization, '*huah*' means '*hua*'.

'What do you mean by *likeness* and by *reality*?'

'A likeness,' replied the old man, 'is what you get when you portray a thing's form and miss the spirit *(ch'i)*. *Chen* (reality, real essence) means when you have captured both the form and the spirit. When the spirit is left out, the form is dead.'

I apologized and said, 'I realize that calligraphy and painting are the occupations of great scholars. I am just a farmer. I have tried my hand at it, but cannot do anything with it. Will you teach me – but I don't think I can ever paint.'

The old man said:

'Human desires are the pitfalls of life. Wise scholars take delight in music and painting, to take the place of the different desires. Since you are of the right type, you should keep on and not give up. I will tell you [of the six essentials just mentioned]: *Ch'i* means the mind moving along, guiding the brush in perfect control. *Yün* means to suggest forms without all the details and create an effect which is not drab and common. *Sze* means to have a grasp of the compositional scheme, and have insight into the scene. *Ching* means to have regard for the changing seasons and catch the reality. *Pi*, or the brush-work, moves according to rules, but it makes adjustments and changes as it goes along. It is neither substance, nor form. It is a movement, a flight. *Mo*, or ink-work, gives variations in shading to give a sense of the location and depth of objects, thus forming a natural pattern. It does not seem to come from the brush.'

After a while, he said again, '[There are four classes:] *shen*, masterly; *miao*, wonderful; *ch'i*, exciting; and *ch'iao*, clever. To do it without seeming effort and catch the forms naturally – that is masterly.* To be able to penetrate all and comprehend the nature of all things, and have all this done properly in form and style – that is wonderful. To be unpredictable, perhaps deviate from the true scene, and so perhaps distort things – that is exciting. Such painting has good control of the brush, but is weak in thought element. The clever artists can do pretty little things, pretending that they know the main principles; they try to elaborate and justify and explain to gain stature for themselves. Such people have plentiful showmanship but little substance.

* The idea of expending no effort but following instinct is essentially Taoist.

'There are four moving qualities of the brush-lines: tendons, flesh, bones, and strength or vigour. Where the lines break off and yet remain connected in line space – that is the tendons. Where the movements, beginning and end, are full and well formed – that is the flesh. Where the lifeline is strong and straight – that is the bones. Where there are no weak lines – that is the strength of spirit. Therefore it is seen that over-use of ink spoils the form; pale, insufficient shading spoils the vigour; dead tendons spoil the flesh; completely disjointed lines are lacking in tendons; and the merely pretty lack bones.

'There are two kinds of faults, visible and invisible. Visible faults are such as flowers not in season, houses too small in relation to the human figures, or trees higher than hills, or a bridge not properly connected with a bank – mistakes that are questions of measurement and size, and can be corrected. Invisible faults are such as lack of tone and atmosphere, or complete distortion of shapes. There is plenty of ink-work, but the objects are dead. Such faults cannot be remedied by correction.

'You love to paint clouds and forests and hills and rivers. You should understand clearly why things look a certain way. Trees, for instance, grow each according to its nature. The pines grow straight without bends, not too closely packed, nor too scattered, neither exactly green nor blue. They always straighten up and grow upwards, and when they reach a certain height, the branches spread downwards, in a down-swinging gesture, without touching the ground, and lie in a succession of different levels. This is like the spirit of the gentleman. Some people paint pines with twisting trunks and abundant foliage. That is not the proper spirit and style of pines. The cypress, on the other hand, keeps on twisting, with many intercrossing branches. Their bends follow certain patterns and they grow in a certain direction according to the sun. Their foliage is shaped like twine and their branches resemble lines of hemp. It would also be a mistake to paint cypresses like snakes on paper [?], with a fearful and sinister appearance. Other trees like the *ch'iu-t'ung*, the oak, the elm, the willow, the mulberry and the ash, all have their individual forms. One comes to know them after long study.

'The forms of landscapes grow from a variety of forces. There

are the sharp peaks, the flat tops, the rounded tops, the connected range, the notch, the bluff, the overhanging cliffs, the valley with footpaths, the rugged, roadless terrain, the river, the gully. The hilltops may be different in shape, but the main range moves in a continuous line. Forests and springs are hidden, suggested here and there. It would be a mistake to paint a landscape without these elements, or again to paint water with disorderly lines, or like broken threads, or without indication of crests and waves. The clouds and mists are light or heavy according to the moment, and they drift with the movement of air and have no fixed forms. One must get at the general drift and not be over-elaborate. These are things to learn to avoid first. After that one may learn the brush-strokes.'

'What do you think of the artists, past and present?'

The old man replied, 'There are few who succeeded. Hsieh Ho regarded Lu T'an-wei as the chief, but it is difficult to see his work now. The drawings still available of Chang Seng-yu often violate the proper form *(li)* of things. There were many competent artists in colour, but the black-and-white was developed in the present Tang Dynasty. The work of Chang Tsao is strong in reproducing the tone and atmosphere of trees and rocks. Its ink-work is splendid and shows complete mastery of the subject. He did not care much for colours. He was unique and unprecedented. The abbots Chü-t'ing and Pai-yün have a marvellous splendour, capturing the true spirit of things, are often surprising and surpass our reach of understanding. Wang Wei has a rich, harmonious control of brush and ink. He communicates a high tone and atmosphere and his forms reveal a deep knowledge. Li Sze-hsün has deep knowledge and a refined, elevated viewpoint. His brush-work is very fine. His work is clever and decorative, but is entirely unsupported by the use of ink-shadings.* The work of Hsiang Yung shows his rocks and trees as curiously dry and lacking definition. He was specially good in the use of ink, but his brush-work lacks bone. However, he succeeds in his free style in capturing the true

* The two artists discussed here are significant as representing two styles. Li is the founder of the Northern School, Wang Wei of the Southern School. Ching Hao here criticizes Hsiang Yung as lacking in bone structure and Wu Tao-tse as lacking in ink-work. It is said that he himself wished to avoid both, and thus be master of both brush and ink.

nature of the primeval unity. Yüan Ta-ch'uang* is just clever and pretty. Wu Tao-tse is good at portraits, of a very high order in individuality. His trees are not designed [?]. Unfortunately he uses insufficient ink. From Chen [?] and the monk Tao-fen down, the others are barely above the average and have nothing exciting. Their use of brush and ink also shows effort. I have indicated the main outlines, but cannot give you the details. . . .' [An unimportant paragraph omitted.]

The old man was surprised [by my poem on pines] and after a long while said, 'I hope you will keep on. Then you can forget all about brush and ink and create real scenes that belong to nature. I live near here, at the Stone Drum Rocks. My name is Stone-Drum-Rocks Man.'

'May I attend you as a disciple?'

'That is not necessary.'

And he left. Another day I tried to call on him, but he was nowhere to be found. Later I followed his instructions and valued them greatly. I have now put them down as guideposts for beginners.

[The *Sze-k'u T'i-yao* doubts that Ching Hao was the author of this piece, on the usual stylistic grounds. 'The style is somewhat dry: it fails to flow. In the midst of elegant expressions, suddenly we come across crude, vulgar phrases. This seems to be the forgery of some artists who knew how to read, but did not know style.' The popular vogue of doubting authorship and crying 'forgery' became a fashion in the Manchu Dynasty, and is unscientific by modern Western standards. Yu Chien-hua, who is living today, furiously rebuts the charge of forgery. There is no other extant writing by Ching Hao (Yu says) to enable us to form a comparison. Ching was just an artist. The very existence of simple phrases tends to support our belief in its genuineness. 'One cannot determine the genuineness of a piece on the basis of excellence of style, without regard to its content. This was the bad habit of civil service examiners!' So much 'textual criticism' of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in China is just this kind of loose talk. See also my comment on No. 8.]

* Name unknown to art historians. Probably a misprint.

II

ELEVENTH CENTURY A.D.

Kuo Hsi

c. 1020–1090

A Father's Instructions

(*Lin-ch'üan Kao-chih,* dated 1080)

[We now enter the famous Sung period. The Tang painters developed black-and-white paintings to a high degree, showing the capabilities of ink-stroke rhythms, laying the basis for the impressionistic style, usually called the *literati* style *(wen-jen-hua)*. The Sung period was important for three reasons: (1) the beginning of the academician paintings *(yüan-hua)*, generally realistic, in contrast to the impressionist style; (2) the death of portrait painting; and (3) the birth of landscape, with the impetus given by the masters of the Five Dynasties and early Sung (Ching-Kuan-Li-Tung). The emphasis changed from human figures to nature (landscape, birds and animals).

This piece may be regarded as signalling the rebirth of landscape painting, showing the intense feeling for hills and rivers and lakes, and some of its important techniques. This feeling for nature runs through all Chinese prose and poetry and is not the result of Zen; it determined the development of Chinese art into landscapes at the cost of human portraits. It is generally agreed that the piece was written by Kuo Hsi's son, Kuo Sze, as is stated in the opening paragraphs.

For examples of Kuo Hsi's art, see Cahill, pp. 36–37.]

1. *Foreword*

The *Analects* says, 'One should aim at Tao,* develop a base of personal character, rest on the standard of true manhood, and amuse oneself with the arts.' The [six] arts refer to rituals, music, archery, horsemanship, writing and mathematics. This 'writing' is a development from drawing. The three sections of *Yi-ching, The Book of Hills and Seas, The Book of Atmosphere,* and *The Book of Forms,* come from the three kinds of atmosphere: hills, air and forms, each having an atmosphere of its own. These are all the beginnings of painting.

Emperor Huang-ti created the official gowns and costumes, with patterns [in squares of dragons, phoenixes, etc.] which showed the origins of the art. Emperor Shun had twelve patterns, including 'wild dragon' and 'decorative insects', and it is said that the purpose was to 'see images of the ancient days'. *Erh-ya* says, '*Hua* means images,' that is to say that images are what make a painting. The commentaries on the *Yi-ching* hexagrams are called *hsiang-ts'e* (image comments) for this reason. The *Analects* says, 'In painting, the application of white comes last.' The *Chou-li* says, 'In painting, the work of applying white comes last.' It is seen that the origins of art stretch back to the remote past coming from diverse sources. The classical reading of the passage, 'Fu-hsi *hua* the hexagram', gives *hua* in 'entering tone', which then was interpreted as meaning 'to stop' ('draw a line at'). This makes no sense. It should be read as *hua* in the usual fourth tone. The special character for drawing a line [with 'knife' radical] was created later; the original was just the regular word [without the 'knife' radical]. It should be noted also that the *ku-wen, chou-wen,* and bird and fish scripts that we know today were all pictographs, or pictures.

Since my childhood, I have followed my father in his trips to see wild nature ('springs and rocks').† Every time he was doing some painting, he would say, 'There is a technique about

* The word 'tao' (meaning truth, the way, moral teachings, etc.) was liberally used by Confucianists and its use was thus not limited to the Taoists.

† The Chinese title of this piece is *'Lin-ch'üan Kao-chih'*. The phrase *Lin-ch'üan* (forest and springs) should be taken to mean a wild landscape, for it means more than 'forests' and 'springs'. It is used in Chinese literature to refer to retirement to nature, what is now called 'retreat'.

painting landscape. One should not think it could be done in any haphazard fashion.' I always noted down what he said. There are several hundred such notes, which I am putting together for lovers of this art, so that they will be preserved.

Alas! my deceased father* was a student of Taoism and practised the secret art of longevity. We did not come from a painter's family. He took to art naturally, and became famous in 'amusing oneself with the arts'. But he was also a man of great character, a loyal son and friend. The arts were his relaxation. His children and grandchildren must never forget this.

2. *On Landscapes*

Why is it that a gentleman loves nature? The reason is that he usually lives in a house and garden, enjoys whistling over rocks and streams, loves to see fishermen, woodcutters and recluse scholars, and enjoys the company of monkeys and cranes. It is human nature to resent the hustle and bustle of society, and to wish to see, but not always succeed in seeing, immortals hidden among the clouds. In times of peace, under a good emperor and kind parents, it would be wrong to go off alone and try to find oneself. For there is duty and responsibility which cannot be ignored. . . . But the dream of a retreat to forests and springs and finding the company of saints in retreat is always there. We are usually excluded from the sights and sounds of nature. Now a good artist has reproduced it for us. One can imagine oneself sitting on rocks in a gully and hearing the cries of monkeys and birds; while in one's own sitting-room the light of the mountains and the colours of the water dazzle one's eyes. Is it not a joy, a fulfilment of one's dream? That is why paintings of landscapes are so much in demand. To approach such paintings without the requisite state of mind would be committing a sin against such natural beauties.

There is a way of painting landscapes and of looking at them. A good painting may be of large size and not seem too large, or of small size and yet not seem inadequate. The same painting may seem of inestimable value if looked at with the heart of a

* Kuo Hsi was a member of the Academy of Art, very highly regarded, tracing his work to the influence of Li Ch'eng.

retired scholar, or completely valueless if looked at with the mind of a snob.

Mountains and waters are tremendous things. One must look at them from a distance to get the general sweep of the scene. The [miniature] paintings of human figures can be seen at a glance while held in the hand or placed on a table. This is the way to look at paintings.

It has been well said indeed that there are different kinds of mountains. Some are good for climbing, some for looking up at from a distance, some for walks, and some for residence. When a painting can achieve this effect, it may be considered good. But those that are good for walks and for residence are preferable to those good for climbing or for looking up at from a distance. The reason is that in several hundred miles of land, only 30 or 40 per cent are good for easy walks or for residence, but this is what one wants. This is the reason why gentlemen seek regions of natural beauty. Artists and critics should always remember the primary motivation of landscape art, its *raison-d'être*.

One can sometimes do a bit of fortune-telling through art work. Li Ch'eng has a good family of children and grandchildren because one sees that his hills and land masses are broad and well formed, delicate at the top and heavy at the bottom – the sign of good progeny in fortune-telling. It is not just fortune-telling. It just should be so.*

Learning painting is like learning calligraphy – one must work with models. By copying models of Chung Yu, Wang Hsi-chih, Yü Shih-nan and Liu Kung-ch'üan (in calligraphy), one comes to resemble them. As for the distinguished and broad scholars, they should practise all styles and absorb them to form their own style. That should be the real goal. It is the custom nowadays for the people of Shantung to copy Li Ch'eng, and for those in Shansi and Shensi to copy Fan K'uan.

One falls into a rut anyway. Why should all the people in such wide areas and all districts copy one style? This has always been the trouble – one limits oneself to one school, and the

* Chinese fortune-telling is for heavy lower features of faces and long ears, and against sharp, thin features. They stand more or less for the principle of generosity and endurance and forbearance as against cunning and impudence and a sharp character.

result is a deadly uniformity. Some people will not listen to this advice, not because they do not want to, but out of sheer habit. However, everybody hates uniformity and likes to see freshness and novelty, and that is why I say a great scholar should not limit himself to one master.

Liu Tsung-yüan well says about the 'secrets' of composition: I think this is true not only of literature, but of all activities, especially of art. In any kind of painting, irrespective of size and quantity, the first key to success is absolute concentration and devotion. Without concentration, one's soul does not go into the work, and the work will be lacking in clarity of spirit. One must be serious about it, or the work will be superficial, and must put energy and industry into it or the picture will be feeble. Lazy work, perfunctorily done, will result in a weak picture, lacking in sharpness. Work done in a depressed mood will result in a dismal atmosphere, lacking in lightness of spirit. These are all due to lack of concentration. Or one undertakes a picture light-heartedly, and the result will be sketchy and lacking in completeness – the fault of lacking a serious attitude. If one does it familiarly or casually, the style will be hasty and uneven – the result of absence of industry. Lack of clarity of spirit results in loss of definition, lack of lightness of spirit works against joy and freedom in style, lack of completeness works against proper composition and form, and unevenness destroys the compact style. These are some of the most common pitfalls of students. But the intelligent ones will understand.

Note by Kuo Sze.

I have occasionally seen my late father leave a couple of paintings uncompleted after starting them. He would leave them alone for ten or twenty days because he didn't want to finish them. Is this not because he wanted to avoid his lazy moods? Sometimes he put on a spurt of activity, forgetting everything else, but something interrupted him, perhaps some triviality, and again he would leave it alone. Is this not perhaps because he wanted to avoid painting in a depressed mood? When he worked, he had the studio in perfect order, the light coming from the window, a clean table, incense and good brushes and choice ink all laid out and he would wash his hands and scrub the inkstone as if he were attending a great ceremony.

When his mind was completely settled, then he would begin. Is this not what he called avoiding light-mindedness? Once he completed a sketch, he would go over it again and again, adding here, correcting there, until he was satisfied, like a general planning a campaign. Is this not what he called avoiding casualness? This goes for success in all walks of life, all undertakings big or small. My father emphasized and explained this to me again and again, perhaps in the hope that I would remember it for life as the key to progress.

Some people learning to paint flowers would put a flower in a hole in the ground and observe it from above to get an all-round view of it. Others learning to paint bamboo would place a bamboo and look at its shadow on a wall in moonlight to study the outline of a real bamboo. In learning landscape painting, the same idea [of gaining proper perspective] holds true. One must personally observe the hills and rivers and get the real flavour. One should look at the hills and valleys from a distance to get its layout and again at close range to know its surface texture. The clouds and mists of a real landscape vary according to the seasons: tranquil in spring, flamboyant in summer, sparse and thin in autumn, and sombre in winter. To catch the life of the clouds, one must draw the general outline, without too many surface strokes. The hillsides look different in the four seasons: smiling and coy in spring, dripping green in summer, neatly dressed in the fall, and asleep, tired in winter. To get the tone of the hillsides, one should indicate the general type without too much detail. Storms and rain in a real scene can be seen from a distance, while at close range, the drift and connections and complex relations are lost. The clarity of atmosphere, either clear or overcast, may be seen at a distance and lost at close range.

Human figures in the mountains are for indicating the roads, and the temples and storeyed buildings are for indicating scenic spots. The position of trees and groves is for showing the distances, and the breaking off or continuation of rivers and valleys is for indicating depth. Bridges and ferries serve human needs, while fishing-boats and fishing-poles help to please the human heart.

A central mountain serves majestically as the lord of the

smaller crests and forests and ravines grouped around it, the eminent point of everything big and small within the compass. Its demeanour is like that of a king receiving the homage of his courtiers and subjects, none daring to assume easy-going or disrespectful postures. A tall pine rises straight into the sky, the leader of all bushes, creepers and vegetation grouped around it, like a commander. Its demeanour is that of a gentleman in a position of honour, commanding the service of the common people, who dare not show an attitude of disrespect or discontent.

A mountain looks this way close by, another way a few miles away, and yet another way from a distance of a dozen miles. Its shape changes at every step, the more the farther one goes. It looks this way from the front, another way from the side, and yet another way from the back. Its aspect changes from every angle, as many times as the point of view. Thus one must realize that a mountain contains in itself the shape of several dozen or a hundred mountains. It looks this way in spring and summer, another way in autumn and winter, the scene changing with the seasons. It looks this way in the morning, another way at sunset, yet another in rain or shine, the manner and appearance changing with morning and night. Thus one must realize that one mountain contains in itself the manner of several dozen or a hundred mountains.

Human sentiments colour the scene. Thus men feel happy when facing the spring hills covered with mists; they feel relaxed and at ease facing a summer hill with deep forests, feel alert and lonely against an autumn hill, clear and sparse with an abundance of falling leaves, and feel silent and desolate against a winter scene enveloped in banks of dark fog. A painting should make one feel these sentiments as if one were bodily there.

Such are the desires aroused by paintings. One feels an itch for taking to the road when he sees a white stretch of footpath against blue smoke; one wishes to go to take a look on seeing a peaceful river reflected at sunset; one gets the idea of wanting to live in the mountains on seeing retired scholars in their mountain retreats; one yearns to go and travel on seeing rocky springs under an overhanging cliff. A painting should arouse such desires and wishes by making one feel that one is bodily there.

The mountains in the south-east [of China] are excitingly delicate. This is not because Nature is partial to the south-east. For the land here lies low in delta regions (Shanghai, Ningpo etc.). The soil foundation is shallow. Many of its mountains and granite walls rise abruptly towards the skies, and its waterfalls seem to descend from the clouds. There are waterfalls coming down over a thousand feet as at Hua-shan – high enough, but there are few of them. Even the larger mountain ranges come up from the land level, and not from farther down.

The mountains of the north-west are immense. It is not because Nature is partial to the north-west. For the land of the north-west stands on a high level, with rivers flowing down from it and undulating foothills spread under it. Its surface is thick and its water deep. There are many long, winding ranges stretching away for a thousand miles, while plateaus ramble on in all directions. There are abruptly rising peaks like Sung-shan and Shao-shih, but there are not many of them, and even these seem to come up from deep down.

The Sung-shan area excels in scenic rivers, that of Hua-shan in good peaks, of the Heng-shan in special crevices, of the Ch'angshan in splendid gorges, and T'ai-shan has an especially beautiful peak. There are all the famous mountains and great places like T'ien-t'ai, Wu-yi, Lu-shan, Ho-shan, Yen-tang, Min, O-mei, Wu-hsia, T'ien-t'an, Wang-wu, Lin-lü and Wu-tang where precious stones are found and immortals make their abodes, whose beauty and grandeur are beyond description. There is no better way to capture their spirit than to love them, to visit them to one's heart's content, and to observe them carefully, so that one can see them with one's eyes shut. Without thought of painting materials or brush and ink, one feels all of it as one's own picture. When the monk Huai-su heard the river's flow at Kialing at night, his cursive calligraphy was improved. When Chang Hsü saw the sword dance of Mme Kung-sun, his cursive script became inspired. Without all this preparation, intimate knowledge and broad experience, this insight and selection, how would it be possible to draw an inspiring picture of these austere heights and create a world above the clouds?

There are many faults in the brash younger generation. In regard to preparation, I have seen a modern picture called 'The

True Man Loves Mountains' drawn with an old man, chin in hand, sitting on the edge of a hilltop, and another picture called 'The Wise Man Loves the Water' showing an old man listening under a cliff. This shows lack of preparation. The first theme should be like Po Chü-yi's essay, 'Thatched Hut', showing the contentment of living in the mountains; the second theme should be like Wang Wei's picture of 'Wang-ch'uan', showing the pleasures of a riverside. They cannot be adequately expressed by the appearance of a single old man.

As for intimate knowledge, I have seen modern artisans who just put down three or four peaks here and there, or give three or four ripples to the water. This comes from lack of intimate knowledge. For mountains are of the most diverse types, varying in size and height. A satisfactory picture should show their inclinations, and relations to one another, and their generous mass. Bodies of water lie quietly, or run swiftly, or splash and foam, or spread out to immense expanse; their rich quality lies in peace and contentment.

As for lack of broad experience, people born in the south-east can picture only the thin, stiff peaks of their district, and people in Shensi can picture only the broad ranges of Kuan and Lung (Shensi) mountains. Those who learn the style of Fan K'uan lack the grace and beauty of Li Ch'eng, and those who learn the style of Wang Wei lack the fine structure of Kuan T'ung. These are faults due to limited experience.

In regard to lack of insight and selection: All mountains are not beautiful, all rivers are not graceful in every stretch. The best front of T'ai-hang is at Lin-lü, the best view of T'ai-shan is at Lung-yen. Obviously to paint any and all would indicate lack of selection.

There are faults of one-sided development: Ruggedness leads to slipshod work; a detached atmosphere may err on slightness of treatment. Human figures may become commonplace, buildings may become too crowded, rocks may show too much ruggedness ('bone') and soil may show too much softness ('flesh'). Or the brush-work fails to be rounded, resulting in angularity, which makes it unreal; or the ink may lack lustre, resulting in 'dryness' which makes it lifeless. Water which does not gurgle is called 'dead water'; clouds that are unnatural are called 'frozen clouds'. Mountains without shading are said to be

'without light and shadow', and those which are completely exposed are said to 'have no vapoury mists'. For light and shadow depend upon the sun; without shading, the action of the sunlight is not shown. The different parts are shown or hidden by the mists; without the partial coverage, there is no movement of the mists.

Mountains are immense things. They rise and drop, open up and are seated; they should be expansive and massive, majestic and spirited and austere; they should look one way, should seem to raise their heads and to make a bow; they should have a top above and a support below, cling to something in front and rest on something behind; they should look up and look down over the valley, they should seem to come down and command those below. These are the general features of mountains.

Water is a living thing. Its form should be tranquil and deep, it should be expansive, should be circling around, should have body; it should foam and froth and splash and shoot; it should be alive with fresh springs, should have volume to reach a great distance; it should leap over waterfalls from the skies, should crash and hit the land below; it should have happy anglers and thriving vegetation; it should be soft on a misty day and resplendent on a sunny morning. These are the live moments of water.

Streams are the blood veins of a mountain, the vegetation its hair, the clouds and mists its expression. Therefore, a mountain becomes alive with water, luxuriant with bushes and trees, and graceful with clouds. A mountain is the face of a stream, waterside pavilions are its eyes, and fishing activities its expression. Therefore a stream becomes graceful with hills by its side, clear and pleasant with pavilions, and poetic with the presence of fishermen. Such should be the disposition of mountains and streams.

Some mountains are high and some are wide. The lofty type has its deep veins below, its shoulders shrugged up, its lower crests intimately connected, set one against another. Such mountains are not 'lonely and alone', and not 'uneven'. The wide type has its veins at the top, its head half sunk, its wide shoulders spread out, its foundation firm and strong. A great mass piles up and sinks into great depths. This type is 'not thin',

'not broken'. Tall mountains which stand alone are apt to be uneven; broad mountains which are 'thin' are apt to be 'broken'. These remarks pertain to the bodily figure of mountains.

Rocky formations are the 'bones' of the universe. It is important that bones should be deep and not superficial. Water is the 'blood' of the universe. It is important that the blood should have mobility.

Mountains without clouds are like the spring without flowers.

Mountains lack delicacy without clouds, lack charm without streams and waterfalls, lack a feeling of life without roadways, and lack life without trees. Without deep perspective *(shen-yüan)* they become flat; without level perspective *(p'ing-yüan)* they appear too close; without high perspective *(kao-yüan)* they appear low.

These are the three perspectives of mountains: looking up from below is called the 'high perspective'; looking from the rim at the interior of mountains is called 'deep perspective'; looking towards the distance is called 'level perspective'. The objects appear bright and clear from a high perspective, dark and heavy from a deep perspective and with shadings of light and shadow from a level perspective. The first shows the great height, the second the complex layers, and the third a remote, gentle view dissolving in the distance. In the first, the human figures appear clearly, in the second, they appear broken up, and in the third, softened. The bright and clear should not be short, the broken up should not be tall, and the softened figures should not be big. These are the three perspectives.

There are three sizes for three things. The mountain is bigger than the trees, and the trees are bigger than the men. If the mountains are not several dozen times larger than the trees, they are not considered big. If the trees are not several dozen times larger than the men, they are not considered big. The comparative size of trees and men is shown by the proportion of tree leaves and the men's heads. A number of leaves equals a man's head and a man's head occupies the space of so many leaves. Thus the relations of mountains, trees and men can be set right. These are the three sizes.

If you want to show the height of mountains, they will

appear high if half hidden midway by cloudy forms, but not so if completely exposed. If you want the rivers to appear long, they will appear long if they are cut off from view in places, but not so if completely shown. A completely exposed mountain lacks an air of distinction and looks like a tip of a mortar. A completely shown waterway lacks not only twists and bends, but looks like an earthworm.

A full view of a river scene with encircling hills and forests should show details as much as possible, to enable the viewer to take a closer look. A side view of a distant range of mountains should spin along as far as possible, to enable one to peer into the distance. 'Distant hills have no texture lines, distant waters have no ripples, distant people have no eyes.' They do not really lack them, but merely appear to do so.

[There are more interesting observations on the treatment of poetic themes in the section *Hua Yi*, and on the technique of painting rocks, and soil, the aspects of rains, storms and snows, and the clearing up of skies, and in the use of brush, ink and colours, etc. in the section on certain 'formulas', *Hua Chüeh*. But the above suffices to show the appreciation of nature and the painting technique of Kuo Hsi.]

12

ELEVENTH CENTURY A.D.

Kuo Jo-hsü

fl. 1070–1080

A Record of Paintings, A.D. 689–1074

T'u-hua Chien-wen Chih (dated 1074)

[Chang Yen-yüan carried his valuable story of painting to the year 841, and expressed the hope that someone would take it up from there and continue the records. Kuo Jo-hsü, who married a royal princess and flourished as official between 1070 and 1075 answered the call and wrote the *T'u-hua Chien-wen Chih (Paintings I Have Seen)*, covering the period 689–1074.

This is a highly respected work, if not quite on a par with Chang Yen-yüan's history. It lists the painters in the important Five Dynasties period, but does not grade them; it also furnishes interesting anecdotes about the painters. Like Chang's work, it also begins with general remarks on art. Part of the general remarks is largely repetitious; Chinese painters and art critics love to agree with the body of ancient tradition and therefore with each other. A translation of a dozen essays on the principles and technique of art would reveal that they say very much the same thing. The section on technique is not as specific as that of Kuo Hsi (No. 11). I translate here the few sections where he is original and important as a source of art opinion and art history. Especially important is his note on the shift from portraits to drawings of birds, insects and landscapes

in the important tenth and eleventh centuries. Kuo was a contemporary of Su Tung-p'o, Li Kung-lin and Mi Fei. The work has been translated in full by Alexander Soper.]

1. *The Style is the Man*

Hsieh Ho says [of the six techniques], 'First, creating a vital tone and atmosphere; second, building structure by brushwork; third, depicting the forms of things as they are; fourth, appropriate colouring; fifth, composition; and sixth, transcribing and copying.' This masterly summary of the six techniques is unsurpassable. However, while the last five can be learned, the vital tone and atmosphere is born with a person. It cannot be learned by attention to details, nor is it something to be acquired through years of practice. One must have an instinctive feel for it; this tone and atmosphere seems to come by itself.

Let me make this clear: the great masterpieces of the past were created mostly by great scholars of high position, or by hermits living close to nature. Because they lived the lives of true men and sought relaxation in the arts, steeped themselves in them, this high thinking and elevation of spirit found expression in their paintings. The tone and atmosphere of the paintings was high because the character of the artist was high, and when the tone and atmosphere was high, the picture became full of life. As we say, such work is the top of the very best, and seems to capture the spirit of things. All paintings must have this rich, vital tone and atmosphere to be called a masterpiece. Otherwise the most elaborate work will provide something similar to that of commercial artists. It is called painting, but is not.

Therefore Master Yang did not receive the secrets from his teacher, and the cartwright could not transmit [the secret of making spokes fit into a wheel].* It must come born in a person and issue directly from one's soul. This may be compared to the matter of personal signatures, which are said to bear the 'stamp of the mind'. These lines and forms come from the mind and are

* Reference to a parable by Chuang-tse, showing how certain things cannot be taught or explained in so many words, but must be learned by direct experience.

identical with it, and are therefore called its 'stamp'. In all things that we say or do or think, or feel, our mind leaves its mark. So much more is this true of calligraphy and painting which come from the feelings and thoughts of an artist and are recorded on silk or paper. Even signatures reveal a man's character. How can calligraphy and painting help revealing the level of an artist's mind and spirit? Master Yang says: 'Words are the voice of the heart; calligraphy is the painting of the heart. In the revelation in voice and painting is the quality of a gentleman or a bumpkin revealed.'

2. *The Three Great Landscapists*

[The three great landscape masters are Li Ch'eng (late tenth century), Kuan T'ung (early tenth century), and Fan K'uan (*c.* 950–1026). The usual grouping is:

Ching Hao – Kuan T'ung
Tung Yüan – Chü-jan
Li Ch'eng – Fan K'uan

Many seem to think that Li Ch'eng's represented the best and most balanced work of these great artists. Generally, the Yüan masters hold this group as their models, and the Ming artists held the Yüan masters as their models.

In some of Li Ch'eng's works he uses the 'level perspective', and does not exhibit the staggering aerial perspective characteristic of many later artists. He shows proportionately very large trees in the foreground, rare in other artists. The towering peaks of Tung Yüan and Chü-jan are more spectacular, but the level perspective of Li Ch'eng gives a feeling of more human warmth and being closer to earth. This influence, however, lies in a more harmonious use of brush and ink.]

In landscape only the three, Li Ch'eng of Ying-chiu, Kuan T'ung of Chang-an, and Fan K'uan of Hua-yüan stand out among the rest. Their works are masterly, beyond compare, and set the high-water mark. We can still see the works of Wang Wei (699–759), Li Sze-hsün (651–716) and Ching Hao (fl. 920), but they are not to be compared with the above. In more recent

periods, some try very hard to learn their styles, like Chai Yüan-shen, Liu Yung, Chi Chen and others. They cannot reach their excellence. (*Original note:* Chai copies Li, Liu copies Kuan, and Chi copies Fan.) Li Cheng's work is distinguished by a delicate openness of atmosphere, and a feeling of unadulterated space in his misty groves; his brush-point is sharp and sure, and his ink-work is extremely subtle. Kuan Tung's style reveals hard, firm rocks; dense, thriving forests; elegant, antique buildings and leisurely, unoccupied people. Fan's work shows huge, massive mountain-tops, with an overpowering effect; his brush-work is even and his human figures and buildings are simple. (*Original note:* The level perspective showing the beauty of misty woods on a plain began with Li Ch'eng. His pine-needles are sharply drawn, without ink-wash, and look full of life. Kuan T'ung's tree leaves are done with pressed strokes, and sometimes the bare tips of branches stand out. His strong, vital lines are inimitable. Some of Fan Kuan's trees slant at an angle, or spread downwards, creating a special effect. But I have never seen his pines and cypresses. His buildings are simple, done by ink-wash; these were later called 'iron houses'.)

There are other artists like Wang Shih-yuan, Wang Tuan, Yen Kwei, Hsü Tao-ning, Kao K'o-ming, Kuo Hsi, Li Tsung-ch'eng and Ch'iu Na. Some have learned some one aspect of the master's art, others have learned all, but in rudiments only, while still others have gone straight into the master's private domain and opened up new avenues. They are all worthy of respect. But collectors value the works of these three masters, like classics in the domain of literature. (*Original note:* Kuan T'ung was a disciple of Ching Hao, but was better than his teacher.)*

3. *Comparison of Tang and Sung*

Someone might ask how do the moderns compare with the ancients? My reply would be as follows:

The moderns [Sung] cannot compare with the ancients [Tang and earlier] in many respects, but excel them in others.

* These are personal preferences. Note that the author completely ignores Tung Yüan and Chü-jan, and prefers the disciple Kuan T'ung to his master Ching Hao.

In the matter of Buddhist and Taoist figures and portraits of people, pictures of buffaloes and horses, the moderns cannot compare with the ancients. But in landscape, flowers, trees, insects and fishes, the reverse is true. Let me explain. [In portrait work] the work of Ku K'ai-chih (fourth century), Lu T'an-wei (fifth century), Chang Seng-yu (sixth century), the Yen brothers (Li-teh and Li-pen – seventh century) and Wu Tao-tse (eighth century) combine dignity with beauty and seem inspired. Wu Tao-tse's work is a model for all generations to come. He is properly called the 'Sage of Painting'. Chang Hsüan, Chou Fang, Han Kan and Tai Sung show a tone and atmosphere and inner structure that is surprising, unsurpassable by later artists. (*Original note:* Chang Hsüan, and Chou Fang of Tang excel in portraiture, Han Kan in horses, and Tai Sung in buffaloes – all of Tang, eighth century.) Therefore I say here the ancients are better than the moderns. But the works of Li Ch'eng, Kuan T'ung and Fan K'uan [in landscape] and of Hsü Hsi and Huang Ch'üan and [his son] Huang Chü-ts'ai [in flowers and birds] broke into new paths unmatched by later followers (all of Sung Dynasty except Kuan T'ung in early tenth century). Even if Li Sze-hsün and his son, and the three Wangs (Wang Wei, Wang Hsiung and Wang Tsai [of Tang]), together with Pien Lüan and Chen Shih, specialists of flowers and birds [of Tang], were born again today, they would hardly find a place with the moderns. Therefore I say the moderns are better than the ancients. One must follow the lines of development, distinguish what is excellent in each and not lump them all together.

4. *On Difference of Style Between Huang and Hsü*

It is popularly said, 'The Huangs are wealthy, Hsü Hsi is a man of nature.' This indicates not only a difference in life-ambitions, but shows the results which come from different life surroundings. Let me amplify. Huang Ch'üan and his son Chü-ts'ai were both court painters in Szechuan; Ch'üan was promoted to deputy representative at the capital, and when he came over to the Sung régime, he was appointed *Kung-tsan.* (*Original note:* Some say that the story of his appointment to the position of *Kung-tsan* is unfounded, since he died soon after he

came over to the new régime, and his works were done mostly in Szechuan, often bearing the reign-title of Kwang-ch'eng.)* Chü-ts'ai was also appointed to the Academy of Arts, serving at court. Thus they painted many rare birds and fowl, flowers and strange rocks. They are today represented by such paintings as 'Hawks Amidst Peach Blossoms', 'Pure-White Pheasants and Hare', 'Partridge in Golden Casserole', peacocks and turtles. The birds look well fed and well kept and the colours of the sky and lakes are in different shades. Hsü Hsi, on the other hand, was a recluse scholar of Kiang-nan, idealistic and living an unconventional life. He painted wild bamboos and flowers on sandy banks along the lakes, and sea birds and deep-water fish. He is represented by such works as 'Wild Geese and Egrets', 'Fish and Shrimp Among Swampy Bushes', and pieces showing marvellous intercrossing branches of flower and bush and patches of vegetables and herbs. His birds are airy and thin in spirit, and his skies and water merge into one another. (*Original note:* This is to show that people paint what they see. The division into the two types is merely a matter of convenience, but the painter really paints what he sees at the moment. In general, the works of Kiang-nan [near Shanghai] show more the spirit of the recluse, and less the strength of the Szechuan artists.) Both styles are strong in the orchid of spring and the chrysanthemum of autumn. . . .

[A look at some of the treasures in the Palace Museum at Taipei, or even at the good reproductions, will show that the painting of flowers, birds and deer in a park reached consummate perfection in colour and line and tone in the tenth century.]

5. *Some Anecdotes about Artists*

Yen Li-pen. When Yen Li-pen (seventh century) of the Tang Dynasty saw one day Chang Seng-yu's (late sixth century) old paintings at Ching-chow he said to himself, 'His reputation was

* During the Five Dynasties in the first half of the tenth century, China was split up into many kingdoms, and Szechuan (*Shu*) developed quite a prolific school of artists.

undeserved.' The following day he went again, and then said, 'Yes, he seems to be one of the good moderns.' He went again the following day. Then he said, 'I see there is a basis to such a reputation.' He continued to study it, sitting and lying down under the fresco for a dozen days before he could tear himself away. . . .

Wu Tao-tse. In the reign of K'ai-yüan (713–741), General Pei Wen went to see Wu Tao-tse on the occasion of his parents' funeral and asked him to draw a few spirits and devils on the walls of T'ien-kung Temple at Lo-yang, as an offering on behalf of the deceased. 'I have not painted for a long time,' replied Wu Tao-tse. 'If you want to, execute a sword-dance for me. I may be inspired to paint by your brilliant sword-play.' Accordingly, the general took off his clothes of mourning and donned his civilian dress. He dashed on horseback back and forth and around; he threw his sword several hundred feet in the air, and it flashed in the sky like lightning. Then the general caught it with a scabbard. The sword sank into it. The thousands of spectators were stunned. Wu Tao-tse then took up his brush and began to draw figures on the wall. These seemed to take life and became an inspiring sight to all. That was the most satisfying moment in Wu Tao-tse's life.

Chou Fang. Chou Fang of Tang was a good writer and artist. As a son of an official family, he counted many ministers at court among his friends. His brother Hao was a good archer and horseman. He had been with General Koshu-han in his Turkestan campaign and assisted in the capture of the city of Shih-pao. As a reward, he was put in charge of the metropolitan guards. When Emperor Teh-tsung (780–804) was building the Chang-ming Temple, he said to Hao, 'I hear that your younger brother is quite a painter. I want him to paint some of the walls. Please tell him about it.' A few months later, the emperor made the request again. Chou Fang went accordingly. When he was making the first sketches, tens of thousands of the residents came to see him at work. There were some students of art among the onlookers, and some offered various comments in praise or pointed out what should be done. Fang revised them on the spot day by day and when the work was completed, after over a month, all criticism stopped. He compelled the admiration of all.

General Kuo Tse-yi's son-in-law, Vice-Minister Chao Ts'ung, once had a portrait made by [the famous] Han Kan, which was admired by all. Later, Chao had one made by Chou Fang. Both were first-class artists. General Kuo put the two portraits side by side, but could not decide which was better. One day his daughter, Mme Chao, came back to visit her parents. The father asked her, 'Whose portraits are these?' 'My husband's of course,' replied the daughter. 'Which one is more like him?' 'Both are good, but the second one is better. The former has all the features correct, but the latter catches all his smiles, ways and expressions.' The latter one was by Chou Fang. General Kuo was greatly pleased and said, 'Now I know which is the better portrait.' He sent several hundred pieces of silk to the artist as his appreciation. Fang painted many scrolls and frescoes in his life. In the reign of Tseng-yüan (785–804) some Koreans of Sinlo* paid a high price for several dozen scrolls by him and took them back to their country.

Huang Ch'üan. Wu Tao-tse once made a portrait of Chung K'uei [the subduer of devils]. The immortal was dressed shabbily, was blind in one eye, had the skin of one leg bruised, and his head was in a turban. A memorial tablet was stuck in his belt. His left hand held a devil while his right was gouging out the devil's eye. It was a most spirited drawing, one of the best ever done. Someone had presented this to the ruler of Szechuan. The latter loved it and used to hang it in his bedroom. One day he asked Huang Ch'üan to see it, and Huang praised it highly as a masterpiece. 'I want to see Chung K'uei plucking out the devil's eye with his thumb, which would be more effective. Please have it corrected for me.' Huang asked permission to take the painting home with him and contemplated it for several days and knew he could not do it. He therefore drew a new Chung K'uei plucking out the devil's eye with his thumb. The following day he presented both to the ruler. 'I asked you only to change it. Why did you draw another one?' asked the king. Ch'üan replied, 'In that one by Wu Tao-tse, the whole body of Chung K'uei, his look, his postured strength, are all concentrated in his index finger and not in the thumb. I could not possibly change it. So I have taken the liberty to do a separate one. I do not hope to equal the old master, but the

* Kingdom in South Korea.

strength of the whole body of this one is concentrated in the thumb.' The king admired it for a long time, and accordingly gave him presents of brocade and gilt ware as a sign of appreciation.

[Logically, there should be a continuation of these historical records for the period after Kuo Jo-hsü, especially about the painters of the Art Academy of the Southern Sung period. Teng Ch'un did this in his *Hua Chi* at the end of the twelfth century, but neither his general remarks nor his few details about the life of the court painters at the Art Academy are good enough to warrant a translation. Nor do I think the work of Liu Tao-ch'un (a contemporary of Kuo Jo-hsü), the *Sung-ch'ao Ming-hua P'ing*, good enough.]

13

ELEVENTH CENTURY A.D.

Su Tung-p'o

1036–1101

The Rise of the Literati School

[We are now about to see the rise of the *literati* type of painting under the inspiration of one of China's greatest writers and poets, Su Tung-p'o.* Su was a versatile creative genius, transforming every genre by the touch of his originality. The *literati* type of painting is also called *hsieh-yi*, 'to put down an idea, or concept'. By this definition, *hsieh-yi* is to express one's idea, and it is therefore properly 'expressionist'. It is characterized by economy of strokes, swift execution and simplicity of composition, such as the painting of half a branch of plum flowers, or a couple of bamboos against a sketchy rock. Thus it is not to be confused with what is called the Southern School, although in the general alliance with calligraphy, in the freer, rhythmic movement of brush-work and in the choice of poetic themes (rustic rather than urban), it is akin in spirit. The term Southern School, first used by Tung Ch'i-ch'ang, around late 1600, is very broad and has been used to include almost everybody except Li Sze-hsün, Hsia Kwei and Ma Yüan and their followers (the Northern School). A sharp division is not so easy. Look at Ma Yüan's rhythmic strokes.

It would seem more accurate to call the artists of the Southern School 'impressionists', in the sense of the French Neo-impres-

* For Su Tung-p'o, see my biography of him, *The Gay Genius.*

sionists, and the opposite school the classicists, like the Renaissance painters. The *literati* school is more like the expressionists. In this sense, then, Wang Wei was the 'founder' of the impressionists or Southern School, and Wu Tao-tse should be the founder of the expressionists. Both lived in the great creative eighth century, as did also the poets Li Po and Tu Fu. The *literati* type of painting can be said to consist in the sublimation of all things, concentration on a simple composition and the use of strong or delicate brush-strokes, executed, like a poem, in a moment of inspiration.

Su Tung-p'o painted chiefly bamboos, like his cousin Wen T'ung (Yü-k'o). He made it extraordinarily popular. He did not write consecutive essays on art, but his art comments, scattered in his letters and sayings, forged the germinal idea of the *literati*'s painting. He and his immediate circle of friends and disciples, like Ch'en Shih-tao and Huang T'ing-chien, all had things to say about art. In particular, the two brief lines in the selection (b) below have become as well known in China as Kipling's 'East is East and West is West' is in English.

Besides starting the fashion for the *literati*'s painting, Su Tung-p'o, with his disciples and his friends like Huang T'ing-chien and Mi Fei, gave vogue to certain practices: the increased use of colophons, especially verse, as an integral part of a painting, marking the closer relationship of calligraphy and painting; the increase of literary 'notebooks' *(pi-chi)* containing a hodge-podge of notes on art, poetry, monuments, books, and anything of interest to a scholar; and the assuming of art names or poetic names besides the regular and courtesy names which proliferated in the Ming Dynasty. 'Tung-p'o' itself is an art name, meaning Eastern Slope, where he lived while in Hang-chow. As in the case of Tung-p'o, some of these art names supplant the regular name (Su Shih) and courtesy name (Su Tse-chan), which are rarely used. Such names can multiply *ad infinitum*.

Once Tung-p'o was judge at Hangchow, and had to try a shopkeeper for debt. He found the poor shopkeeper an honest man who really could not pay on account of the bad times. To the defendant's surprise, he ordered him to go out and buy a dozen fans. Then and there, in full view of the court, he took a brush and painted the fans, and said, 'Go and sell these fans and

pay your debts.' On account of Tung-p'o's reputation, these fetched high prices. This is typical of the man, and of the spirit of the *literati*'s painting.]

(a) *An Expressionist Outburst.* Poem written on the wall of a friend.

'Receiving the moisture of wine,
My intestines sprout and fork out,
And from out my liver and lungs
Shoot rocks and bamboos.
Surging through my breast, irresistible,
They find expression on your snow-white wall.'

(b) *Against Verisimilitude*

'To judge a painting by its verisimilitude
Shows the mental level of a child.
If a poem is written as such
a poem should be written,
You can be sure he is not a poet.'

(c) *The Spirit is the Thing*

'Looking at a *shih-jen-hua* (a painting by a *literatus*) is like looking at horses. What you want to see is the spirit of a horse. The professional artists often see only the skin and hair, the whips, the trough and the hay. That is why the work of professional artists is lacking in spirit, and after seeing a few such paintings, one is bored. [Sung] Han-chieh's work is really a painting by a *literatus*.'

(d) *My Spirit Sweeps All Before It*

'I realize that full mastery is not just license, but arises from perfection of details. But when my brush touches the paper, it goes as fast as the wind. My spirit sweeps all before it, before my brush has reached its point.'

(e) *Bamboo Formed in the Breast*

'When a young bamboo sprouts, it is only an inch long, but the joints and leaves are already latent in it. All nature grows this way, whether it be cicadas and snakes, or bamboos that

shoot up a hundred feet high. Nowadays the artists construct a bamboo, joint by joint and leaf by leaf. Where is the bamboo? Therefore in painting bamboos, one must have bamboo formed in one's breast;* at the time of painting, one concentrates and sees what one wants to paint. Immediately one follows the idea, handles one's brush to pursue the image just seen, like a hawk swooping down on a rabbit. With a moment's hesitation, it would be lost. This is what Yü-k'o taught me. I understood what he meant, but could not carry it out. That is because my hand refused to obey me, through lack of practice. There are things with which you are vaguely familiar; you seem to know it, but when you want to paint it, you are at a loss. This is true not only of painting bamboo. . . . [My brother] Tse-yu cannot paint; he merely understands the idea. I understand not only the idea, but also have learned the technique.

'When Yü-k'o started to paint bamboos, he did not think highly of it himself, but people from all places came with their silks and crowded his doorstep to beg for his paintings. Yü-k'o was quite annoyed and, throwing the silks to the floor, said angrily, "I am going to cut these up and have them made into stockings." When Yü-k'o returned from Yangchow (modern Yang-hsien in Shensi) and I was at Soochow, he wrote to me, "Recently I have been telling scholars that my school of ink bamboo has moved over to Soochow, and that collectors should all go there. I am sure all the material for stockings will come to you now." He added two lines in postscript that he wished to paint a bamboo grove ten thousand feet high on a piece of Goose Valley silk. I said to him that for that one would require two hundred and fifty feet of silk, and that I knew he was tired of painting but only wanted to get the silk. Yü-k'o could not reply and only said that I was talking nonsense and that there were no bamboo groves ten thousand feet high anyway. I answered for him with two lines from a poem: "There are bamboos ten thousand feet high, when you look at their shadows cast by the moonlight." Yü-k'o laughed and said, "Su always knows how to argue, but if I had two hundred and fifty pieces of silk I would buy a farm in the country

* This phrase 'bamboo formed in the breast' has now become an idiom, meaning that one has full control of a situation, or has plans in one's mind as to how to meet a crisis.

and retire." He gave me this painting of the Valley of Yün-tang [tall bamboos] and said to me it is only several feet high, but the bamboos appear to be ten thousand feet in height. . . .

'Yü-k'o died on January 20, 1079. On July 7 of that year I was sunning my collection at Hu-chow. I came upon this painting and burst into tears. . . .'

(f) *Mi Fei's Story.* Mi Fei reported a conversation with Su Tung-p'o on the same subject:

'Su Shih (Tse-chan) paints bamboos by drawing them growing from the ground straight up. I asked him why he did not paint them by sections (joints). He answered, "But bamboos never grow section by section." [All sections grow together.] His concepts are distinguished, based on those of Wen T'ung (Yü-k'o). Su said he would like to offer a stick of incense (render homage) to Wen. Yü-k'o started the use of heavy ink for the right side of bamboo [leaves] and light ink for the back. His bamboos are exquisite. Tse-chan (Tung-p'o) draws strange branches of dead trees, in rhythmic, twisting movements, suggesting the restlessness of his spirit.' (From *Hua Shih.*)

[The *li* of things is a concept of Neo-Confucian philosophy, contemporaneous with Su Tung-p'o. The *li* is the inner nature of things and of the universe itself, thus equivalent to 'inner law' and structure governing a thing's form and behaviour. The *li* philosophy conceives of the universe as a moral order. *T'ien-li*, the order of Heaven, can be adequately translated as 'God's law', but *li* here denotes an inner law inherent in the nature of things.]

(g) *The Inner Nature of Things*

'I have been of the opinion that men, animals, houses and furniture have a constant form. On the other hand, mountains and rocks, bamboos and trees, ripples, mists and clouds have no constant form *(hsing)*, but have a constant inner nature (*li* – an inner law of their being). Anybody can detect inaccuracies in form, but even art specialists are often unaware of errors

in the inner nature of things. Therefore some artists find it easier to deceive the public and make a name for themselves by painting objects without constant forms. However, when a mistake is made with regard to form, the mistake is confined to that particular object; but when a mistake is made in the inner nature of things, the whole is spoiled. There are plenty of craftsmen who can copy all the details of form, but the inner nature can be understood only by the highest spirits. Yü-k'o's paintings of bamboos, rocks and dried-up trees may be said to have truly seized their inner nature. He understands how these things live and die, how they twist and turn, are blocked and compressed, and how they prosper and thrive in freedom. The roots, stalks, joints and leaves go through infinite variations, never alike, and yet always appropriate; they are true to nature and satisfying to the human spirit. These are records of the inspirations of a great soul. . . . He had painted two bamboo bushes in the abbot's court and left for Ling-yang. I came with him to say good-bye to Abbot Tao-tsin, and he again drew two bamboo tips and one dry tree in the eastern room. The abbot was just having the walls of the general room restored, and asked Yü-k'o to do it. Yü-k'o has promised, and here I am making this note of it. Those who understand the inner nature and examine these paintings will understand what I mean.' (*On Paintings in the Tsing-yin Temple.*)

(h) *On Wang Wei's Verse and Painting*

'Read carefully the poems of Mo-chieh (Wang Wei), and you will see that there are paintings in his poems. Look carefully at the paintings of Mo-chieh, and you will find that there are poems in his paintings. Mo-chieh's poem reads:

"White rocks stand out on Blue fields.
Red leaves linger on the Jade stream —
On the mountain paths, there has been no rain.
Yet the dripping green of the air moistens a
man's clothes."*

* Some say that the poem was not really by Mo-chieh, but by someone else to help supply his lost works. According to Wang Wei's brother, hardly four hundred of the more than one thousand poems of Wang Wei were lost during the rebellion of An Lu-shan.

(i) *Postscript to Huang Ch'üan's Sparrows*

'In the paintings by Huang Ch'üan, the birds' necks and legs are extended. Someone says that "birds either stretch their legs and pull in their necks, or stretch their necks and bend their legs, but not both at the same time". I have tried to verify this and find it is true. We see that in observation of nature, even great artists sometimes make mistakes. This would be true of [understanding] the greater things. Therefore a gentleman keeps on learning and inquiring.'

(j) *Postscript to Tai Sung's Fighting Bulls*

'There is a plain scholar of Szechuan who loves art and has a collection of hundreds of pieces. Among these, there is a scroll of Tai Sung's "Bull", which he loves especially. It is provided with a jade-headed roller-pin and kept in a brocade bag, and he takes it wherever he goes. One day, he took out the scroll to air it in the sun. A cowherd boy saw it and laughed. "This," the boy said, "is a picture of a fighting bull. When bulls fight, they concentrate on the horns and their tails are kept between the hind legs. But here the bulls' tails are stretched out. It is a mistake." The owner laughed in approval. The ancient proverb says, "For farm work, ask the boy servant; for spinning, ask the maid." This is eternal truth.'

14

ELEVENTH CENTURY A.D.

Mi Fei

1051–1107

Connoisseurship

(Hua Shih)

[A great admirer of Su Tung-p'o, who was sixteen years his senior, Mi Fei was himself a much greater painter, with a vast permanent influence on succeeding centuries. He was original and created his own style of landscape, the Mi Fei style. Both in composition and in tonal rhythm we may say there was no relation between Mi Fei and the great masters of Five Dynasties and early Sung, like Li Ch'eng and Fan K'uan.

One is tempted to create the word 'tonalist' to represent adequately the influence of Mi Fei and his imitators. The style consists typically in painting vague mountain-tops hidden above a vast sea of clouds. Everything is enveloped in a wet, vapoury atmosphere; outlines even in the foreground are blurred as in a heavy fog; ink-strokes of leaves are overlaid with blue-green washes to give a softened effect. But the significance of 'tonalism' lies, it seems to me, in three things: (1) The use of ink-wash without contours for effect, and therefore the *doing-away*, for shading purposes, with the much-exaggerated and much-classified 'technique' of texture strokes *(ts'un)*, on which orthodox painting had always been based. Thus what would be perfectly natural in a Western ink-shaded sketch was hit upon by someone who dared it as a novelty. Chang Seng-yu was the

first portraitist to be influenced by Hindu painting and use ink-shading; but then it was taken up by the school of delineators like Li Sze-hsün. On the whole, the Li School used carefully constructed contours, and the school of Wu Tao-tse used bold, rhythmic contours, but without depending on ink for shading. What shading there was had always been done by *ts'un* (which conceals a lot of self-imposed nonsense). (2) Tonalism means the creating of a pervading atmosphere and (3) this pervading atmosphere, rather than rhythm of strokes, controls the composition, enforcing extreme simplicity. Thus Mi Fei's influence is greater than has been usually accorded him. It is not confined to his direct followers, like his son Mi Yu-jen, Kao K'o-kung, Fang Ts'ung-yi, Ch'en Ch'un, and others, including the Ch'an painter Mu-ch'i, who is inadequately known in China.* Its influence can be felt, of all unlikely places, in Wu Chen, and extends to artists of the so-called Northern School like Hsia Kwei and Ma Yüan, where we see the same emphasis on tone and pervading atmosphere and the same economy of detail, although the strokes and contours are remarkably solid and clear.

Mi Fei is also called Mi Fu, written with the character for Fu (*alias* Yüan-chang). His son, Mi Yu-jen (*alias* Yüan-huei), was equally distinguished. Together, they are known as the 'Two Mis', and that unique style is called *'Mi-chia Shan-shui'*, 'landscape of the Mi family'. Mi Fei was a great connoisseur and collector and shared the 'madness' of collectors and antiquaries. He had to possess something that was truly good and antique which he had seen. Once he openly asked for the gift of an inkstone from Emperor Hui-tsung when he was called in to do some painting. He earned the name of *'tien'* or 'crazy' Mi, as Ku K'ai-chih had before him. Once he dressed himself formally in official cap and gown and fell to his knees before an especially beautiful piece of rock, worshipping it as he would his father-in-law. He worshipped Su Tung-p'o as an elder scholar and a poetic genius, and during Su's last illness, came to see him very often. In a sense, the Mi style may be considered an offshoot of the *literati* school.

* Mu-ch'i's place is not usually recognized in histories of Chinese painting, such as the one by Cheng Ch'ang or by Yu Chien-hua. His work is preserved in Kyoto. But look at his work in Cahill's *Chinese Painting*!

Mi's *Hua Shih* (*History of Painting*) is very much valued for its account of his connoisseurship. In the following selections, we get a picture of the vogue of the old masters like Wu Tao-tse, Wang Wei and Li Ch'eng in his time, of the problems of genuineness and prevalence of forgery, and of the techniques for the care of valuable paintings. The selections are intended to be suggestive, rather than exhaustive. They are also important for descriptions of the style of the great early painters, seen by this connoisseur of the eleventh century, but not now available to us. The *History* consists of sundry notes of a few lines each, entirely unarranged.

Mi Fei's standard is of the highest, both as regards connoisseurship and collections of art and as regards his own goal in art. He tried, as he says, not to have one stroke recalling Wu Tao-tse!]

Difficulty of Connoisseurship. Among those that are easy to verify are the following: the human figures of Ku K'ai-chih, Lu T'an-wei, Wu Tao-tse, and Chou Fang the bamboos and birds of Teng Ch'ang-yu, Pien Lüan, Hsü Hsi, Tang Hsi-ya and Chu [?]; and the landscapes of Ching Hao, Li Ch'eng, Kuan T'ung, Tung Yüan, Fan K'uan, Chü-jan, and Liu the Taoist. The buffaloes of Tai Sung, and the horses of Ts'ao Pa, Han Kan and Wei Yen are difficult to establish because there are so many like them. The contemporaries are not worth considering. It may be not too bad to cover the wall with a picture by Chao Ch'ang, if one can get it. But others like Ch'eng T'an, Ts'ui Po, Hou Feng, Ma Pen, Chang Tse-fang will only dirty the walls. Perhaps at tea-shops and inns they can be hung up side by side with the cursive scripts of Chou Yüeh and Chung-yi, but we are not discussing them. On the other hand, an excellent old piece, even anonymous, can be like one's cherished friend.

There were three collectors in the reign of Chia-yu (1056–1063); Yang Pao, Shao Pi and Shih Yang-hsiu. All were enthusiastic collectors. Later I saw the three collections and found that Shih's was not bad, but of Yang's pieces stamped with the seal of 'five dukes in four generations', not one was good. Shao's seals mostly contain beautiful seal scripts, usually

placed high up on the scroll. Anything that slightly resembles Kiang-nan (style of Hsü Hsi) is labelled 'Hsü Hsi'. Any Szechuan picture of star gods is labelled Yen Li-pen or Wang Wei or Han Huang. It is simply ridiculous. The grandson showed me a picture 'Grazing at Leisure' by Han Huang. It consisted of a double scroll, on which were painted about two dozen donkeys, and the quality is not even on a par with Ts'ui Po. The silk background was painted a dark yellow, and the silk was of fine tight threads. The price asked for it was 400,000 cash. On the left upper corner was a label in white powder saying: "Grazing at Leisure" by Han Chin-kung, undoubted family treasure.' On top was an official seal of the Military Governor of Chin-kiang, stamped in simple oil, over four inches square, in heavy script. Below stood slightly [blank] a Tang seal, very small and in fine script. The people laughed at the forgery. After a while, nobody wanted it and it was sold for five thousand cash to a Mr Chiang. The owner sighed and said, 'How awful to have a herd of donkeys braying in the parlour in the morning!' [Good riddance.]

Ku K'ai-chih. The 'Heavenly Maids and Flying Fairies of Vimalakirti' by Ku K'ai-chih is in my home. His 'Female Instructions', a horizontal scroll, is in the home of Liu Yu-fang. These are very lifelike and the beards are well depicted. The *Journals* of Emperor Tai-tsung record the buying of a scroll by Ku. Some scholars today have copies of a Tang copy of Ku's 'Famous Women', and this copy has been even printed on fans; the figures are about three inches long, like the scroll 'Female Instructions' owned by Liu.

The 'Heavenly Maids of Vimalakirti' in my copy are about two feet long, what are called 'small-sized Vimalakirti' in *Ming-hua-chi*. . . .

'Portrait of Wang Jung' was in my home. I exchanged it with Lü Tuan-wen for *Li Yung Script* (calligraphy). The above are forged Ku K'ai-chih. I exchanged them at Wang Shen's* home for one Huai-su script.

* Wang Shen, a painter and married to a royal princess, was a rich man, a close friend of Su Tung-p'o. Su also said a lot of Wang's collection was worthless.

Wang Wei. A 'copy' of Wang Wei's 'Little Wang-chuan' in very fine lines is owned by Mr Li of Ch'ang-an. The figures are good. It is certainly [based on the] original. It is entirely different from what is called by everybody Wang Wei. Perhaps it is a copy from the album of Mr Yang of Yi-hsing.

Chang Hsiu (*alias* Ch'eng-chih) has 'Pi-chih Buddha' in his home. Under the Buddha is a picture of Wang Wei, in yellow robe and a peach-style turban, his two palms closed in worship. This is a self-portrait. It is very much like the so-called ten disciples of Kuan-chung [place] in technique. It is genuine. There are many pictures like the 'Mules' and 'Chien-men Pass' in the Szechuan school ascribed to Wang Wei; also ascribed to him are many snow-scenes done in Kiangnan style. Any picture with delicate lines is labelled Wang Wei. For instance 'Wei King Wu Reading an Inscription', owned by Su Chih-ch'un, is also labelled Wang Wei. Li Kuan-ch'ing's small scroll is also labelled Wang Wei. This is now in my home. The 'Snow' owned by Li of Ch'ang-an and that of the same title in Sun Tsai-tao's home are also ascribed to the same artist, and so are innumerable pieces in noble homes. There cannot be that many.

Hsüeh Shao-p'eng's 'Three Celestial Maidens' is said to be by Ku K'ai-chih. But it is an early Tang.

Wu Tao-tse. Su Tung-p'o has a painting by Wu Tao-tse of the Buddha and some ten attendants like Chih-kung. It is in very bad condition, but right in front is a hand, extremely well done. The dots are made without [much] ink, and the shading around the lips is very natural. Therefore the effect is very much alive.

Wang Fang (*alias* Yüan-kwei) has two 'Heavenly Kings', both among the best by Wu Tao-tse. His lines flow easily and freely like strips of *shun*-vegetable [in water], rhythmic and well formed, with the surfaces of ups and downs well indicated, looking like new. They are like the one owned by Tung-p'o.

The 'Great Mercy' owned by Chou T'ung (*alias* Jen-shu) is also genuine. People nowadays call a picture a Wu Tao-tse whenever they see a Buddha, for they have never seen a genuine one. The people of the Tang period regarded Wu Tao-tse as supreme and tried to copy him. Hence there are

many that look like Wu's work, and it is difficult to determine their authenticity. Up to my old age, I have seen only four genuine Wu Tao-tse paintings.

Li Kung-lin (Lung-mien) had pain in his right hand for three years. It was only then that I painted. Li once learned the style of Wu Tao-tse, and this has always left a mark on his work. For myself, I prefer the antique style of Ku K'ai-chih, and try not to have one stroke done in Wu's style. Also, Li's expression is not outstanding. I do the eyes and the facial lines in stiff, wooden strokes. It comes naturally to me, and it is not acquired. It has to wait for people who appreciate it. [I] make portraits only of the good and wise men of ancient days.

Tenth-century Masters. Ching Hao is good at painting cloud-capped mountains, imposing and rounded on all sides.

Kuan T'ung's mountains are crude (in crude strokes), but he is good at ravines and streams. His peaks lack delicacy. Kuan T'ung's human figures are of the common type (*shu*). His rocks and woods are of the style of Pi Hung – branches without trunks.

Tung Yüan's peaks are not good. His overhanging cliffs and treacherous footpaths and ravines and deserted plains often give a sense of reality.

Chü-jan gives a clear and luxuriant atmosphere, but has too many rocky peaks.* Taoist Liu was also from the Kiang-nan district and studied under the same teacher (Tung Yüan) as Chü-jan. In Chü-jan's paintings, a Buddhist is always seated on top; in Liu's work, a Taoist.

Of Li Ch'eng landscapes, I have seen only copies, 'Pines and Rocks' and 'Landscape', in four scrolls. The 'Pines and Rocks' were owned by Sheng Wen-shu, now in my possession. Li

* In these remarks we see the revolt against the stupefying rock formations of the tenth century and the formation of Mi's own style. The impressive rocky cliffs had been done to death and Mi Fei started the soft, toned-down peaks, which after all are more natural. Such soft-toned peaks are seen in Ma Yüan and Hsia Kwei and this influence is seen even in Chou Ch'en and Wen Cheng-ming in Ming. Mi's remark on Tung Yüan's peaks as 'not good' is especially interesting; they are usually oversized for the distance and invariably covered with dots – a mannerism which the Four Wangs of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were still copying.

Ch'eng's landscapes are very distinguished and softly graceful. His pines are very strong and powerful; the branches and needles are dark-shaded. The undergrowth is neatly executed, and he does not favour weird, wriggling shapes. The scrolls now owned by the aristocratic families, like the calligraphic inscriptions of Yen Chen-ch'ing and Liu Kung-ch'üan, have only a superficial resemblance to the master's genuine work. They are unnatural and common. The branches cross each other furiously and the pine trunks are gnarled and dry and thin. The undergrowth is like a pile of firewood, lacking life. They are all forgeries. I have the idea of writing an essay called 'No Li-ch'eng' (Li does not exist). The 'Pines and Rocks' in Sheng's possession are small-sized, painted on what looked like paper. The trunks are tremendous, and stand under a luxuriant shade of branches. His joints are not marked with ink circles, but formed with big dots. The whole surface is overlaid with dilute ink, looking very lifelike. Right in front rise abruptly well-modulated rocks. The foothills are on the level of the bottom of the rocks and one rock stands in the water. Below the rock, dilute ink is applied against it as a sandy bank, which disappears in the water. It is not what is popularly mistaken for Li Ch'eng style, where a mountain is left unsupported either by land or by water, as if it were suspended in mid air. People say Li Ch'eng's downstrokes 'have no bottom' ('legs'), because they have not seen genuine ones.

Forgery. I once bought a scroll of a landscape by Li Sheng of Szechuan from one Mr Ting. It was done in a very graceful, fine manner, with high peaks above, a bridge and ferry below and waterfalls in the middle. There were over thirty pine-trees A small script bore the signature, 'Li Sheng of Shu'. I exchanged this for an ancient calligraphy owned by Liu Ching. Liu scraped off the signature and put down 'Li Sze-hsün', and passed it on to Chao Shu-ang. How sad the way forged things are so easily passed off for genuine!

Disappearance of Painters of Stories. The painters today do not paint stories or events at all. When they do, they get the ancient costumes mixed up and only invite laughter. People in the earlier days always referred to a certain story in a picture. The

Szechuan artists kept up the tradition of Chin and Tang and many did paint stories in the beginning of the present dynasty (mid-tenth century). Human figures are only the size of a finger. They are neatly done, though lacking in spirit and energy. Trees are well done in strong colours, well modulated. Now we see no more of this.

Mounting and Care. Ancient paintings up to the beginning of Tang (seventh century) were done on unsized silk. After Wu Tao-tse, Chou Fang and Han Kan, the silks were prepared by mixing white powder with warm water patted on the silk like a sheet of silver. This is wonderful for the fine work on human figures. People often judge a Tang painting by its silk, and when they see coarse threads, say it cannot be Tang. This is wrong. The works of Chang Seng-yu (sixth century) and Yen Li-pen (seventh) were done on unsized silk – at least those that are still available for examination. Paintings of the South Tang Period (923–935) were done on coarse silk. Hsü Hsi (tenth century) used silk that sometimes looked like cotton.

Real silk *(chüan)** has a pale colour. The colour remains clear and bright, even when tattered or shredded with age. Only Buddha portraits are usually discoloured by incense smoke.

When silk is moistened with liquid, the colour of incense which remains in the grain is easily seen. It can be covered by a new overlay of colour. Ancient silks do not have a straight run, but two or three threads are involved. Such runs cannot be forged.

If an ancient painting is not falling to pieces it need not be strengthened at the back or on the border. If it is not in good condition, change the border or the back mounting once, but each change necessitates more changes. It would be a pity. For the fine nuances in human facial expressions and hair and the fine colouring of flowers, bees and butterflies may be lost through strengthening of the back of the silk.†

Chao Shu-ang says, 'The cotton braid tying up a scroll

* *Chüan* is the kind of silk, fairly stiff like organdie, usually used in paintings. It is translated merely as silk.

† In early paintings, the ink or colour shading was sometimes done on the back of the silk.

should be a finger and a half wide, made up of very fine, soft fibre, which will not fray. Use a penknife and ply gently beneath the threads of the border and fix it there, then it is rolled and tied. Thus it does not press on the centre of the picture, preventing damage or wrinkles. Many paintings are broken in the centre by the tying straps. Books are often spoiled in the same way. The knot should be tied gently, not too firmly.'

Cracks should not be mended with silk. For the new silk may look all right, but the pressure is uneven when rolled up, and new cracks will develop, which will be deplorable. People in earlier times used to make a mark between the lines to protect the characters, and these will not crack in an earthen container. Now people sometimes strengthen these marked lines with silk. It may look fine and smooth, but after a period cracks develop across the characters, which is a pity. Calligraphy or painting done on paper should not be strengthened with silk. Even sized silk is new and relatively stiff. The grains of the silk will press on the paper leaving grain marks there. After a while, the paper begins to fray from friction with the silk. Again after some time, the colour seeps over to the silk. Wang Shen used to strengthen his calligraphic works with silk against my advice. Later, he took out Huan Wen's calligraphy to have a look, and found that the ink area was worn and the fine grains of silk showed underneath, to his regret. He took a piece of thin paper to cover it and put it away. He never made the same mistake again. A hundred pieces of silk will show that some are better in grain than others because the manufacture varies.

Vertical scrolls rolled up horizontally show horizontal cracks; horizontal scrolls show vertical cracks; all according to the way in which they are rolled up. Vertical cracks are not limited to just one thread line; after a while the scroll breaks up at both ends, and will not come together again; it either frays, or cracks open. It cannot be forged. The forged (jointed) one is cut right open across the threads, but both sides remain the same old silk. The new material begins to show ragged edges, and it exercises a hard pressure. Through moistening, the colour is shown as deposit between the threads. Those suffering from smoke have a bad smell, and the marks are deeper on top than below. Antique paper has an antique scent of its own.

Wen Yen-po used antique silk strengthening to line his scroll

drawers. His idea was to protect the paintings. But paintings may stick to the lining and suffer more damage.

Modern screens with common drawings break after a couple of years – they just crack open.

Drawers, cases, are made for keeping scrolls. One should from time to time take the scrolls out and unroll them. This contact with human hands helps to preserve them. In cases kept for a long time unopened they are often spoiled by dry rot, and are then beyond all repair.

15

THIRTEENTH CENTURY A.D.

Chao Meng-fu

1254–1322

The Antique Spirit

[We are now with the Yüan masters. Of these, Chao Meng-fu and Ni Tsan bring home to us a sense of peace and warmth, in contrast to the escape to nature and the restlessness and energy of the tenth-century landscapists.

Mi Fei's revolt had been significant. He had wiped out the awful terrifying peaks of Kuan T'ung and Fan K'uan, replacing them with pale, misty mountain-tops without rocks, and softened the whole tone of nature. He had, too, replaced the struggle with the *ts'un* texture lines by thick, overlaid ink-washes in the distance and simple 'primitive' strokes representing objects in the foreground. But he had not made his return to human habitations. His mountain-tops were inspiring, but not 'livable', in Chinese art terms. They are mountains to 'look at', to 'visit', but not to 'live in'. The tranquil country scenes, with human activities and cottages and chimney-smoke, or busy streets, were not considered inspiring enough. In turning from Mi Fei to Chao Meng-fu and Ni Tsan (*alias* Yün-lin) one feels as if returning from a foggy mountain range to one's own cottage in the plains below, with a shepherd dog, a cat and some melons ripening on the trellis.

But the tone and the mood had been set by Mi Fei himself – a softened view of life and the universe. The period following

Mi Fei, the Southern Sung Dynasty in the fifteenth century, with the capital down south in soft-tinted Hangchow and with its Academy of Art, had preceded the Yüan masters. This apparent gap in our selections is not a real gap in artistic activity. The Academicians wrote nothing original, because they were necessarily conventional, and the best, the greatest of this period, Hsia Kwei and Ma Yüan, did not write at all. Without Hsia Kwei and Ma Yüan, Chao Meng-fu and Ni Yün-lin would be impossible. Hsia and Ma were strictly 'tonalists'. The romantic freedom of Mi Fei had become a spirit of serenity and reflection and repose. True, the technique was different, the clear contours of the Northern School (if one prefers to use that meaningless phrase) were there, but the texture strokes had been reduced to a minimum. One gets rather a sense of empty space; rocks and outlines of trees leap out of a seeming void. In Hsia Kwei and Ma Yüan, a curious sense of solidity is conveyed by a few deftly placed strokes. Matter is, and is not, there. All is colour, tone, atmosphere. As Mi Fei obliterates details by an enveloping atmosphere, so Ma Yüan and Hsia Kwei obliterate water and distant hills, vaguely caught and suggested, rather than depicted. Ma got the nickname 'One-Corner Ma', because in painting the vast West Lake of Hangchow with its willow embankments and villas, he selected a concentrated corner only, with nothing of what stands all around.

But Ma and Hsia had decidedly come down to the plains and found the valleys and the placid streams just as delectable as the strange mountain-tops. *Ch'i-yün* had always meant for the artists the impression of vitality growing out of the artist's vibrant energy: now it meant what it should mean, mood and tone and atmosphere only. The obsession with brush-strokes and texture lines, characteristic of Chinese painting, was not gone – it could not be gone so long as the Chinese artist did not discard his brush – but it was pleasantly subdued.

There was a sectarian spirit among the orthodox Southern School painters, especially bitter in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which failed to give Ma and Hsia their due.

Chao Meng-fu came into the picture then. He served under the Mongol House of Kublai Khan. As a descendant of the Sung Royal House (of the clan name of Chao), he was on this account sometimes down-graded in a superficial, broad sense,

and was not included among the 'Four Masters of Yüan'. But his art was its own justification. Also he had an extremely gifted wife, Madame Kuan, known for her bamboos, whose landscapes showed distinctly the influence of Mi Fei.

Chao Meng-fu seemed to have summed up in himself the rich heritage of the past. It was of course selective. As Kao Lien (No. 18) noted, he took from Ma Ho-chih and Li Kung-lin their delicate lines, from Li Sung-nien and Li Ch'eng their composition, and incorporated the colour shading of Chao Po-ch'ü and Li Sung and the airy spaciousness of Hsia Kwei and Ma Yüan.

Contemporary with him was Kao K'o-kung (1248–1310), and just a little later Fang Ts'ung-yi (fl. around 1350), both definitely influenced by Mi Fei.

In Chao Meng-fu, art had come home.]

The important thing in a painting is the antique spirit *(ku-yi)*. A painting may be very well done, and yet be worthless if the antique spirit is lacking.* People today only think of delicate lines and fresh colours and call themselves competent artists. They fail to see that in the absence of the antique spirit, all kinds of trouble start, and the work will not be worth looking at. My paintings seem to be simple and crude, but those who understand know that they are akin to the antique way, and are therefore good. I can explain this only to those who understand.

Ch'ien Hsüan (Shun-chü) draws flowers in colour; the important point is that the flowers come out alive.

The Sung painters are far behind the Tang painters. I deliberately try to learn from the Tang and almost wish to get rid of the brush- and ink-work of the Sung artists.

I have tried since my childhood to paint narcissi, doing several dozen sketches a day, but I never quite got it. There are specialties in art. I wanted to do it and tried to catch its likeness. But obviously one cannot catch the beauty of all things, from

* The 'antique spirit' is a term hard to define, but generally refers to sparseness in design, a certain 'crude' or 'primitive' (*chuo*, literally 'stupid') touch in brush-strokes, the use of pale blue-green, dull reddish-brown and bronze colours, and above all, simplicity and restraint.

the narcissi, trees and rocks to buffaloes, horses, insects and fishes. I see Tse-ku of my clan has done ink flowers, and has caught all the intricate postures of their petals and leaves. It is quite an achievement, more than I can do myself.

. . . I have served at the court [Peking] for a long time, and have had the opportunity to go around with Hindu monks. Therefore I like to think I am pretty good in painting Arahats (Buddhist saints). I did this seventeen years ago, and seem to have given it the antique spirit. I do not know what the viewers of this picture will think.

In painting human figures, the great thing is to catch the nature and disposition of the persons. This work by Tung-tan (Li Tsan-hua) shows not only the forms and expressions; the ways of man and dog are suggested by it. That is why I consider it valuable.

16

FOURTEENTH CENTURY A.D.

Ni Tsan

1301–1374

Calm Detachment

[Ni Tsan was a young man when Chao Meng-fu died, and lived on to see the collapse of the Mongol Dynasty. Highly respected as one of the 'Four Masters' of Yüan with Wang Meng (*c.* 1308–1385), Wu Chen (1280–1354), and Huang Kung-wang (1269–1354), he was most akin to Chao in technique and spirit. Wang Meng and Wu Chen had gone for the deep-mountain atmosphere of Li Ch'eng and Chü-jan. Huang Kung-wang (known also by his self-styled art name Ta-ch'ih, 'Great Crazy') was one of the greatest; let us say he was one of the 'mountaineer' type, but he was original and had a masterly style of his own. His mountains were essentially 'livable'; he, too, made blurred dots like Mi Fei for his tree foliage, but with a dry brush. From the Yüan Dynasty on, artists had switched from silk to paper as a general rule, which change necessitated a drier, softer brush. His mountains are less awesome, but more harmonious.

What is the relation between Ni Tsan and Mi Fei? On the surface, none; as regards creating a tone and mood, everything. Ni is what I would call a tonalist. Like Chao Meng-fu, he has come down to the plains and lakes, and his distant hills are seen in the so-called level perspective. (Mi Fei, although painting mountain-tops, had what may be called air-to-air perspective,

and not the ground-to-air perspective of Tung Yüan and Fan K'uan.) Ni Tsan's pictures are controlled by an air of serenity, which seems the entire message. He has a cool, chaste atmosphere, and shows nature in its purity without the interruption of human beings.

This was the mood of his pictures, which came from his character. Born of a wealthy family, he gave away his money and property to friends and relatives before the collapse of the dynasty, and lived, under various disguised names, a solitary life, wandering among the lakes of Kiang-nan. He had a horror of crowds and, like Mi Fei, a mania for fastidious cleanliness. Only when he was alone on the lake shores was his spirit free.

Ni Tsan's influence was later seen in Shen Chou and Wen Cheng-ming of the following century. In Ni Tsan, nature soothes rather than excites. His was a spirit of purity incarnate, and for that he stood alone. This vision was obliterated when the four Wangs (seventeenth century) went off again in a grand, servile imitation of the ancients.

It seems that in Chao Meng-fu and Ni Yün-lin, the human spirit had at last come to rest. It never quite entered the activities of the market or the common men's homes, but it came very close to it.

In the following is a typical statement of the *literati* painting school. Ni was called 'Abstruse' *(Yü)*. Consequently he was often referred to as 'Ni Yü'.]

What I call painting is just a few simple, hasty strokes of the romantic *(yi)* brush. It does not strive for formal likeness, but is done just to please myself. Recently when I went to town, I was surrounded by people who wanted me to paint the way they wanted, and moreover, specified a time for delivering it. I was submitted to insults of all kinds. What a world! As if we could blame a eunuch for not having a beard!

Kao K'o-kung (Fang-shan, 1248–1310) is one of those rare persons who cut themselves off from the vulgar world and are careful to conceal their talents. He lives humbly in Hangchow. On his leisure days, he comes to the Ch'ientang river-bank on a cane, with a pot of wine and a book of poems. There he sits, gazing at the mountains around, feeling pleased with their

undulating crests and the moving clouds. Between his office affairs and his writings, he also paints, to give expression to what cries out for expression.

Among the landscapists of the present dynasty, there are Kao K'o-kung, distinguished for his atmosphere of calm detachment, Chao Meng-fu for his bold, daring strokes, Huang Kung-wang for his originality, and Wang Meng for his freshness and elegance. There are differences in quality among them, but I have nothing but praise for these four. I don't know about the rest. This piece may not be the best of Huang, but it shows a distinctive atmosphere.

17

FOURTEENTH CENTURY A.D.

Huang Kung-wang

1269–1354

Perspectives

[The great Huang Kung-wang has some notes on the technique of painting, but they are commonplace, largely repetitious of what has been said before, and not worth translating.

Because of the tremendous reputation of Huang, his few one-line remarks (thirty-two in one version, nineteen in others, etc.) were considered the elementary principles of the Southern School. As a matter of fact, many of these were identical with those by Ching Hao (No. 10) and Kuo Hsi (No. 11), and they are so brief and lacking in personal statements that they are of little value here. However, there are two important statements, not found in others, one being a slightly different definition of the 'three perspectives'.]

In painting avoid these four mistakes: 'erraticness', prettiness, vulgarity and recklessness.

There are three kinds of perspective for looking at mountains: from below looking straight ahead is the 'level perspective'; from a nearby point looking across to another hill opposite is called the 'broad perspective' (elsewhere called 'deep perspective'); to see a distant view from outside the mountains is called 'high perspective'.

18

SIXTEENTH CENTURY A.D.

Kao Lien

fl. 1521–1593

A Layman's Point of View

(Chun Sheng Pa Chan)

[The Ming artists were suffering from a surfeit of models, after the detailed work of Sung Academicians and the lighter brush-work of the Yüan masters. Originality was choked by the abundance of models to copy from. The so-called Southern School at its best had been perfected by the great artists of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; this amounted to what may be called generically the impressionistic school, whether it be the crowded, restless but compact pictures of Wang Meng, or the airy chasteness of Ni Tsan, or the greater human warmth of Chao Meng-fu. Their originality was replaced by scholarship exactly as the Han scholars, impressed by the luxuriant growth of philosophy in the Chou Dynasty, became great commentators, but only commentators. Originality in a philosopher like Wang Ch'ung was looked at askance. The impressionistic school, once a revolutionary movement, became as it were the orthodox established church. Artists and critics alike were lost in the search for secrets and comparisons of the *ts'un* texture strokes. The Southern School was the orthodox school. Tai Chin, who followed the slightly unorthodox school of Hsia Kwei and Ma Yüan, gained a great vogue, but also the hatred of the

orthodox artists. Discussion was lost in the admiration of the old masters, and criticism was stifled by patient examination of techniques. Of this orthodox school, Tung Ch'i-ch'ang seemed to be the embodiment.

There were clearly geniuses who could not be bound by rules and who merely went ahead and developed what their instincts told them to do. The impressionistic revolt against realism was not defeated by theory, but by the actual work of Shen Chou, Wen Cheng-ming, T'ang Yin and Ch'iu Ying. These four great artists of the fifteenth century were neither 'north' nor 'south'. They were just there. They created what was beautiful without knowing to what school they belonged. They formed the 'Four Great Masters' of the fifteenth century. By sheer results, they compelled recognition for the unmistakable genius of T'ang Yin and Ch'iu Ying. T'ang Yin may be assigned to the Northern School if you like, so may Ch'iu Ying, for they were both realists. But T'ang Yin did what no one else could do by combining realism with a genius and a style of his own, and Ch'iu Ying, a realist in painting house interiors and men and ladies, nevertheless showed that mastery which defied imitation. (T'ang Yin was notorious for his affairs with women. Ch'iu Ying, on the other hand, was an apprentice, never a scholar, and could not write like scholars.)

All I can say for Tung Ch'i-ch'ang was that he *imitated* the ancients very well. It was as if a nineteenth-century Western artist was intent on copying Tintoretto, or even El Greco, and nothing else.

The Chekiang School, led by Tai Chin and his pupil Wu Wei, picked up the tradition of Ma Yüan and Hsia Kwei. Tai and Wu were Academician artists; so were Ma and Hsia. Academician artists were on the whole realists – Emperor Hui-tsung himself was a good example – but the Chekiang School had also brought in the controlled rhythmic strokes of Ma Yüan and Hsia Kwei. After seventy or eighty years this school fell into disrepute; there was too much brush-work, somewhat like the effect of Rouault. It jarred on the senses.

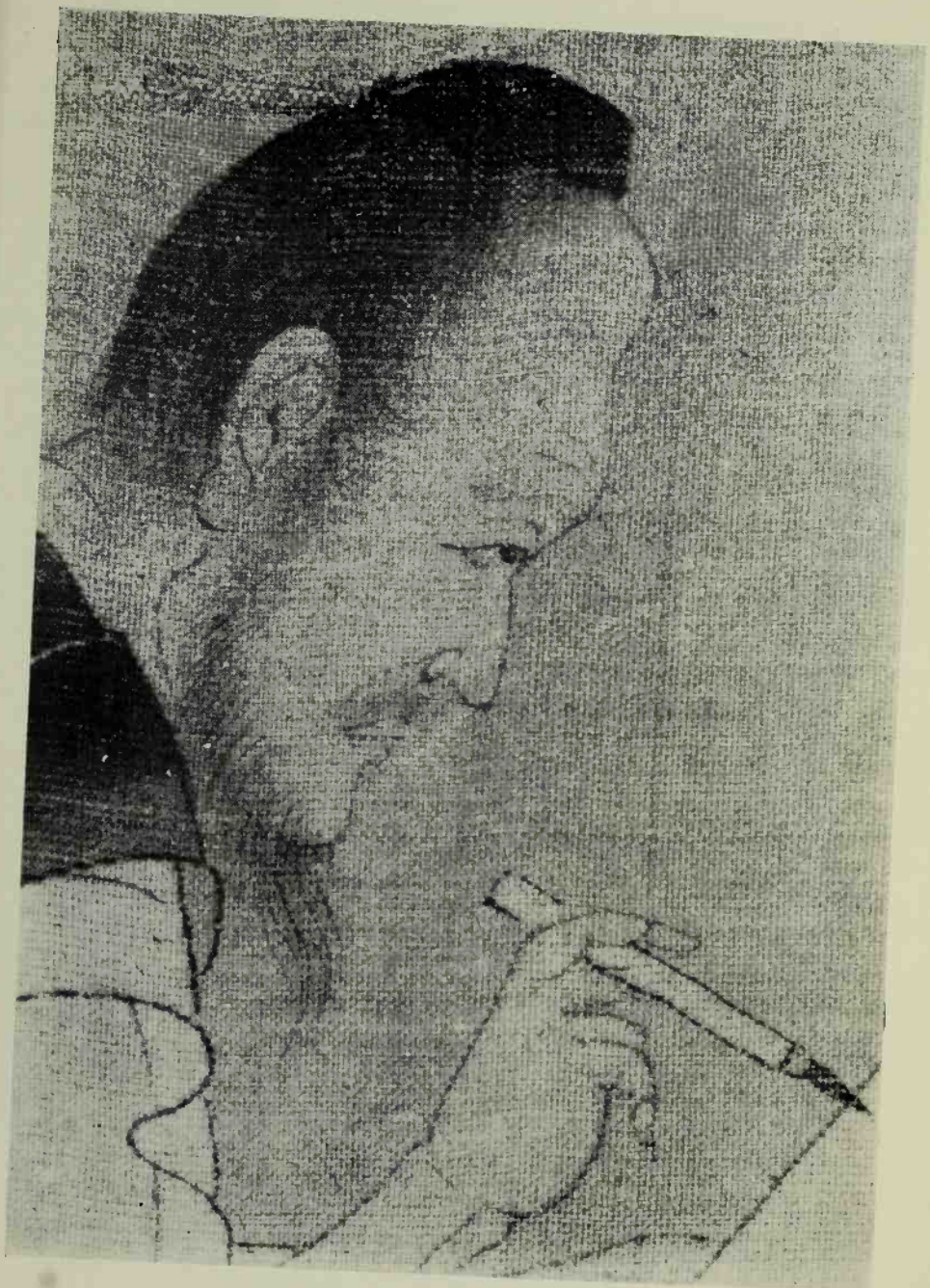
Art fell into a dilemma.

In this period dominated by Tung Ch'i-ch'ang (around the year 1600), there were a few critics who did not repeat what the orthodox school had been saying for centuries. In these slight

1. *Tomb Tile Painting*
(In black and red pigment; 2nd–4th century)

2. *The Lo River Goddess* by Ku K'ai-chih
(Twelfth-century Sung copy of fourth-century original)

3. One of the series 'Portraits of Emperors' attributed to Yen Li-pen (Early seventh century)



4. Detail from *Scholars Collating Texts*
(*circa* tenth century)

5. *Clear Weather in the Valley* by Tung Yüan (*circa* 1000)

6. *Hills and Trees in Mist* by Mi Fei
(Eleventh century)

7. Detail from *Ladies Preparing Silk* by Emperor Hui-tsung of Sung
(Early twelfth century)

8. *A Walk in Spring* by Ma Yüan
(Twelfth century)

9. *Distant View of Rivers and Hills* by Hsia Kwei (Twelfth century)

10. *Recluse Scholar under Willow* attributed to Ma Lin (Sung, twelfth century)

11. *Mother Goose and Goslings* by Lu Tsung-kwei (Sung)

12. *Bird on Branch* by Mu-ch'i
(Thirteenth century)

13. *Ch'iao and Hua Mountains in Autumn* by Chao Meng-fu
(Thirteenth century)

14. *Fishermen's Pleasures* by Wu Chen
(Fourteenth century)

15. *Cloudy Mountains* by Ch'en Ch'un
(Sixteenth century)

16. *Snow at a Mountain Pass*
by T'ang Yin
(Sixteenth century)

17. *Waiting for the Ferry* by Ch'iu Ing (Sixteenth century)

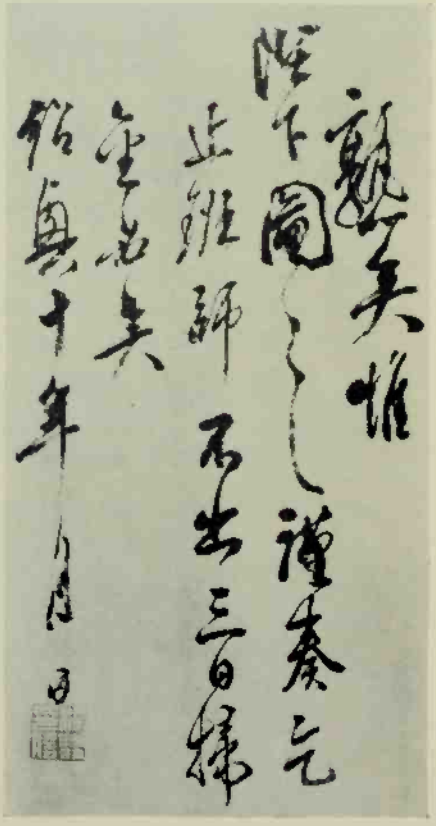
18. *Lotus* by Pata Shanjen (Seventeenth century)

19. *Two Landscapes* by Shih-t'ao
(Seventeenth century)

20. *Portrait of T'ao Yuan-ming*
by Shih-t'ao
(Seventeenth century)

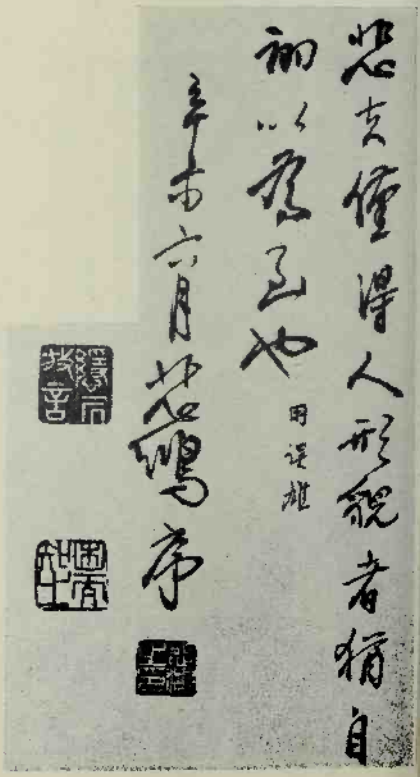
21. *Self-portrait* by
Chang Ta-ch'ien
(Contemporary)

22. *Lotus* by Chang Ta-ch'ien
(Contemporary)



23. Calligraphy by General
Yo Fei
(Twelfth century)

24. *Horse* by Hsü Pei-hung Ju Pei-on (Contemporary)



25. Calligraphy by Hsü Pei-hung

efforts, there was insight and originality. Of these, I choose Kao Lien, Ku Ning-yüan, and Hsieh Chao-cheh.

Kao Lien was not generally known as a painter. He was the author of a book on the enjoyment of living, *Chun Sheng Pa Chan*, with sections on food, medicine, chess, hygiene, relaxation, and all the amenities of a leisurely life. He had also sections on care and handling of paintings and the connoisseur's art. We may say that he represented the layman's point of view, a lover of art, but still a layman.]

Kaotse [the author] says that there are the 'Six Techniques', 'Three Faults', 'Six Essentials' and 'Six Strong Points' for beginners.* These touch on the superficial things in the discussion of art.

I discuss art from the point of view of charms in nature, in human life and in objects *(t'ien-ch'ü, jen-ch'ü, wu-ch'ü)*.† Charm in nature relates to the spirit; charm in humans refers to life; charm in objects relates to forms and shapes. The spirit lies outside the forms and shapes, and the forms and shapes are concealed within the spiritual atmosphere. Forms that are not alive result in flatness, but life with bad forms gives a slipshod impression. Therefore, one should look for spiritual likeness beyond material likeness, and seek for life within its forms.

The distant views reveal the charms of nature. The forms which can be looked upon at close range are the charms of human life.

Hence when one stands a little away from a picture on the wall, one finds that the hills have sharp, rugged forms. But pictures without the life of forests and falling slopes, or those

* The six techniques are by Hsieh Ho. The six essentials are by Ching Hao (No. 10). The other threes and sixes are by Liu Tao-ch'un (eleventh century). Liu's six strong points refer to what to look for in some paintings with obvious weaknesses.

† *Ch'ü*, interest, or interesting aspects, is hard to translate. It refers to what is enjoyable, enticing in literature or life, such as cloud formations, a beautiful passage, an insect's back and legs, a witty saying. Sometimes it refers to the 'flavour' of an evening conversation. A painting may then have a certain flavour as regards nature or life. In some places the word *'ch'ü'* may be simply translated as 'beauty', such as the 'beauties of nature' *(t'ien-ch'ü)*.

that are a collection of lines without the movement of wind, or of people standing still or seated, without the movements of eyes and lips and legs, or of birds that have beautiful feathers but do not suggest flying movement, or of crying, or flowers that have wonderful colours but no suggestion of scent or dewiness – these are said to be lacking in spirit. If on the other hand, they are all there, and show a completeness of form, they may be said to have the charm of objects. To be able to discern the life and movement of a spiritual atmosphere among the charms of human life – that is to have the charm of nature.

Take, for instance, the big scroll entitled [the Goddess] 'Kwan-yin with Moon and Water', among the Tang paintings. The lines of the costume, the fine, delicate colours, the tassels of pearls, give an expression of life to the Buddha's appearance. A white muslin robe covers half the body, barely disguising it, laced with a white border of fine brocade. Among the Bodhisattvas that I have seen, not only later paintings, but even those of the Five Dynasties close to the Tang period, I have not seen anything remotely comparable with it. Over the whole picture shines a diffuse moonlight, yellowish-white, and in the centre sits the goddess. You stand before it and see the figure and the moon apparently floating across a vast expanse of water. This is what is meant by saying that a spiritual atmosphere stands out over and above the picture.

Again, take Yen Li-pen's picture of the 'Six Kingdoms'. It depicts a group of common people drunk or sober, dancing and singing, dressed in strange costumes, or sleeping in the open. It gives a very vivid picture of life in foreign countries. Or his large-size picture of the 'Four Kings'. The rulers and their courtiers and guards are shown in a formal ceremony with marvellous life. There are trees with bare, forked branches, and banks of mist, coloured in a lifelike manner, so that they seem to stand out. Yet on touching it, you find that it is a piece of smooth silk.

There is the picture of O-pang Palace [of Ch'in Shih-huang] at Li-shan. There are ranges of rocky hills, dotted with hundreds of palace buildings, with carriages, horses and houseboats, while innumerable men and women the size of ants, an inch or tenth of an inch high, are gathered like ants, moving about, all drawn in exact detail. For the artist carries out what

he sees in his mind by means of his hand; every dot and every touch of his brush show the charms of nature. Therefore it is possible to represent a hundred miles in a small space and capture all shapes and forms through the tip of one's pen. . . .

There is, too, Chou Fang's 'Beautiful Women'. They have an indefinable beauty, shown in their generous bodies, coy charm and decorous expression. They are not of the overpainted, lithesome type, arousing lascivious thoughts in the viewer. Chou's 'Dragon King at a Vegetarian Dinner' is done in fine, silky lines which go round and round. The pupils of the eyes are like lacquer, and give a lifelike expression. There are old hunchbacks and young people dashing about, although angry waves and denizens of the sea lined up in formation are enough to frighten the onlooker. It is not a matter merely of representation of certain bodily shapes. Likewise, in Pien Lüan's pictures of flowers and insects, the flowers seem to dip and dance in the wind, the insects seem to drink the dew and fly off and the grass bends before the wind – all like life itself. One feels as if sitting in a nice spring garden even when seeing the picture on a snowy day. Tai Sung's 'Returning Buffaloes in the Rain' shows a few willows above, done with a fine spray of ink dots looking like pinheads. The whole atmosphere is one of twilight drizzle, and both the buffaloes and the cowherds are anxious to hurry home. These are all examples of the moving charms of nature, spirit coming out of the bodily forms and the life inherent in them.

We see that the people of Tang set the standard for all eternity. Their work was serious; without being laborious, they hit upon many pleasant surprises. The later centuries tried their very hardest and succeeded in grasping the charms of things, but missed the charms of nature. What I appreciate in the Tang paintings is their art in capturing the fullness of spirit before putting brush on silk and leaving it there when the picture was completed. The Sung artists tried to represent the likeness at the expense of the spirit. Therefore the Sungs are superior in charm of objects to the Tangs, but inferior to them in natural charm.

Today the art critics generally think of Sung paintings as those of the Academy of Art and not of much value, and turn to the Yüans, because the Sungs were strong in detail and weak

in spirit. However, the level of Sung is not easily reached, though the Yüans did equal them. Did not the art of Huang Kung-wang derive from Hsia Kwei and Ma Yüan? The art of Wang Meng, too, derived from Tung Yüan and Fan K'uan. Ch'ien Hsüan was but Huang Ch'üan in a new dress, and Sheng Mou a late imitator of Liu Sung-nien. Chao Meng-fu, gifted with unusual talent, took the delineation lines from Ma Ho-chih, composition from Liu Sung-nien and Li Ch'eng, colouring from Chao Po-ch'ü and Li Sung, and the sense of life from the open spaciousness of Hsia Kwei and Ma Yüan. And the final result was that he was not just like any of these, but developed a style all his own, elegant and warm, awakening a response in others like a beautiful woman. Indeed he stood unique in his generation as the outstanding artist among scholars, but his technique was entirely traditional, without unorthodox features. There were others: Wang Meng, Huang Kung-wang, Chao Meng-fu's son Chao Yung, and Ni Tsan for *literati* spirit; Ts'ao Chih-po, Kao K'o-kung, Wu Chen . . . [list of names omitted] for mastery of craftsmanship; Cheng Tse-cheng . . . [names omitted] for romantic serenity. Those are all Yüans, competent in their generation, but they certainly did not excel the Sungs. As to Chao Meng-fu, Huang Kung-wang and Wang Meng, even the Sung artists would bow in approval of their natural charm, were to see them.

Today we speak often of the *literati* spirit *(shih-ch'i)*. This so-called *literati* spirit refers to those scholars who can paint in the style of the *li* script, depending entirely on the rhythmic vitality and trying to achieve a natural charm beyond the materially interesting. They speak of 'writing', rather than 'depicting' a picture, because they wish to avoid the [realistic] art of the Academy painters. This type of drawing may serve to record a man's happy inspiration of the moment, but would hardly serve as art to compare with that of the ancients or to be treasured by posterity. The works of Chao Meng-fu, Huang Kung-wang and Ch'ien Hsüan are really *literati* paintings. But are these easy to equal by superficial artists? Did they achieve their tremendous reputation without the art technique of the Sungs? Thus we see how it is with art.

19

SIXTEENTH CENTURY A.D.

Ku Ning-yüan

fl. 1570

On Brush-work

[Ku Ning-yüan was a highly respected artist in his time, although he was not an outstanding one. His short *Hua Yin*, no more than a couple of hundred words, is interesting in discussing the concept of blunt, primitive strokes, as interesting as Huang Kung-wang's warning against 'prettiness' ('sweetness'). Although very short, this is one of the most intelligent essays on art.]

When one is not equal to painting, the best thing is to take a stroll alone. Perhaps one will encounter nothing, or perhaps one will come across an odd piece of rock, or a dried-up branch, a small pool, or a sparse wood. These things lie about, unwanted by anybody. But they are pieces of nature, totally unlike what is seen in pictures. One should give them a cool, careful look and try to catch that indefinable quality wherein lies the expression of life. This is like poets jotting down lines to be incorporated in verses later.

The first of the six techniques is a lifelike tone and atmosphere. If the tone and atmosphere are there, the picture will come out alive. This tone and atmosphere may lie in the scene itself, or may be outside. It is caught from the changes of light

on clear and rainy days and in the different seasons. It is not merely a matter of piling up ink on the picture.

If the groundwork consists of dry, dragged lines and the ink-wash is hazy, the picture will lack brush-work and ink-work (distinctness). If the groundwork consists of a group of small pebbles or forms and these are not properly worked, it will also lack distinctness. To achieve distinctness of shape (both brush-work and ink), one should first determine the skeleton and structure ('bones and tendon') and gradually build up to a good well-rounded surface, achieving mass and depth but still keeping a certain lightness of spirit. These are general principles. But real masters do not need such caution, for they apply the ink freely under perfect control.

The goal in painting should be freshness *(sheng)* after mastery *(shu)*. But it is difficult to be fresh [and spontaneous] after one has gained mastery. There is, however, a difference between easy familiarity (*lan-shu*, overcooked) and controlled mastery *(yüan-shu)*. If it is controlled mastery, it can remain fresh. It is better to be blunt *(chuo)* than skilful [in strokes], and it is difficult to be blunt (naïve) when one has attained skill. But if a picture is original without effort, it can be blunt and yet skilful, and while being really skilful, it gives an effect of bluntness. Only the Yüan artists understood the fresh and the blunt strokes.

[This concept is new, but is also expressed by others, like Tung Ch'i-ch'ang. Literally, *sheng* means 'raw', 'uncooked', *shu* means 'cooked', 'familiar', and *chuo* means 'stupid', 'blunt'. This has a great deal to do with appreciation of Chinese painting. It is also akin to the distaste for mere grace and 'sweetness' or prettiness. The idea is then that 'fresh strokes' and 'blunt strokes' are desirable; freshness standing for spontaneity, and bluntness for a certain rugged strength and 'primitive' antique quality. The works of Mi Fei or Shih-t'ao contain examples of this. One looks for spontaneity and lack of traces of effort in a good painting. Ku Ning-yüan is also remarkable for the following statement regarding children's drawings showing bluntness and spontaneity.]

Students of art fall into ruts as soon as they begin. But women

and children and unpretentious people often draw for their own pleasure, and are afraid to show it to others. Such drawings may not be lifelike, but they have something which the accomplished artists do not have, and that is the quality of *sheng* and *chuo*, freshness and *naïveté*. They say that *sheng* and *chuo* are entirely different from learning the rules. For them [for the children], the original nature is not yet developed, like the beginning of the creation out of chaos – they are making, as it were, their first drafts of the universe.*

The Yüan artists used fresh strokes and blunt designs for good reasons. They were afraid to become well known and involved in politics. In times of a foreign conqueror Chao Meng-fu did not care; he took office, enjoyed all the honours, and became a rival for the well-known artists of Tang and Sung. But after all his being in politics was a drag upon his art work.

What good is there then in being fresh and blunt? Freshness prevents pomposity and makes for the so-called *literati* style. Bluntness prevents laboriousness and therefore has elegance; it gives the so-called deep flavour of the poet.

Oversparing use of ink causes lack of atmosphere; but straining after atmosphere may also cause a heavy blurb. Too liquid ink will take away from the lines and grains (shading gradations), but over-attention to shading will cause evidence of effort and lack of ease. Of the secrets of the six techniques, the control of ink must be always ensured.

What goes towards the left must start from the right; what goes to the right must start from the left. It will not do to go straight ahead in one direction. To have growth, a base must be provided. This is so in all nature. Observe carefully and you'll see for yourself.

* This is strictly the idea from Laotse, who regarded the new-born babe as having the primeval nature not yet differentiated and broken up.

20

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY A.D.

Yüan Hung-tao

fl. 1607

Be Yourself

[As with Tang poetry, the copiers or imitators of the great poets had copied themselves to death, so the banality of 'imitating the ancients' had deadened initiative throughout the Ming period (mid-fourteenth to mid-seventeenth centuries). The conflict between conformity with tradition and originality of spirit was always there. In the beginning of the Mings, Tai Chin (early fifteenth century), an academician, adopted the tradition of Ma Yüan and Hsia Kwei, and made his mark, although he died in poverty. Shen Chou (1427–1509) and Wen Cheng-ming (1470–1559) and T'ang Yin (1470–1523) won recognition by sheer perfection in purity of method. These three greatly popularized the coloured landscape in dull reddish-brown, which was subdued and pleasant and had an 'antique' effect – just as shades of red and brown have become the favourite colours in Western oil-paintings.

But on the whole, the effect of the 'ancient' disciplines was deadening. Chinese critics and the artists themselves never doubted two propositions: one, that the ancients were so superior and possessed a mysterious talent lost to later generations, and two, that the 'ancient techniques' must be the foundation of all art work. The great Yüan masters (thirteenth and fourteenth centuries) pretended to draw inspiration not

from the Tang masters, but earlier, from the tenth-century landscapists, and Mi Fei, who came in the eleventh century, declared that he spurned the Tangs, and would go straight back to the fourth and fifth centuries. The Mings became the greatest imitators of all. The highest goal was to be 'like Ta-ch'ih' (Huang Kung-wang) or 'like Pei-yüan' (Tung Yüan). Of this tendency for imitating the ancients, Tung Ch'i-ch'ang seemed to be the most successful representative. Art could very well become a profession of signed, honest forgeries.

There were individuals who protested against this tendency of 'following' masters *(shih)*. Chinese art lore is full of information of who copied whom, of who *shih* (took for master) what ancient artist. Practising artists like Huang Kung-wang had never forgotten that they must imitate nature, and not any one master. To be fair, Tung Ch'i-ch'ang also advised artists to 'look at real mountains' *(k'an chen shan)*, but what curious advice! Of the earliest expressionists, Chang Tsao (fl. 750) made the famous statement about the secret of his art: 'Outside, I take nature as my master; inside, I follow my own heart.'

Yüan Hung-tao (fl. 1607, better known as Yüan Chung-lang) was, with his two brothers, the founder of the Kung-an School of poetry. This was the school emphasizing *hsing-ling*, or individual 'personality', and tending always to deprecate imitation of the ancients. As he protested against the ham-stringing effect of tradition in poetry, so he felt the same attitude towards the 'ancient techniques'. It would be unfair to say that he called the classicists painters by formula, but in spirit, that was what he said. There are no formulas for poetry, said Su Tung-p'o; there are no formulas for prose, poetry or paintings, says Yüan Chung-lang.]

Once I went with Po-hsiu (his elder brother) to see Tung Ch'i-ch'ang.

'There are modern outstanding artists,' said Po-hsiu, 'like Wen Cheng-ming, T'ang Yin, and Shen Chou. Do you think they have the spirit of the ancients?'

Tung Ch'i-ch'ang replied, 'The distinguished modern artists never paint one stroke that is not like the ancients. But to be

absolutely like the ancients is to be not like them at all. It is not even painting.'

I started when I heard this, and said to myself, 'That is from someone who understands.'

Therefore a good artist derives from nature, not from any one person. A good student learns the spirit, and not the doctrines. A good master takes for his master not someone in the past, but the whole glorious creation. Take, for instance, a person who considers Li T'ang as his master. Does he try merely to learn the patterns and stroke techniques of Li T'ang? Or should he not rather learn the spirit of Li T'ang, the spirit of not wanting to be a Han, or a Wei, or a man of the Six Dynasties? This is the right way to learn. It is said one can win a victory in battle by 'burning one's bridges';* but can also lose it by the same method, and sometimes win by *not* burning them. Thus, to disobey the rules is sometimes the right way to follow the masters of the past. Many authors today condemn as new poetry whatever shows a [fresh] line that truly describes something, and when they observe the rules and patterns and borrow some superficial lines from others, they call it 'restoration of the ancients'. This is to follow the rules, but it has not the real beauty and charm of the ancient authors. It is the method of death.

* Literally 'remove camp ovens and place the army against a river-bank', showing determination to win or die.

21

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY A.D.

Hsieh Chao-cheh

c. 1607

Gossip

[Hsieh Chao-cheh was a scholar and a successful official, but not an artist himself. He lived, with Tung Ch'i-ch'ang and Yüan Chung-lang, in the long reign of Wan-li (1573–1619), distinguished by great artistic activity but little originality. Art was divided between those who wanted to hark back to the past, and those who took the easier path of modern styles. The classicists condemned the Chekiang School of Tai Chin's follower (Lan Ying), and among the classicists themselves the Sungkiang School condemned the Soochow (Wu) School. A kind of puerile scholarship, like that of Wang Shih-tseng, dominated poetry; Wang himself wrote some empty comments on the development of painting. The search for the *recherché* style, whether in poetry, or in painting, had deadened the aesthetic activity of the period.

Tung Ch'i-ch'ang, by his art, his calligraphy and his connoisseurship, dominated this period. One is tempted to include in this collection his prolific comments on art in *Hua-ch'an-shih Shui-pi, Hua Yen, Hua Chih,* etc., but one soon gets lost in piecemeal comments on heterogeneous subjects of painting, with always the implication that Tung knew best. For this reason, I have chosen Hsieh rather than Tung here, for Hsieh gives at

least a more human, and less pedantic approach, and he can be interesting.

Hsieh is the author of *Wu Tsa-tsu*, Five Jars of Pot-pourri, which covers every subject under the sun, from the history of homosexuality in China to folk medicine, ghosts, elephants, etc. These chitchats are more intimate; and warmer, like a talk among friends. He also repudiates the Six Techniques, a rather unconventional thing to do.]

I have seen paintings of beautiful women by Chou Fang, Li Kung-lin, and the modern works of Ch'iu Ying. The women are always painted plump and fleshy with abundant hair, their clothes in close creases, with an incomparable expression. It was said that Chou Fang mixed with the aristocracy and saw many pretty women of high society, and that was why his women looked plump and well fed; also, that in the north-west, most women were robust. This may not be entirely correct; it might be just the vogue of those times. Han Kan painted fleshy horses without showing their bones. Did he really see only fat horses? Today there is a painter in Soochow, Chang Wen-yüan, who paints extremely charming ladies with delicate figures. It is a marvellous art of its kind. It is sad that he is not known abroad.

Mi Fei speaks of the two classes of connoisseurs and 'art lovers' (or 'hobbyists', *hao-shih-chia*) in his *Hua Shih*, where he hits the nail on the head. A 'connoisseur' has a deep love for the subject, sees a great many paintings and remembers them; some are artists themselves. Their collections consist of works only of the top quality. There are people today, however, who happen to have money. They have no real love for art, but think of it as a social decoration. They rely on others who know and keep scrolls and paintings in rich brocade cases, tied with jade-tipped rollers. It is really amusing. These are the 'art lovers'. There are sons of rich families today who cannot qualify as art lovers. They have piles of money and do not know what to do with it. They hear that such a painting exists in the world, and casually buy it, and put it on the shelf or hang it on the wall. They never look at it again, and these things are kept in cabinets to undergo slow rot. Nine-tenths of them are like this; they do

not even take the trouble to have them properly mounted and protected. I have come across the sons of many rich families all over the world. The best of them qualify as art lovers only, but I will not call them connoisseurs.

Collecting painting and collecting calligraphy are alike. But calligraphy is easily kept [in folded albums] on a desk, to be looked at from time to time, or sometimes one practises calligraphy with it as model for a few minutes and stops when tired, and puts it back. Thus one learns to appreciate it alone, without too much effort. A scroll is different. When you unroll a scroll, you want to be careful not to soil it, or cause cracks and wrinkles by improper rolling and unrolling. Large paintings on the wall tax the viewer's vision more. They may be eaten by moths if kept rolled up, or suffer from mildew if exposed. It is quite an effort to roll and unroll them carefully, and one does not want to leave it to the servants. Connoisseurs often prefer calligraphy to painting. Mi Fei once exchanged ten ancient paintings for one ancient calligraphy. He certainly knew what he was doing, and he was willing to trade one for the other with such a disparity of values. But ancient paintings are easy to copy, while ancient calligraphy is both rare and difficult to authenticate.

Mi Fei went once with Fan Ta-kwei, the son-in-law of Fu Pi, to Hsiang-kuo-shih.* He paid $700 for a snow scene by Wang Wei. His own servant was not with him, and he entrusted it to a servant of Fan. After a while, both master and servant had disappeared. The next day Mi sent someone to fetch it and was told that the scroll had been sent to the Western Capital (Ch'ang-an) for mounting. Mi realized that he would never see the painting again, and made a gesture of giving it to Fan as a present. Its serves old Mi right! He often obtained what belonged to others by hook or by crook. Once he saw a calligraphy by Wang Hsi-chih owned by Tsai Lu-kung. He obtained it as a gift by threatening to jump into the water. Once he was called in by the emperor [Hui-tsung] to make a copy of the *Thousand-Character Script*, and came out with an imperial inkstone hidden in his sleeve. He got his deserts at the hand of Fan.

Painting stands a little below calligraphy because the work

* A well-known temple in the Sung capital Lo-yang, where second-hand objects were sold.

is considered a little inferior in status. Besides, before Tang and Sung, the artists chiefly drew gods, Buddhas, people, birds, and animals, bamboos and trees for people's amusement and to decorate screens. Therefore the status of artists was low. Ku Shih-tuan and his son often resented being treated as servants. Liu Yu (official artist) was lodged together with other artisans. Yen Li-pen, a great artist, was at the beck and call of the court; he never forgot the humiliation, although his art was highly honoured. From Sung down, the artists have favoured a romantic atmosphere, yet have not quite left the mark of the artisans.

Calligraphy can be preserved for a thousand years; painting for five hundred years. Calligraphy is preserved by rubbings [from stone inscriptions] and copies, but its spirit is gradually lost through many copyings and rubbings. Painting is preserved by mounting, but numerous changes of mounting also spoil its spirit. It is a little easier to make a name in calligraphy, but paintings keep a little better, for more people are good at painting than at calligraphy, and paintings also fetch higher prices.

There are seven kinds of disasters that can come to paintings and calligraphy. (1) The prices are too high, above the reach of the common people. As a result, the works of art all go into collections of the wealthy, where genuine works are lumped together with the spurious. (2) When a noble family falls and its property is confiscated, the collections all go to the palace where they are eaten by moths and insects and can no longer be seen by the people. (3) Vulgar people collect art objects for reputation and professional dealers compete in raising the prices, without regard to their intrinsic worth. (4) Great, powerful dealers trade them like goods and are willing to part with them for a profit. Then the works go into the possession of the vulgarians. (5) The works are locked in rich mansions, their cases covered with dust, while the owners gorge themselves with food. (6) Uneducated heirs of fortune do not care a bit about these family possessions and seem totally unconcerned in case of fire or theft. (7) The works are sometimes spoiled through bad, unskilled mountings, and facial features are destroyed, or substitutes are made, causing disputes. Besides all these, there are losses during wars and political upheavals. It pains me every time to read Li Yi-an's account in her *Story of a*

*Collection of Antiques.** The husband and wife together built up this collection and were fortunate enough to have the means to do it, which was unusual. Yet they could not keep them intact in their possession.

Painting may be a little more difficult to learn than calligraphy, and more people practise calligraphy than painting. If the handwriting of the very important people is slightly better than the average, people value it. Take the great writers of the Sung Dynasty, men like Wang An-shih, Sze-ma Kuang and Su Cheh (Su Tung-p'o's brother). Their calligraphy was not really extraordinary, but people collect and love it. Painting, on the other hand, is not something done with a few strokes, nor can it be undertaken by someone who knows nothing about it. There is a difference in acquiring skill and excellence and therefore in assessment of the two arts.

From Chin and Tang down to the Sung and Yüan times, the good calligraphists and painters were mostly the gentry and officials. Hardly one per cent comes from the recluses. This is something difficult to understand. Can it be that art increases its importance with an official career? Or is it official career that lends distinction to one's art work? Or is it true indeed that poor artists died unknown in their humble cottages for lack of friends to help them? If so, then it is not true to say, 'Better be poor than rich', as the saying goes. In the present dynasty there are many scholars without rank who became well-known for their art works. This must be because the successful scholars are just concerned with their official promotions and do not take art seriously, so that those who would keep away from politics can perfect themselves in art without competition from the officials. It makes one sad to reflect on such a change in modern times.

The ancients speak of the 'Six Techniques': (1) a vital, lifelike atmosphere; (2) structure through brush-strokes; (3) depicting forms and shapes as they are; (4) appropriate colouring; (5) composition, and (6) copying and making transfers. Not one of these things touches upon the secret of

* The *Chin-shih Lu Hou-hsü* by China's greatest poetess, Li Ch'ing-chao, gives a moving account of how she and her husband collected art in their young days and how the collection was gradually lost during their flight from the northern invaders. See my translation in *The Importance of Understanding*, p. 145.

painting. They are for the guidance of artists in painting portraits, flowers and birds. To try to apply them to painting today would be like putting square pegs in round holes.

We often laugh when eunuchs and women always ask on seeing a picture, 'What story is it about?' Actually in pre-Tang days, all famous paintings had a story. In painting an historical event, the artist has to have a definite idea of its composition, and all the background of hills, cities, houses and people's costumes have to be checked. It cannot be done by setting down whatever comes to the artist's mind, on the excuse that it is *hsieh-yi* (the exercise of a momentary mood), as is done nowadays. Chang Seng-yu, Chan Tse-ch'ien, Yen Li-pen and others (sixth and seventh centuries) all painted gods and Buddhas and the spirits of the heavenly bodies. The stories of Shih Leh (330), Tu Chien-teh (d. 621) and An Lu-shan (755) are not really worth painting, yet such paintings were made. Other more trivial subjects are hare-hunting by Emperor Yi-tsung, Yang Kuei-fei mounting a horse, Ch'en ruler Hou-chu visiting Chin-yang Palace, summer resort at Hua-ch'ing Spring. Other subjects of ancient paintings are: Emperor Shen-nung seeding the fields, the people under Yao beating the ground [while singing and dancing], Laotse going through the pass, Confucius and the Disciples – to take the noblest themes. There are other less worthy subjects like the hermits and Taoist saints gathering herbs, transmuting gold, etc. Such subjects are no longer illustrated by modern painters, but the ancients did a great deal of it, it seemed by a sort of tradition, and the artists knew exactly what was expected.

Modern painters concentrate on mood and flavour, and do not pay much attention to portraits and stories. Paintings of birds and flowers are generally looked down upon.* As for pictures of the gods and spirits, Buddhas and hell, hardly one per cent of the pictures deal with them. These subjects are avoided to save eyesight, out of laziness, for portrait work requires a great deal of accuracy.

In going over the *Hsüan-ho Hua-p'u*† and the *Hua Shih* of Mi Fei, one gains the impression that the palace collections of Sung

* As products of artists of the Academy of Art.

† Official catalogue of paintings under Sung Hui-tsung, compiled *c.* 1120.

contained remarkably few landscapes. Perhaps the emphasis was still upon human figures, houses, plants and insects. Pictures of Taoist and Buddhist saints and gods began with Ku K'ai-chih (fourth century); human figures as such from Ts'ao Pu-hsing (third century); birds and animals from Shih Tao-shih (fourth century).

Such treasures are indeed rare. But landscape came as late as Li Sze-hsün (eighth century) [in the Hsüan-ho collection]. The Sungs were quite close to Tang in time and it should not have been difficult to collect more, but only the landscape artists were included. Such is the preference in the Hsüan-ho period (1119–1125). The *Hua-p'u* says, 'Landscapes are hard to sell in the market.' Can this be true? Mi Fei's records also confirm that the early paintings of Chin and Tang were on religious subjects. Mi did not seem to have seen genuine paintings of Yen Li-pen or Wang Wei.*

In this sense, the private collection of the Hsiang family of Chia-ho is indeed incomparable. It has the 'Female Instructions' of Ku K'ai-chih, the 'Pin-feng' of Yen Li-pen, the 'Landscape' ('Chiang-shan') of Wang Wei – all priceless – and innumerable small scrolls from Li Sze-hsün down. It takes months to go through all of them. It contains also many bronzes and calligraphic treasures. For generations they have been a wealthy family and are willing to pay high prices; so the best things of Kiang-nan have gone into their possession. The curious thing is that all this goes with an incredible penny-scraping. They do not only collect the best paintings, but are in all kinds of business. The family employees work day and night over the chips and accounts. It is almost as if they were two different persons. I hear that some of the collection is gradually coming out.

I have seen very few Tang paintings, only a few scrolls by Wang Wei, Li Chao-tao, and Chou Fang. The paintings that can be established as Sung have a different tone and atmosphere, and the different artists excel in some specific ink or stroke treatment, quite beyond the ability of the modern artists. Art lovers generally confine themselves to examining the silk used; they do not really know painting.

* See No. 14 by Mi Fei. This is not quite exact. Mi seems to have seen one genuine copy, and one copy based on genuine work by Wang Wei.

Though landscape existed in early Tang, the emphasis was on fineness of detail. The work of Li Sze-hsün and Wang Wei, for instance, was all extremely fine. The ink-splash technique began with Wang Hsia (*c.* 800).* Hsiang Yung started the dry-brush style. With Ching Hao, Kuan T'ung (tenth century), the fashion for pale, remote views supplanted the vogue of portrait artists. With the beginning of Sung (mid-tenth century), Tung Yüan, Li Ch'eng, Kuo Hsi and Fan K'uan showed a new spirit of freshness and freedom that was not known heretofore. But this must not be confused with carelessness, for their work showed perfect control of shading, general structure, disposition of details, and suggestion of distance. Mi Fei learned the ink-splash from Wang Hsia, but missed his spirit. Ni Tsan used the dry-brush technique, but lacked rich lustre. This started the fashion for lazy modern artists to 'express moods' without paying attention to detailed organization. We see thus the rise and fall in art.

I have in my collection Li Sze-hsün's blue-gold landscape, Wang Ku-yün's 'Summer Resort', Li Kung-lin's 'Country Villa', as well as 'Water Mortar' by a Yüan painter. All are masterpieces in extremely fine lines. They cannot be matched by modern artists. I am told that there is a picture by Liu Sung-nien (fl. 1190–1230) entitled 'Enemy of Books'. It depicts very vividly what the schoolchildren were doing when the teacher was away. It is a copy made by Ch'iu Ying. A boy holds a bamboo pole to bird-lime a spider, and the spider seems to be moving, alive, pulling at the web. What perfect craftsmanship can do!

There is a picture of 'Han Hsi-tsai's Night Revelry' by Ku Hung-chung of Kiang-nan. Han was in the Imperial Cabinet and he was known to have kept many women entertainers at home, with whom he held wild parties every night. This reached the ears of the King, Hou-chu, who wanted to have a picture of these nightly revelries, but could not manage it. He commissioned Ku to go to his home and observe. Ku remembered the details and made a picture the next day. So these night scenes became known to everybody. . . .

* Wang Hsia also goes under the name of Wang Mo. He is the initiator of a very important technique, later developed by various impressionists, and especially expressionists.

Miniatures of human figures and landscapes began with Li Sze-hsün and his son. Within a square-foot area, a picture contains natural scenery and hundreds of men and horses. Even their formal features and beards are distinctly drawn. Later, during the Five Dynasties, there was Wang Chen-p'eng who was even better, but did not use blue-gold colours. During Sung and Yüan, there were Li Kung-lin, Liu Sung-nien and Ch'ien Hsüan for this type of fine drawing. In modern days there are Ch'iu Ying and Yu Tse-ch'in, who paint long (horizontal) scrolls in this manner, but the quality seems to have deteriorated.

Ku K'ai-chih did a picture, 'Heavenly Maidens of Vimalakirti'. The human figures are two feet and five inches tall. Yet these were called 'small-sized Vimalakirti'. One cannot imagine what the large ones would be like. If modern artists were asked to draw figures of this size they would be embarrassed. Ku's 'Famous Women' are hardly over three inches; they were in his time considered very small, but today they would be considered very big indeed.

Wu Tao-tse and Huang Ch'üan both painted 'Chung K'uei the Devil-Catcher'. In modern days, Tai Chin refused to paint evil spirits for a high minister. I think it was wrong to ask this of him, but as for Tai Chin, he might have complied and done it for the fun of it.

Tai Chin was locked up in cangue and shackles because the high official was angry at his refusal to paint the evil spirits guarding a gate. One Huang Kung-tseh from Fukien happened to see him and pleaded for his pardon. Tai remembered him always. When he left he presented Huang with four of his best paintings, of which he thought highly. One of Tai's pictures is still in the hands of Huang's grandchildren. Such is the uncertain fate of artists. There is the case of Shen Chou. He also refused to paint a picture for a magistrate. The magistrate was angry and intended to humiliate him. It happened that a high official, Wu Yüan-po, came to call, and his first inquiry was how was Mr Shih-t'ien (the artist) doing. The official learned from his aides what a famous painter Shen was and apologized. Wen Cheng-ming (a contemporary of Shen) was appointed to the Hanlin Academy. The Hanlin scholars regarded it as an insult to have among the members an artisan. Wen heard of this and

left angrily. These three cases are similar. No wonder Yen Li-pen resented being treated as a servant at court.

[A note seems due about Tai Chin (early fifteenth century). He was the founder of the Chekiang School and together with Wu Wei (1459–1508) had considerable influence. He was, however, unfortunate in his life and recognition came late. Li K'ai-hsien (1535–1612), who worshipped both, gave us a story of how Tai died in poverty. Tai was a member of the Imperial Art Academy but aroused the jealousy of others. On exhibit before the emperor was a painting by Tai, 'Fishing Alone on an Autumn River'. It showed a fisherman in a red dress, red being a difficult colour to apply properly. Hsieh Ting-hsün and others, who 'were not worthy to hold Tai's shoes', spoke to the emperor about the impropriety of having a fisherman in red, red being a colour of official dress. Tai was dismissed and had to beg for rice from fellow artists. Later he was called back, but he had had enough. He had no money to pay for his daughter's wedding, and tried to sell his paintings but found no customers. (Postscript to *Chung-lu Hua-p'in*, dated October 1541.)]

22

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY A.D.

Shih-t'ao

1641–c. 1717

An Expressionist Credo

[The following expressionist credo (*K'u-kua Ho-shang Hua-yü-lu*, 'Sayings of Friar Bitter-Melon') is the best and deepest essay on art written by a revolutionary artist.

The Manchus conquered the Mings in 1644. But Chinese art was also ripe for the picking. A deadening pall had descended over the artist's creative activity. Art had come to a blind alley – the alley of the 'imitation of the ancients'.

Outwardly it flourished at the beginning of the Manchu (Ching) Dynasty, with the so-called Four Wangs. They were:

Wang Shih-min (1582–1680), *alias* 'Yen-k'o', etc.
Wang Chien (1598–1677), *alias* 'Yüan-chao', etc.
Wang Hui (1632–*c.* 1717), *alias* 'Shih-ku', etc.
Wang Yüan-ch'i (1642–1715), *alias* 'Lu-t'ai', etc.

The last of the four, a grandson of Wang Shih-min, especially dominated the period, as the number one artist protégé of Emperor Kang-hsi, who presided over the execution of the famous scroll celebrating the emperor's sixtieth birthday. What was more, the four all praised each other. All of them took the Yüan master Huang Kung-wang as their model. All painted in Huang's dry-brush style. All of them had no higher ambition than to be like him.

The doctrine of 'imitating the ancients' had reduced itself to an absurdity. It is as if all the best artists of today were to flock to the Prado Museum, and forgetting all about the Pyrenees and the Basque country, devote their lives to copying Velasquez, Goya and El Greco. Each would then make as exact a copy of Goya as possible, imitating his technique and use of colour and light and shadows, and then sign his painting: 'Copy of Goya, made by X', or 'In the manner of El Greco, made by Y'.

The art was *recherché*; it had a great body of tradition of styles, composition, strokes, colour behind it. All the formulas were known. The individual strokes of Li Ch'eng, Huang Kung-wang, etc., had been scrutinized. Tung Yüan had certain dots in mountain peaks, therefore that was the *'fa'*, technique, of Tung Yüan. Li T'ang had 'big axe-cuts' – no, I am sorry – had 'long axe-cut strokes'. The vulgar viewer who failed to appreciate the shading lines had probably never heard of Li T'ang. In composition, there were strange rocky cliffs on top, a bank of white mists in the centre, some trees and rocks and perhaps a pavilion or a ferry at the bottom. One can shift the trees and rocks about a bit. But all would be in the manner of Pei-yüan (Tung Yüan), or 'Great Crazy' (Huang Kung-wang). Wang Shih-min signed himself 'Yen-k'o' ('Guest of the Clouds'), and Wang Hui signed himself 'Ching-yen' ('Farming the Clouds'). It was all very poetic, very elegant.

The trouble was that when *all* formulas for painting were known, no room was left for originality. One could, always, produce a pretty picture by following the formulas, they were so familiar. Impressionism, which was the art of recording individual reactions to reality, had got itself into a rut. For even impressionism, when it became the orthodox school, could be a deadening thing. What would happen to Western art if a hundred or two hundred years after Cézanne, the Parisian artists were still trying to 'copy' Cézanne, 'paint in the manner of' Cézanne, 'model oneself on' and 'derive from' Cézanne, the ancient one? Impressionist art could then be mass-produced, like period furniture. Wang Hui especially could mass-produce his pretty landscapes, with occasional shifting of the waterfall to the right and the cliff to the left. But there were so many admirers who clamoured for them! Their influence, plus their

talk about the 'manner' of the old masters, was so impressive that they dominated Chinese painting for the rest of the dynasty down into the twentieth century.

To be sure, some of the artists advised their fellows, as Tung Chi'-ch'ang did, to look at *real* mountains. But the fact that such advice was necessary indicates that most of the artists were not doing so.

Into this picture came Tao-tsi, more generally known among the Chinese as Shih-t'ao, and his friend Pata Shanjen (1625–*c.* 1705). This was the most significant revolt. With a sudden surprise, one realizes on looking at Shih-t'ao that all compositions of landscapes – perspective, distance, range, subject matter – need not be the same. Pata Shanjen boldly replaced the ink-washes, a technique abjured by the orthodox Southern School artists of his day.

There were, as a matter of fact, three of these independent artists, Shih T'ao, Pata Shanjen, and Shih-ch'i (better known as K'un-ts'an, *c.* 1610–*c.* 1693), a monk who preceded Shih-t'ao slightly. In fact, all of them were monks, or regarded themselves as such, without actually living in a monastery. It is a question whether Shih-t'ao had his head shaved.

Shih-t'ao's real name was Chu Yüan-tsi; he also signed himself 'Blind Abbot', 'Great Wash-Stick', 'Friar Bitter-Melon'. Once he was asked why he called himself 'blind' since he had good eyesight. He replied, 'This pair of eyes cannot see money when it is there, which everybody sees clearly. Am I not blind?' Both Shih-t'ao and Pata Shanjen came from the imperial family of Chu of the Ming Dynasty. When the dynasty collapsed, both took up the life of the recluse to escape politics. Pata Shanjen's real name was Chu Ta. The story has it that he chose the name Pata Shanjen, written with four characters, for one good reason: the way he signed the four words together, it looked half like the word 'to cry' and half like the word 'to laugh'. He didn't know whether to cry or to laugh – at the political situation of China being ruled by Manchu conquerors. The influence of Pata Shanjen upon a great contemporary artist Ch'i Pai-shih (1863–1957) is unmistakable.

In Chinese circles today, Shih-t'ao and Pata Shanjen are valued more highly than the other classicists. There is even a lively business in Shih-t'ao.

The following essay by Shih-t'ao, dated around 1660, may be called an 'expressionist credo'. It is completely original and shows a psychological insight into the process of artistic creation not found elsewhere in Chinese literature. In style, it is archaically beautiful, terse and taut with meaning, and very difficult to render into English. But of all Chinese essays on art, this is the most profound ever written, both as regards content and style.

The author uses many big, simple words to express certain philosophical ideas. 'Method' *(fa)* means the method of drawing, with deprecation of the 'methods' of those imitating the old masters. 'Recognition' *(shih)* means the gift of insight. 'Development' *(hua)* means often the flexibility that comes from true understanding. 'Reception' *(shou)* refers often to a natural 'born gift', but also means to 'derive from', to 'be guided, inspired by'. 'Substance' *(chih)* and 'decoration' *(shih)* are self-explanatory. *Li*, as usual, refers to the inner law of being, the inner nature of things. The distinction between *shen* ('spirit') and *ling* ('soul') is vague, as in English. 'Function' *(jen)* has a more philosophic meaning; it refers to the logical place in nature of a phenomenon. Everything in nature (such as hills, streams) has a proper logical function in the universe. The artist penetrates into the life of the universe and expresses it by means of brush and ink. This should not be construed as Zen. It could just as well be interpreted as polytheism. The universe is alive – that is about all that it says.

All in all, the 'Great Wash-Stick' says some unheard-of things.]

1. *The One-Stroke Method.* In the primeval past there was no method. The primeval chaos was not differentiated. When the primeval chaos was differentiated, method (law) was born. How was this method born? It was born of one-stroke. This one-stroke is that out of which all phenomena are born, applied by the gods and to be applied by man. People of the world do not know this. Therefore this one-stroke *(i-hua)* method is established by me. The establishment of this one-stroke method creates a method out of no-method, and a method which covers all methods.

All painting comes from the understanding mind. If, then,

the artist fails to understand the inner law and catch the outward gestures of the delicate complexities of hills and streams and human figures, or the nature of birds and animals and vegetation, or the dimensions of ponds and pavilions and towers, it is because he has not grasped the underlying principle of the one-stroke. Even as one makes a distant journey by starting with a first step, so this one-stroke contains in itself the universe and beyond; thousands and myriads of strokes and ink all begin here and end here, waiting only for one to take advantage of it. A man should be able to show the universe in one stroke, his idea clearly expressed, the execution well done. If the wrist* is not fully responsive, then the picture is not good; if the picture is not good, it is because the wrist fails to respond. Give it life and lustre by circular movement and bends, and by stopping movement give it spaciousness. It shoots out, pulls in; it can be square or round, go straight or twist along, upwards or downwards, to the right and to the left. Thus it lifts and dips in sudden turns, breaks loose or cuts across, like the gravitation of water, or the shooting up of a flame, naturally and without the least straining of effect. In this way it penetrates all inner nature of things, gives form to all expressions, never away from the method, and gives life to all. With a casual stroke, hills and streams, all life and vegetation and human habitations take their form and gesture, the scene and the feeling connected with it caught hidden or exposed. People do not see how such a painting is created, but the act of drawing never departs from the understanding mind.

For since the primeval chaos became differentiated, the one-stroke method was born. Since the one-stroke method was born, all objects of the universe appeared. Therefore I say, 'This one principle covers all.'

2. *From Method Freed.* The T-square and compasses are the perfect norms of squares and circles, and the universe is the revolving movement of squares and circles. People know that there are such squares and circles, but do not know the revolving movement of heaven and earth. Thus heaven and earth bind man to a 'method', and through ignorance man becomes

* In Chinese painting technique, the palm and fingers are held fairly rigid and all movement should start from the wrist.

enslaved by it. Despite all natural and acquired intelligence, one never understands the inner law of things. Thus one is not freed by the method, but on the contrary is obstructed by it. In ancient as well as modern times, the obstructions due to method remain because the nature of one-stroke is not understood. Once it is understood, the obstacles fall away from man's vision and he can paint freely according to his will; painting according to his will automatically removes the obstacles. For painting is depicting the forms of the universe. How can it be done except by brush and ink? Ink comes by itself in heavy and light shades, in wet and dry. The brush is held by man, and from it come contours and texture lines and dry and wet ink-washes. Of course there was a method among the ancients for without the method [of squares and circles] they would be without formal limits. Thus it is seen that the one-stroke is not just to establish formal limits to the limitless, nor does it establish the limits by a 'method'. Method and obstructions do not coexist. Method is created of the painting and obstructions fall away during the creation. When method and obstructions do not interfere, the nature of the revolutions of heaven and earth is understood. Thus the principle of painting is revealed and the principle of the single-stroke is fully comprehended.

3. *Development.* The ancients furnish the means for insight, recognition. To 'develop' means to know such means and spurn them. I seldom see people who inherit the bequest of the past and can further develop it. Those who inherit but do not develop fail because of their limited insight. If the insight or recognition is limited to being like the past, then it is not a broad insight. Therefore the gentleman takes the past merely as a means of modern development.

Again it is said, 'The perfect man has no method.' It is not that he has no method, but rather the best of methods, which is the method of no-method. For there is expediency besides the principle, and flexible development besides the 'method'. One should know the principle and its flexible adaptation in expediency, as one should know the method and apply it flexibly. For what is painting but the great method of changes and developments in the universe? The spirit and essence of

hills and streams, the development and growth of the creation, the action of the forces of the *yin* and the *yang*, all are revealed by the brush and ink for the depiction of this universe and for our enjoyment. People nowadays do not understand this. They always say, 'The texture strokes of such-and-such an artist can be the foundation of art. One's art will not have permanent appeal unless it is like the landscape of such-and-such an artist. The calm and detached atmosphere of such-and-such an artist can establish one's moral tone. Without such skill, art will be merely an amusement.' Thus the painter becomes a slave to a certain known artist and not his master. Even if he succeeds in imitating the model well, he is only eating the left-overs of his home. Of what value is that to the artist himself? Or some say to me, 'A certain artist broadens me. Another artist deepens me. To what school shall I belong? What class shall I choose? To whom shall I want to be compared? What should be the influence? What kinds of dots and washes? What kinds of contour and texture lines? What kind of structure and disposition will enable me to come near to the ancients and the ancients to come near to me?'

People who talk like this forget they have a self ('me') too, besides the ancient models. I am as I am; I exist. I cannot stick the whiskers of the ancients on my face, nor put their entrails in my belly. I have my own entrails and chest, and I prefer to twitch my own whiskers. If sometimes by chance I happen to resemble someone, it is he who happens to come to me, and not I who try to be his death. This is the way it is. Why should I model myself upon the ancients and not develop my own forte?

[The above is a most important statement of individualism in art, like Yüan Chung-lang's statement of individualism *(hsing-ling)* in literature. The full importance of such a statement will be appreciated when one remembers: (1) the horrible, ceaseless and unremitting imitation of all things ancient in art and literature, and (2) the superficial grammarians, stylists and critics who tried to explain all artistic appeal by pointing out the tricks and devices of style. See also the very important colophon in No. 22A below.]

4. *Respect Your Gift.* As between natural gift and insight, the natural gift comes first. For if insight comes before the gift, it is not an [inborn] gift. The wisest of the ancients developed their inborn gifts from what they learned, and developed what they learned fully aware of what their inborn gift was. But it could concern knowledge of some special thing: this would be a minor talent, for minor ability. They were not able to recognize the power of the one-stroke and fully develop it. For the one-stroke is contained in all things. A painting receives the ink, ink receives from the brush, the brush from the artist's wrist, and the artist's wrist from his directing mind. This receiving is like the way life is created by heaven and forms are made by the earth.

The important thing is that a man should respect his natural gift and not neglect it. To know or conceive a painting and not develop it is to shackle oneself. One who receives the gift of painting must respect it and keep it, strengthen it, not dissipate it abroad, nor let it go to sleep inside. The *Yi-ching* says, 'The forces of heaven are strong. A gentleman constantly strengthens himself without cease.' This is the way to respect your gift.

5. *On Brush and Ink.* Among the ancients, some have brush [-power] but no ink [-power]. Others have ink [-power] but no brush [-power]. The difference lies not in external nature but in the man's natural talent itself. The ink splashes on to the brush by soul and the brush controls the ink by spirit. Without nourishment and culture the ink lacks soul; without vitality the brush lacks spirit. Those who receive the well-nourished ink but have not the vital spirit have ink-power but no brush-power. Those who have the vital spirit but do not transform the cultured soul have brush-power, but no ink-power. Life in nature consists in the ink-wash expressing the concrete forms of hills and rivers and things, seen from the front or the back, from the side and on a slant, scattered or clustered together, distant or near, external or internal, solid or empty, continuous or broken; they have layers and sections and falling aspects; they have charm and elusive expanse. Thus all nature presents its soul to man and man has the power to control its vitality and culture. If it were not so, how could the brush and ink create the embryonic form and skeletal structure, the opening up and

closing in [of spaces], the bodies and functions, the forms and gestures, and picture those that are bending in ceremony or standing erect, those that crouch and leap and hide and soar, and all those that are rugged, expansive, stiff and tall, all those that are awe-inspiring and overpowering and strange – how else could all this soul and spirit of things be captured and given their full effect on paper?

6. *Control of the Wrist.* Some may object, saying, 'There are instructions on art, in chapter and verse, and detailed instructions on the use of the brush and ink. We have never heard of one talking in vague, general terms about the life and movement of hills and streams and trying to communicate it to others. Perhaps Ta-ti-tse (Great Wash-Stick – Shih-t'ao) thinks highly of himself and wants to establish some kind of esoteric art. So he spurns the lowly details.'

It is certainly not so. What is born in us may be from unknown depths, but its expression is here and now. What can be put into the distance comes from the recognition of some object close at hand. The one-stroke is something elementary in calligraphy and painting; the modified line is a common elementary way of controlling the brush and ink. The mountains and seas are but copies of swellings and hollows of things near by. Life and movement are the elementary principles of contour and texture lines. If one knows, for instance, objects confined to a particular locality, that is the original for a locality. If, then, that particular locality has a certain hill and a certain group of peaks and the artist confines himself to drawing that hill and those peaks, without change, then these become laborious restrictions on the artist's talent. Would that do?

Besides, without change in the life and movement, attention is given to the superficial contour and texture strokes. Without change in method, the life and movement become stereotyped. Without knowledge of light and shadow, one sees only a row of hills and connections of waterways. Without the provision of woods and hills, one feels the emptiness of the scene. To avoid these four errors, one must begin with wrist control. For if the wrist is infinitely flexible and responsive, then the drawing goes in different ways. If the brush is quick and sure, then the forms take definite shape. When the wrist is firm, the drawing is sure

and expressive, and when it is flexible, it darts and dances and soars. Or with a perpendicular position, the strokes strike the paper squarely without showing the tip of the brush. Or it may incline and make possible many graceful dragging lines. When it moves fast, it gathers force; when it moves slowly, there is a meaningful dip and turn. When the wrist moves, unconsciously inspired, the result is true to nature, and when it changes, the result can be weird and fantastic. When the wrist is gifted with genius, the painting is beyond the work of human minds, and when the wrist moves with the spirit, the hills and streams yield up their souls.

7. *Cloudy Forms.* Where the brush and ink blend, cloudy forms are produced. Undifferentiated, such cloudy forms represent chaos, and to bring definition out of chaos, there is inevitably the single-stroke. For with the stroke, the hills come alive, the water moves, the woods grow and prosper and the men are given that carefree atmosphere. To be able to control the mixture of brush and ink (stroke and wash), disperse the cloudy forms and create the universe and thus become a good artist on one's own and be known to posterity – this comes from intelligence. One must avoid laborious details, flatness, or falling into a set pattern, being woolly, lacking coherence or going against the inner nature of things. Stand firm in the sea of ink, seek life in the movement of the brush-tip; create a new surface and texture on the foot-long material, and give forth light from the unformed darkness. Then, even if the brush and ink and the drawings are all wrong, the 'me', the 'self', remains there. For one controls the ink and is not controlled by it, handles the brush and is not handled by it. One gives form to the embryo, the embryo does not assume its own form. From one, it divides into tens of thousands, and from the ten thousand shapes of things, one attends to the One, transforming the One into the primeval cloudy forms – this is the height of artistic ability.

8. *Hills and Streams.* The substance of hills and streams embodies the inner law of the universe. But by the method of brush and ink one catches their appearance. One cannot attend to the appearance without regard to the inner law, or attend to the substance alone without regard to the method, for thus the

inner law would be violated and the method become futile. To avoid the violation of inner law and the degeneration of method, the ancients tried to reach out to the One. For if the One was not understood, all phenomena would become obstacles; on the other hand, with the understanding of the One, all things have their place. The inner law of painting and the method of the painting brush are but [to catch] the substance and appearance of the universe. The hills and streams are the life and movement of the universe. The changes of light and darkness and rain and clear days are the expression of the hills and streams; the distances and distribution, their layout; the crossing and recrossing and meeting and merging, their rhythm; the light and shade, the *yin* and *yang*, their demeanour. The gathering and distribution of water and clouds express the continuity of hills and streams; the gestures of crouching and leaping up and turning of directions express their movements. That which is high and clear constitutes the standard of heaven; that which is thick and heavy forms the norm of earth. Heaven binds the hills and streams by means of winds and clouds; the earth awakens them to movement by means of water and rocks. Without these powers of heaven and earth, there would be no natural disasters. Yet heaven cannot bind up the hills and streams to make them conform to one shape, nor can the movement of the surf striking upon rocks serve to point out the differences in live, moving landscapes.

Besides, the mountains and waters are immense, and cloud formations spread across peaks for ten thousand miles. From a narrow point of view, even genii cannot cover the entire expanse. But with the one-stroke, man takes part in the creation of the universe. The artist surveys the layout of hills and streams, estimates the width and length of the land, examines the distribution of mountain peaks and observes the airy forlornness of clouds and mists. He looks at the earth spread out before him and takes a swift glance at the distant ranges, and knows that they are all under the overlordship of heaven and earth. Heaven has the standard to transform the spirit of hills and streams, earth has this norm to activate their pulse beat, and I have this one-stroke to penetrate into their very body and spirit.

Well, then, fifty years ago I was not yet born out of the hills and streams. Nor do I intend to neglect them and let them hide

away their secrets. The hills and streams have appointed me to speak for them. They are in me and I am in them. I search out the extraordinary peaks and put them on paper. We meet and comprehend one another in spirit. Therefore all belong to Ta-ti-tse.

9 *Texture Strokes.* The texture strokes are for showing the surface texture. Since mountains have numerous forms, their surfaces are also different. People only speak of the texture strokes without reference to the real surface. Then the strokes have nothing to do with the mountains. Some are of rocks or soil, where such surfaces should be indicated, but these are not the natural textures of the mountains themselves. The different names of mountain peaks indicate their real convolutions; the different forms have different surfaces of all kinds. Therefore there are different kinds of texture strokes *(ts'un),* such as 'curling-cloud *ts'un*', 'axe-cut *ts'un*', 'split-hemp *ts'un*', 'loose-rope *ts'un*', 'ghost-face *ts'un*', 'skull-like *ts'un*', 'wood-pile *ts'un*', 'sesame seed *ts'un*', 'golden-blue *ts'un*', 'jade-powder *ts'un*', 'bullet-hole *ts'un*', 'pebbles *ts'un*', 'boneless *ts'un*'. These are different *ts'un* strokes. They must vary as the masses and surfaces of the peaks demand, and the two, the strokes and the nature of the real surfaces, have an inner relation. The peaks change their masses according as their own convolutions change. Such names of peaks indicate that they are there: The Skycore Peak, Bright Star Peak, Lotus Peak, Fairy Peak, Five Old Men Peak, Seven Wise Men Peak, Cloud Terrace Peak, Lion Peak, Crescent Peak, Lang-yeh (Fairyland) Peak, Golden Wheel Peak, Incense Pot Peak, Little Flower Peak, White Chain Peak, Returning Stork Peak. These peaks suggest such forms and the texture strokes should bring out their surfaces. However, at the time of drawing, no one has the time to think of the particular kind of stroke used. One stroke follows another, all following the natural inner law of their being. The movement of the line expresses the nature of all.

Thus the life and movement of hills and streams are caught, and the method of indicating surface texture does not vary with the schools. The life and movement of hills and streams are thus contained in the painting; the prevailing spirit of a painting lies in the ink, and the life of the ink lies in control.

One who has mastery of the ink gives the impression of solid interior and spacious exterior surface. Thus through the gift of the stroke, the artist confronts all without error. There are also times when the interior is left empty while the exterior is fully indicated. Because the stroke swiftly changes and the exterior is fully indicated, further adumbration of the interior is not necessary. Therefore the ancients suited the solids and spaces to the interiors and exteriors, changed their methods as they went along without error; in the full possession of the spirit and atmosphere, they daubed, or cut, or slanted as they pleased. As for those whose vision is completely obstructed as if by a wall, do they not invite disgust from the Creator?

10. *Dividing Sections.** The practice of dividing a picture into 'three levels' and 'two sections' seems to ascribe a fault to nature. It is true that on some occasions the natural scene is so divided. Such dividing lines seem to exist as when the Yangtse leads into the sea, and the many mountains of Chekiang rise up on the opposite bank across a river. But often when we see landscapes with such perfunctory divisions, we feel at a glance that they are made to order. The three levels say that the first level is the ground, the second level contains the trees and the third level the mountains. How is one to distinguish the distances? Do they not look like stereotypes? the so-called two sections say that the mountains are on top and the immediate scene is below. In the centre some clusters of cloud cut the picture sharply in two. But to paint a picture one should not stick to the arbitary three levels and two sections, but should give the whole picture a sense of cohesion. There should be unexpected break-throughs to show the strength of the artist's conception. Then wherever the brush leads it will not show the common tricks. If this sense of cohesion is established, minor faults may be forgiven.

11. *Short-cuts.* There are six short-cuts in painting: emphasis on scene, emphasis on mountains, contrast, additions, abrupt

* The following sections, Nos. 10–18, with the exception of 15 and 16, have not been translated by Osvald Sirén in his *The Chinese on the Art of Painting*. They deal with more specific problems of art, but are illustrative of how Shih-t'ao's principle is carried out, and are quite significant.

endings and suggestions of danger. Emphasis on scene means the scene is in spring, but the hills may be of archaic type as in winter. Emphasis on mountains means the trees are sparse as in winter, but the hillsides may be in spring. Straight trees contrast with leaning rocks, and straight cliffs contrast with down-bending trees: that is contrast. When the hill-lines are vague and there is no sign of life, willows and bamboos, bridges and summer houses are added: that is addition for aesthetic effect. Abrupt endings mean that the scene suddenly comes to a stop, and all the trees and rocks are left uncompleted where the lines break off. Such lines breaking off must disappear into the thinnest possible stroke. There are places suggesting danger where roads are blocked off and no access is possible. There are groups of islands in the sea, like the Gulf of Pei-chih-li and the islands of Peng-lai and Fang-hu, the lands of the fairies, inaccessible to mortals. These are natural inaccessible formations on the seas. As to dangerous places in drawings, they consist mainly of high peaks, sharp bluffs and plank roads built on hillsides; rugged and dangerous for visitors. Here great strength in brush-strokes must be shown.

12. *Woods and Vegetation.* The ancients painted trees in groups of threes or fives, or even nine or ten trees together. They were so arranged that they faced in different directions with light and shadow at different heights, giving a sense of life-likeness. When I paint old pines and cypresses, ash and locust, and there are four or five of them, I make them look like sportsmen rising to dance in different bending, crouching and stretching positions. They seem to move freely. Sometimes the lines are hard and sometimes soft, both the brush and the wrist being moved. Mostly the movement of lines is like that used for painting rock surfaces. Five, four or three fingers move back and forth with evenly distributed energy coming from the wrist and further from the elbow. When the stroke is very heavy the brush must quickly be lifted from the paper, to dissipate that force of movement. Thus there are changes of light and heavy spots, and the result is a spaciousness fraught with life. This method may also be applied to large mountains, but not to other subjects. The goal is to create vibrant energy with haphazardness. This is so, not to be explained.

13. *Sea Waves.* There are currents in the sea, and hidden veins in mountains. The seas ebb and flow; the mountains dip and bow. The sea can raise spirits, and the mountains have pulse beats. The mountains pile up on one another, break off into ravines and deep valleys in the most unexpected zigzag manner, and the air and clouds and mist breathe through them. This is like currents and tides in the sea; the life does not come from the sea, but the mountain acts like the sea. The sea can also act like the mountains. It has a vast expanse, its calm swish and its wild laughter, its mirages, its leaping whales and roaring dragons. Its surf rises like hill crests and its ebb resembles mountain ranges. This is how the sea acts like the mountains, not because the mountains give it these movements. They act like themselves, and appear so to the human spectator. Take the islands in the sea like Ying-chow, Lang-yüan, Juo-shui, Peng-lai, Yuan-p'u and P'ang-hu. Even though they are scattered around, it can be surmised that there are mountain ranges and springs under the water. One might think of the sea only as the sea and of the mountains strictly as mountains only, which would be a mistake. To me mountains are seas and seas are mountains, and the seas and mountains know that I know. This is the romance of brush and ink.

14. *The Four Seasons.* The scenes vary with the seasons, each having its own flavour, and they change with the weather. In doing a painting we must have proper regard for the changes. There are ancient sayings that describe them: '[The strokes] grow with the grass on sandy banks and their lines join with the water and clouds' (spring); 'The land lies always in the shade, and the air is coolest along the bank' (summer); 'I look afar at a desolate city and the flat woodland is still dark green' (autumn); 'The brush moves ahead where the road fades away; the ink is heavy where the pond is cold' (winter). There are also days out of season, as, 'Snow is hard but the temperature is still warm; New Year's Eve is approaching and the days begin to grow long.' This indicates that one does not feel cold even in winter. There are also the lines, 'At the year's end, the dawn begins to come early; with snow still on the ground, the rainy sky has cleared.' As applied to painting these [mixed up] scenes can apply not only to winter, but also to the other three

seasons. There are days that are in between clear and rainy, such as, 'A wisp of cloud shadows the moon; the slanting sun shines through a spell of rain.' There are dull days, like, 'Do not mistake it for twilight; around the horizon there is a bank of clouds.'

I have pointed out these lines as appropriate inspiring thoughts for paintings. The scene always indicates the season. All clouds and hills change. Lines sung in this spirit show that a painting often expresses the idea of a poem, and a poem is the Zen of a painting.

15. *Keep Away from the Hustle-Bustle.* A materialist attends to the affairs of the world. A man enslaved by the material world lives in a state of tension. He who is tense labours over his paintings and destroys himself. He who moves among the hustle and bustle of the world handles his brush and ink with caution and restraint. Thus the environment impinges upon a man, can only do him harm and in the end make him unhappy. I meet the world as it comes, yield superficially to the hustlers, and thus achieve peace of mind. With peace of mind comes a painting. People know about paintings, but do not understand paintings of one-stroke. For the important thing in art work is contemplation. When one contemplates the One (unity of all things), one sees it and that makes one happy. Then one's paintings have a mysterious depth which is unfathomable. I believe nobody has said this before, and therefore touch upon it again.

16. *Nonconformism.* The intelligence of the ignorant and the conventional people is about the same. The conventional people follow the ignorant and the ignorant have a mind completely veiled. Remove the veil and the ignorant become wise; leave the conventional man uncontaminated and his mind remains pure.* Therefore the perfect man has to think his way through, has to have a perspective. With a perspective, he becomes transformed; by thinking his way through, he merges into nature.

* This is essentially Zen *(ch'an)* in a narrow sense. In a broader sense, it is Taoist and even Confucianist. The extraordinary thing about some aspects of Confucianism is that it demanded 'Keep clear the originally clear character' and 'constant renewal' (cf. 'Great Learning' chapter in *Liki*).

He responds to the affairs of the world without signs and deals with them without visible traces.* His ink seems to be there by itself, and his brush moves as if not doing anything.† Thus the little scroll controls all objects of creation. One who keeps his mind calm will find that ignorance is replaced by wisdom and conventionality by purity of mind.

17. *Calligraphy Included.* Ink can build up the forms of hills and streams, and the brush can threaten and overthrow their foundations. They are not to be treated lightly. After knowing well all human history, one must have a sea of ink controlled by a mountain of brushes to have a wide range of subjects. Let go and it encompasses the eight extremities and the nine continents, the four sacred mountains and the four oceans; gather it up and they are conveniently tucked away in your breast. There is no limitation to methods or skills, and the skills can be shown in calligraphy as well as in paintings. For these are twin arts with the same function. The single-stroke is the origin of all calligraphy and painting, which are, as it were, the material application of the first principle. To know the applications and forget the first principle of the one-stroke is like children who forget their ancestry. One might forget the God-given while entangled with material objects, and so know that the universe is eternal and yet ascribe the work to man. Heaven can give man his method, but not his skill, inspire him with a painting, but the change and development are up to the man himself. When a man, however, strives after skill apart from the method, or makes changes apart from the [concept of the] painting, he is forsaken by heaven, and his work will not last. For heaven grants unto man according to his ability: to the great he grants great wisdom; to the small, petty wisdom.

Therefore all painting and calligraphy are based on heaven and perfected by man. A man acting according to his greater or lesser talent given by heaven will have the [true] method of calligraphy and painting, and develop it further. Therefore I have added this section on calligraphy.

* This is Laotse.

† *Wuwei*, inaction. Here it means 'essentially in accordance with nature', or 'by the action of nature itself without human interference'.

18. *Maintaining Function.** The ancients were able to express forms through brush and ink and by means of hills and streams, the actions without action and transformations of things without [visible means of] transformation. They left a name for posterity without being well known in their lifetime, for they had gone through the awakening and growth and life, recorded in the work they left behind, and had thus incorporated into themselves the substance of hills and streams. With regard to ink, the artist has received the function of awakening and growth;† with regard to the brush, the function of life; with regard to mountains and rivers, the function of understructure; with regard to contour and surface lines, the function of spontaneity. With regard to the seas and oceans, he has received the function of the universe; with regard to the low backyards, the function of the moment; with regard to no-action, that of action; with regard to the one-stroke, that of all strokes; with regard to the responsive wrist, that of the tip of the brush.

The artist who takes these functions upon himself must maintain such functions and know what the several functions are before he commits them to paper. If not, his mind is limited and superficial and cannot carry out the functions he undertakes.

For heaven has invested the mountains with many functions. The body of the mountain comes from its location; its spirituality from its spirit; its changes of mood from growth and change; its first awakening and growth *(meng-yang)* from its clarity; its stretching across vast areas from movement; its hidden potentialities come from silence; its bowing and curtsying features from courtesy; its rambling manner comes from a peaceful disposition; its grouping together from caution; its airiness from wisdom; its beauty from delicacy of spirit; its leaping and crouching from the military spirit; its awe-inspiring

* This is the strangest discourse I have ever translated. In this whole section, the artist identifies himself with the universe and its various manifestations. He must justify and maintain the proper 'functions' *(jen)* of the myriad things.

† The artist's creation is compared with the creation of the world of forms out of chaos and life out of forms. When the first vague shapes take form in ink, this is comparable to the awakening and growth of a child's consciousness *(meng-yang)*, and later life is given to the picture through the brush-strokes. See above, especially section 5.

aspect from its dangerous shapes; its reaching out to heaven from its height; its massiveness from its generosity; and its superficialities come from what is small in it. These are the functions of the nature of the mountain itself, not what it receives from others to thrust upon Nature. Man can take these functions from Nature and maintain them and not because the mountain thrusts them upon man. Thus it is seen that the mountain takes up these functions and maintains them and they cannot be changed or substituted. Therefore the true man *(jen)* never leaves his true manhood and enjoys the mountains.

It is the same with water. Water does many things. These are things that water does. It reaches out in vast rivers and lakes to spread its benefits – such is its virtue. It seeks the lowly humble places – such is its sense of courtesy. Its tides ebb and flow ceaselessly – such is its Tao. It breaks out in crashing waves – such is its strength. It swirls about and seeks its level – such is its law. It reaches out to all places – such is its far-reaching power. Its essence is clear and pure – such is its goodness. It turns about and reaches towards the (East China Sea) – such is its goal. For water carries out these functions from the primeval damp chaos. Unless it were able to carry out these functions, it would not be able to circulate to all parts and be the arteries of the world. To know the functions of the mountain without knowing the functions of water is like a man sinking in a sea without knowledge of its shores or standing upon its shores without knowledge of the vast expanse beyond. Therefore the wise man knows the shores and watches the water passing by and his spirit is pleased.

For the immensity of the world is revealed only by the function of water, and water encircles and embraces it through the pressure of mountains. If the mountains and water do not come together and function, there will be nothing to circulate with or about, nothing to embrace. And if there is no circulation and embracing, there will be no means of life and growth. When the means of life and growth are under control, then there is the wherewithal of circulation and embracing, and with circulation and embracing open and possible, the functions of mountains and water are fulfilled.

As for the painter, the value lies not in the vastness of mountains and water, but in their controllability, not in their number

and quantity, but in their flexibility in change. Only flexibility in change enables one to paint like a great master, and only control can manage their vastness. The function of the brush is not in the brush, but in something of value created – the function of ink is not in the ink but in its receptivity and response. Likewise the functions in mountains and water lie not in themselves, but in their respective silence and mobility. The proper functions of the ancients and the moderns are not in themselves but in their respective primitiveness *(huang)* and freedom. Thus each has its proper function clearly defined, and the ink and brush-work last for ever, for their functions are adequately fulfilled.

So in speaking of these functions, one sees that they are laws of growth and life. The One controls All, and All are controlled by One – not by mountains, not by waters, not by brush and ink, not by the ancients, nor by the moderns, nor by the sages. Such are the functions when they are properly maintained.

[This essay has a postscript by Chang Yüan, dated July 1728.]

22A. *Shih-t'ao*

[Many of Shih-t'ao's inscriptions on various paintings have been collected. The following are selected as reinforcing the opinions in the Expressionist Credo above.]

People speak of the Northern and Southern School of painting, and of the style of the two Wangs (Wang Hsi-chih and his son) in calligraphy. Chung Yung said once, 'I don't apologize for not having the style of the two Wangs, but for the two Wangs not having my style.' Now if it is asked, Do I belong to the Northern or Southern School, or does the school belong to me? I would laugh and answer, 'I have my own style.'

One wonders what models the ancients followed before they themselves became models for others. But since the ancients have established certain models, modern artists are not permitted to create new models [or styles]. The consequence is that there is no chance of creating a new style. The artists copy

the techniques of the old masters, but not the minds which employed such techniques. That is why there is no spontaneity. Is it not sad to think of it?

In this business, one who understands merely lets his brush go and soon a thousand hills and valleys appear, looking like dashing clouds and striking lightning, leaping out of the paper. Is it in the style of Ching Hao and Kuan T'ung? Of Tung Yüan and Chü-jan? Or of Ni Tsan and Huang Kung-wang? Or of Shen Chou and Chao Meng-fu? Who is going to give it a name? I have seen well-known artists who always declare they paint in the style of a certain master, or copy a certain master. Calligraphy and painting [talent] are born in each individual. Let everyone attend to his own business. What is all this talk about?

The ancients may have specialized in some one style, yet they learned from many masters. Otherwise, there was no source of method. They did not act like modern scholars, who stick in one corner like a corpse. To know this is to be distinguished in art.

The picture in a poem comes from the writer's own feelings. It follows that the picture in a poem cannot come from imitating Chang or imitating Li. The poetry in a picture is born of a certain moment and surroundings. It follows that it cannot be produced by a *tour de force*. A real inspiration comes to the mind like an image upon a mirror. It is never deliberately thought out. People nowadays do demean and defile the arts of poetry and painting.

The ancients did not formulate a method for fun. In a leisure hour, one thought of the word *hsü-ling* (empty and alive). One should not take a picture too literally, but rather like looking at an image in a mirror. The real flavour of a landscape must be savoured in a real countryside. One sees it as half real and half imagined, as if the picture before one's eyes had dripped from the tip of one's pen. And when the picture is done, the viewer has no way of telling where it begins or stops. Such a painting should be considered great, beyond discussion as to what period and what style it is cast in.

It is difficult for artists to achieve the stature of the ancients. The cause lies in copying their patterns. But these patterns have been copied ever since Wang Wei's days up to now. Thrice

copied, and the character *wu* becomes the character *wa*. Is it not sad?

I don't believe that my paintings will be particularly valued. But I value them myself. I am lazy and often ill, and give them away to few people, only to some real friends. And even then, I don't make it easy for them; at most I give only one or two. If they ask for some more, I delay and delay. This is good both for the giver and the receiver. I have seen collectors who keep a painting for their own enjoyment. They really appreciate it. The painting is kept on the desk, and slowly enjoyed with the help of a cup of tea and a stick of incense. Those who value a painter by hearsay, get it in by one ear and lose it by the other ear. Therefore I value my own. After my death, perhaps there may be more admirers than at present. I don't know. My real admirers will smile when they see this.

[It is clear from Shih-t'ao's own description of his method that his theory of one-stroke means the following: the artist dips his brush in ink and is ready to paint, like the creator about to create forms and shapes out of chaos. He then follows the inspiration of the moment, and lets the picture grow out of his brush, following the momentary demands, governed by its own harmonies, changing and making adjustments according to its own inner necessity, so that from beginning to end it is one continuous act of creation.]

23

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY A.D.

Shen Tsung-ch'ien

fl. 1781

The Art of Painting

(*Chieh-chou Hsüeh Hua P'ien,* dated 1781)

[I have selected Shen Tsung-ch'ien's work as the best treatise on the theory and practice of Chinese art from among at least a dozen written by practising artists of the various centuries. It is the most readable, clear, detailed and explicit, and it lets us in on the thinking and the goal of Chinese art in a way no other treatise does. It shows what a first-class artist is trying to do and how and why he does it. The reader, I think, will agree with me that this treatise by Shen is the most explicit exposition of the technique and the goal of Chinese painting, and moreover, is a great essay. If Shih-t'ao's essay (No. 22) is an expressionist credo, Shen's work may be regarded as the best and ablest exposition of the principles of the impressionist school.

Shen's book gives not only the most explicit instructions on technique, but also deals with the deeper problems of form and style and psychology of art. It is an eloquent appeal for serious purpose in art and sets the highest goal for the artist. The author was a classicist, interested in restoring the tradition of the great masters, but his classicism was well reasoned. How to find freedom for personal expression within the general principles of classic art was his main problem. Particularly

penetrating is his criticism of the 'shocking modern art' of his days.

Shen Tsung-ch'ien's work is a complete book by itself. The present translation covers Books I and II, roughly three-fifths in volume. Book III is a rather extensive treatise on portrait work, quite remarkable in its observations. Book IV is shorter, but contains 'general remarks' on (a) painting human figures, (b) on artists' materials, and (c) on the use of colours. I have divided the sections under three headings: (A) Questions of Technique; (B) Taste and Style; and (C) Foundations of Style. I have also rearranged the sequence of three sections for better continuity. Sections 1, 5 and 9 are originally 6, 15 and 1 respectively.

(A) *Questions of Technique* (1–6)

1. *Begin at the Beginning.* All things formed by the forces of the universe have an expression. To paint them is not only to catch their forms, but also their expression. One may try to catch them by a few casual strokes, but these will only suggest a rough idea, and lack substance. The fault lies in technique. Or one may try to set off all the details; one will easily succeed in getting the general outlines of woods and rocks, yet they seem dead. The fault lies in minuteness of detail. Now if one tries to correct them by repeated light washes for shading, the result will be that the soil and rocks and branches will become a blur. Both form and expression are sacrificed. Moreover, this is to miss the principles of painting entirely.

The beginner must begin with the use of the brush. This is the same as that used for writing. It may be an old brush, or a new one, but should not contain hardened ink that was left over from the last use. Wash thoroughly, dip it in ink with water evenly and squeeze dry. The tip of the brush should come together as if never soaked in water, before it is applied to the paper. This is because it should be dry and not damp. The brush movement is controlled from the brush; it should not make many meaningless turns, nor should the line be stiff and straight.

In painting rocks and rocky hilltops, first make a rough outline. This is called *kou* (contour line), and gives only the rough shape of the rock; nothing is suggested about its surface. Then

lay various strokes, vertical, horizontal or slanting, on the yet unfilled rock surface. This is called *p'o* (to break), that is, to let light and shadows appear from the void. After *p'o*, one can see the top and sides and lower parts of the rock. The hollow areas will be dark and the patterns blurred because of the absence of light. The parts exposed to light have also various grains and patterns, but these are indistinct because of the light. Lay a (comparatively) dry brush on to the hollow areas and brush against the lighted areas with progressively lighter strokes in accordance with the grains and patterns of the surface. This is called *ts'un* (texture stroke). *Ts'un* means wrinkles, referring to the wrinkles on the rock's surface. After this, the rock already stands out. Follow with extremely dry, short strokes across the *ts'un* areas, to increase the darkness. This is called *ts'a* (rapid, short strokes). Now the rock seems to have an expression. Finally, take a fairly dark dry brush* and work over the whole place, giving accent to various areas according to the artist's judgement, to bring out the surface. At this point, the movements of the brush, where the brush first contacts the paper and where it leaves off, must be clearly traceable, and yet show neither weakness nor lumpiness. For to use light ink over dark causes a blur, whereas to use dark ink over light shows a pleasant contrast. Therefore lay dark over light ink, and not *vice versa*. This is the technique of *p'o-mo*. The effect is clarity without harshness of lines, smoothness without blurs. This is called *pi-yung* (brush-fuse), which means the brush-strokes fuse.

So far the use of ink has been implied. I may amplify, to show how the uses of brush and ink are interrelated. The ink is gradually laid on by means of the brush, or it would be just a blotch of black. When laid on thin it is hardly discernible, like a misty spray, shining with lustre like a pair of eyes when concentrated, strangely elusive and varying when applied with a dry brush, and dripping with colour when applied wet. Then it is clear like an autumn pond, lustrous like a spring hill, resplendent like a flower in the morning and delicate like lawn grass. It retains that beautiful lustre through the years, even when the silk is worn out with age. Its infinite flexibility lasts and the artist lasts with it; from its open, inviting quality the

* The terms 'dry brush', 'wet brush', 'very wet brush', 'brush with concentrated ink', etc., are used specifically in teaching manuals.

viewer derives a lasting enjoyment. This is called the transforming power of the ink *(mo-hua)*. . . .

The use of ink is inseparable from the brush. With the brush, it goes wherever you wish it to go; without it, the picture will lack structural strength, as we find in the modern Wu-lin (Hangchow) School started by Lan Ying and the Yün-chien School started by Lu Hui. At first, the ink was not completely detached from the strokes, but they seemed to have no relation to each other, and ink was used freely to help build up the picture where the brush-strokes had left off. Later the followers forgot about the brush-strokes entirely. Where this may lead no one knows. Therefore the combined use of stroke and splash must in no circumstances be separated. With proper understanding of this principle of keeping close co-operation of brush and ink, proceed until one comes to *pi-yung* and *mo-hua*, where fusion of strokes and harmony of ink take place. Then one can afford to forget about the question of form and expression. I do not mean to say that form and expression are unimportant, but that with the consummate control of ink and brush, the forms and expressions are more or less there already. We come to the point where appreciation goes beyond the material forms. Neither the question of form, nor the question of expression comes up.

The beginner always likes to have many definite rules to follow, what method to use for this or that, what kind of brush-stroke is used in this or that school. After one gets familiar with the behaviour and tendencies of brush and ink, one should forget the rules and concentrate on copying from the masters. Work first with the standard masters, and study the general intent of a picture, then take one section of it and scrutinize it carefully. One may not understand it at first, but after repeated trials one will. Then one proceeds to another section. If one goes straight for the picture as a whole, one will miss the fine points in its use of stroke and ink. If one fails to get it, the most precise reproduction will result in a laborious but lifeless product. If one succeeds, however, in learning the control of details the reproduced copy may differ here and there from the original, but in a general way it will be in the right spirit, without glaring mistakes. The ink and brush should fuse naturally. This is the benefit from copying masters. When one

strains after an exact reproduction, one is bound to lose that fluid control of brush and ink, and the extent of the undertaking crushes one's spirit. That is why it is essential to keep the spontaneous fluid expression of feelings and the perfect co-operation of brush and ink. Gradually one improves and with time progress will become evident.

Students must begin with painting rocks. For rocks are most difficult to draw and provide the best opportunity for learning the brush-strokes. Once this is mastered, the skill so acquired can be freely applied to other objects. This is like learning composition, where the conjunctions and common turns of expression and structural patterns are mastered first; the acquisition of vocabulary can easily follow. In painting rocks, the secret lies in fluidity and spontaneity of the stroke, and perfect control of the ink.* Those skilful in this can draw a circle and it will be embodied with the life-pattern of a piece of rock. Without this skill, the more effort is put into it, the more wooden the picture becomes. It is seen therefore that the secret lies only in the relationship of brush and ink.

The deeper fissure strokes of rocks must trail like plant roots in water, and again like the strokes for drawing orchid petals. But the ink must be fairly dry and thin, like plant roots and orchid petals, but slightly more rounded. There must not be too many of these long fissure strokes; about two or three surrounded and combined with shorter strokes. For these longer strokes are like the essential lines of a man's face.

The beginner must first ask on seeing a work, Is this a [good] brush-stroke or not, and is it [controlled] ink-work or not? If it is not, it is not a 'painting' even with the best composition. If it is, then it does not matter whether it is heavy or thin, or has many strokes or few. For this mastery of brush and ink has this marvellous power to make interesting lines that are alive, even without much experience. Imagine the use it can be put to when one has travelled and seen a great deal and read a great deal!

* The movement of painting or writing with a brush depends upon the strength or flexibility of the brushes, the thickness, thinness and comparative wetness of ink, and the quality of the paper surface. Thus it is a conjunction of three factors of varying quality which determines the speed and fluidity of the movement, or their opposite.

2. *The Brush-stroke.* To avoid jerkiness the brush should be guided by the wrist as it glides along the paper, and not manipulated by the fingers.* After some practice, this becomes natural, and there appears to be a centre in the brush-strokes, called the 'core' *(chieh-hsin)*. This way of holding the brush may seem slow and difficult at first, but with practice becomes very fast. When fully mastered, it occurs automatically, and then it can be applied to paintings of any size. It can make bold, free strokes, as well as minute lines. It almost goes by itself. This is mastery of the technique. The ancients meant this when they spoke of brush-work 'cutting into the silks' – as it is said of good calligraphy that it 'cuts three-tenths of an inch deep' [when it makes a bold, clear print].

The ancients also spoke of the strength of a brush-stroke as being able to 'lift a bronze tripod' (figuratively). This refers to the sureness of touch and firmness of line. In applying a brush, force *(ch'i)*† is all-important. With force comes the strength of stroke; any line so drawn becomes alive with energy. As we say, 'the line has spirit' (is spirited). The ancients' skill all started merely from this: when mastered, one could do anything with it. It would be a great pity if one neglected this basic discipline; one would move only farther and farther away from true painting and end up in a superficial, heterogeneous display of lines by squandering one's energy elsewhere. The serious student should not go after too many things at first, but concentrate on this strength of line. With this firm foundation, one cannot go astray.

The brush-stroke is the backbone of a painting. For trees and rocks have no regular fixed shapes, but these shapes are fixed by the brush. The shapes and forms change infinitely as the brush

* In effect the brush is held in an absolutely vertical position firmly between thumb and fingers in such a way that it can move firmly in any direction, up and down, right and left, as desired. This applies to paintings of usual size and writing characters over six inches long. In ordinary writing, of course, the brush is guided by the thumb and fingers. In writing characters over one foot square, the movement starts from the elbow, freely suspended, and the wrist becomes rigid and more or less passive.

† The word *ch'i* has puzzled many translators; it has often been translated as 'air', 'breath', 'atmosphere', which is its meaning in some contexts. In general, however, the word 'force' comes nearest to it. The *yin ch'i* and *yang ch'i* should be translated as the two 'forces', positive and negative.

touches the paper at the artist's will. The artist's will or intention in turn also arises from the contacts made. And so it goes on until something exquisite results. The artist's intention goes before the brush-stroke, and the flavour and charm come from the lines formed. When the 'bone' (sinuous strokes) of a painting is there, it is then possible to connect up the cartilages and tendons, and flesh and skin (surface and mass) can be formed around it. To attend to the surface effects without inner bone structure would be like gilding an earthen wall; it is beautiful on the outside but without a proper base the lustre will soon wear off. That was why the ancients concentrated on the brush-stroke.

The qualities to aim at are: strength as against weakness; lightness as against formless lumpiness; firmness as against whim, and refinement as against vulgarity. The strokes then should be luminously clear, darkly archaic, firm and clear cut, and richly lustrous. Their dots and lines and curves should be naturally rhythmic and the chops and cuts delightfully masterly. Of course this is not easy to attain. The student should try to work hard and through practice acquire mastery. After that he can dart and soar and move freely, all with spontaneity and yet in good form. Like a hero, he stands in his untrammelled mood, or again like a dragon at play, or [looks antique] like an excavated spear coated with mud. When this stage is reached, there is no worry about matching the ancients (old masters).

When the brush touches paper, there are only differences in touch, speed, angle and direction. But a too light touch results in weakness while a too heavy touch causes clumsiness. Too much speed results in a slippery effect, too little speed drags; too much slant [of brush-tip] results in thinness; a too perpendicular approach in flatness; a curve may result in ragged edges and a straight line may look like one made with a ruler. All these come from lack of flexibility and too much effort. Things and objects vary infinitely in form and manner, and it is possible to capture them all by the brush-stroke. Clumsy brush-work will catch only the form and miss the manner or spirit. Once the spirit is caught, the fewer the strokes the better the spirit will stand out, and all the speed, touch, angle and direction will come by themselves without the accompanying faults.

[Here follows a purely descriptive passage extolling the beauties and strength of strong, graceful brush-work, all in figurative language – 'Like the spirit's work and the devil's axe . . . like unearthed ancient bronze . . . like circling phoenixes and crouching dragons . . . like a frightened snake . . . like floating gossamer and flying catkins . . . etc.' Another paragraph follows, urging students to develop both grace and strength; those who have naturally graceful strokes should develop strength by learning from ancient models as Tung Ch'i-ch'ang did. Those who have naturally strong strokes should develop grace, as Shen Chou did. The author herein paid his homage to these two Ming masters.]

3. *Use of Ink.* When ink appears as a blotch on silk, it is called 'dead ink', but when it shows a clear shading of light and dark, it is called 'live ink'. It is important to make this distinction for live ink shines, but dead ink does not.

There are two different ways of applying ink: 'splash-ink' and 'break-ink'. The Southern School mostly uses break-ink, while the Northern School uses splash-ink.* But both ways give luminous results. In the case of break-ink, first trace the contour with thin ink, then add shading lines to bring out the surface unevenness. When the object has thus taken form, gradually darken the areas, taking care to leave them damp so that the ink appears to have a softening effect. Once more sharpen the contour and fissure lines with concentrated ink *(chiao-mo)*, or perhaps add moss-dots along the contour lines.

In the case of the splash-ink technique, first make a tentative sketch of the whole with chalk, making sure that the hills and woods and rocks have a sense of cohesion. Then use thin ink to anchor and define the lines where different surfaces and areas meet. Dip the brush in damp ink and rapidly spread it over the areas. Wait till it is dry. Add fairly thin damp ink to deepen the darker areas, like the top of the

* This is one of the best statements regarding the differences between Northern and Southern School practice, terms which are loosely used. 'Break-ink' is used here in the sense that the surface of a painted object is broken by surface lines, or texture lines.

main mountain and rocky cliffs, and areas cut off by misty clouds.*

Both Tung Yüan and Huang Kung-wang painted pictures entitled 'Floating Hillsides and Warm Verdure'. The use of the words 'floating' and 'warm' shows that ink is essential in achieving such effects. Tung Yüan once wrote on one of his own pictures, 'The source of streams is heavy and well rounded; the vegetation growth is luxuriant,' indicating appreciation of his use of ink. Wang Hsia (*c.* 800)† was the first to use the splash-ink technique, but his work has already disappeared. Mi Fei and his son Mi Yu-jen, Fang Ts'ung-yi and Tung Yüan were all able to achieve the effect of appearing and disappearing mists and showing the light and atmosphere of hillsides because of their consummate mastery of ink.

All things consist of form and colour. The brush delineates their forms, and the ink should give the colour. But this 'colour' *(seh)* does not refer to greens and reds and the like but to the shades of light and dark and their depth. When skilfully manipulated it is able to show the expression, distances and life and spirit of a scene. The so-called lifelike tone and atmosphere depends upon the proper use of ink to get that luminosity. For example take two scrolls, one done in black and white and the other in deep blue-green. It will be seen that where the blue-green is deepest, the ink is also heaviest, so that even in colour, the depth is brought about by the use of ink.‡ Cannot one say that ink is colour? For in black-and-white, the ink comes with the brush, the brush 'leading' the ink, as it were. In colour painting, the colours are applied over the brush-strokes, so that the brush still takes the lead. Care must be taken, however, that the ink does not overwhelm the brush-work; by so much as it spreads beyond what is intended, just so much it becomes a dark blotch and is no longer ink-work. In the use of colours, the brush-work must not cause

* In effect, in the Southern School lay thin ink over surface lines. In the Northern School, darken areas over thin ink base. In result, the Northern School technique produces a more even surface, whereas in the Southern School the surface lines stand out quite distinctly.

† Also known as Wang Mo.

‡ Colour pigment is often darkened to the desired degree with diluted ink.

ink-spread; if it does, it takes over the function of the colours. Try to understand how ink and colour can become one, for with this the colour becomes luminous and remains so for a thousand years even though the silk is worn out with age.

The lustre of ink is marvellous. But unless used properly even the top-quality ink will not give anything but a spread of ashes and soot. Therefore ink is divided into two kinds: 'tender ink' *(nen-mo)* and 'old ink' *(lao-mo)*. Tender ink is used for its freshness and luminosity. Soak up water in the brush, decide how much ink is wanted, dip it in the ink, dilute in water, brush it over paper, and the ink-spread will be harmonious and even and lustrous. All manner of shades of light and dark are thus indicated – misty woods, vapoury hills, distant hilltops, the open sky at night, sunlight and shadows, etc. Woods deepen into darkness, banks of haze cover mountain-sides and clouds rise and springs bubble, and all strange crags, deep ravines in wind and storm can be brought out. 'Old ink' is used for creating a vague, archaic atmosphere and for showing the surface lines. This way of using ink mainly depends on the strength of brush-strokes. The brush makes a sousing sound as it passes over the paper, and the strength comes from the wrist and not from the fingers. The result will be that the force of the brush-stroke seems to penetrate into the back of the paper, and the lines thus drawn will be like old trees standing in the wind, hard and rugged and frozen. This is useful in depicting strange cliffs shooting up into the clouds, frosted ground, drizzle and tangled branches, creating a marvellous effect. In 'old ink', the brush-work predominates; in 'tender ink', the ink fluid predominates. 'Tender ink' is good for tone and atmosphere *(ch'i-yün)* and beautiful vapoury effects in general; 'old ink' is good for skeletal tone *(ku-yün)* and for tree trunks and branches and handsome lines of hills and rocks. Thus the brush leads and the ink follows, always in close harmony. The brush must simply be fed by the ink and take the ink wherever the ink is to be. Tu Fu has a line,'Rich in primeval energy, the screen appears wet', which describes the dexterous use of ink.

Few people understand the two words 'brush' and 'ink', and especially 'ink' (ink-work) is understood by the very, very few.

I often see people pour ink over dark areas and call it 'ink' (ink-work).* They thus use ink simply in place of colours, and not really 'ink'. Where the brush-work is not seen, there is no ink-work. How can a painting, where the ink does not go with the brush to show its lustre and expression, be said to 'have brush and no (insufficient, weak) ink'? How can ink-work without signs of brush-work be honoured with the name of 'ink-work'?

To understand this mystery, study carefully the work of the Yüan artists, or of Tung Yüan. The ink-work† of Huang Kung-wang is harmonious; that of Wang Meng, bold and free; that of Ni Tsan, faint; that of Wu Chen, rich; that of Tung Yüan, luminous. The secret of the ink-work of masters is seen in the traces where the brush passes, and the same individual differences are observed in the darker areas. Even in the case of cloud-scapes of Mi Fei and Fang Ts'ung-yi, really the ink-spread only helps the excellent dots laid by the brush. People nowadays depend on the ink-spread to cover their ugly dots and call it ink atmosphere. They will never understand, even if they live to be a hundred.

4. *Composition.* It would be a great fault to begin a picture without a preconceived plan, and then add and adjust as one goes along, with the result that the different parts do not have an organic unity. One should rather have a general idea of where the masses and connections, the light and dark areas would be, then proceed so that one part grows out of another, and the light and dark areas co-operate to build a picture. Examined closely, each section is interesting in itself; taken together there is an organic unity. From the top to the bottom, all the misty woods and villages on the plains are interrelated, and are united by one general movement or gesture. It is thus compact but not crowded, airy but not loosely constructed, so natural, like something cast, that one could not add to it or take

* *Pi* and *Mo* here really mean ink-work and brush-work, but in Chinese, this is simply spoken of as 'brush' and 'ink'.

† The translation 'ink-wash' would be misleading here; it means strictly the technical use and control of ink, as distinct from, though related to, control of brush.

away from it without loss. This is the composition technique of the ancients.*

The general plan must be decided in a moment, but the disposition of the details should be given some careful thought. In sketching a plan, one should constantly stand a little distance away to look at it and make sure that everything is in place. Some people have used the method of hanging a piece of silk over an uneven earthen wall and see the rough marks come through the silk, thus suggesting shapes of hills and streams and disposition of crowded and spacious areas, then quickly trace the sketch with chalk. This is also one interesting way of getting the lay-out for a picture.

In a good, well-planned picture, every tree and rock, every hill range and grove, has a very definite place where it belongs, although the objects as such are most variable. If this vision is not held, there will be many hesitations and waverings of mind during the execution. It will not be a good picture even though the execution technique is good. One should from time to time study the masterpieces carefully and observe, besides the tone and colour of brush and ink, also the disposition of parts of a picture and try to understand the reason for it. At the moment of painting, one should constantly watch and consider what to join up and what to avoid. There will come a time when one does all this naturally, and without much thought of contriving achieve a perfect balance and proportion. Then it may be truly said that one is a master of composition.

Again, it is important that the balance and counterbalance of trees and branches and light and shade should be obvious to the viewer at a glance and not be slowly understood. Otherwise the picture will lack clarity. Some try to achieve the effect of haziness by having shadowy forms, but the result is often obscure, the opposite of clarity. Some labour over the fine details; the result may be fine work, but there may be an overabundance of detail – and this, too, acts against the effect of clarity. To counteract such failures the best way is to let the main skeleton and frame stand out to avoid amorphousness, and to emphasize the general plan as against the details. Automatically, the atmosphere will be clarified. I remember that

* It is evident from Shih-t'ao's essay and here that the phrase 'the ancients' is used habitually to denote what was an ideal.

when I was beginning to paint, I used a lot of ink-wash to soften up the hard strokes, and was pleased with myself for achieving a misty effect. Mr Chang Keng of Ho-tien criticized my work by one word – 'obscenity'! Thereafter I set out severely to correct myself to obtain clarity as my goal. It occurs to me that there are many beginners of art today, but those who take real trouble to perfect themselves are few. There are some who try, but are impatient, and so land in overcrowdedness or obscurity. This must be pointed out to them, so that all doubts and hesitancies disappear and the way seems open for further development. This is the crucial point, after which everything will be easy.

A painting should be good to look at from a distance or near at hand. Some paintings are good to look at closely, but not at a distance; they show good brush-work and ink-work, but the fault lies in the general composition. Of other paintings the reverse is true. Pictures for albums are looked at as they lie on a table, so any faults in the general plan may not be glaring. In the case of large scrolls which have to be looked at from a distance of more than a dozen paces, the general arrangement is seen at once, so the outline comes before the detailed handling of brush and ink. Shen Chou was certainly a gifted artist, but he refused to paint large scrolls until he was over forty. This shows how difficult it is to get the first broad outline right. Even the ancients were very careful about it.

There are of course thousands of hills and dales, more than one can study for enjoyment. But in a painting, the important thing is the main lay-out (*k'ai-ho*, 'open and close'), like the running theme of a literary composition. In between, there are the main theme and the foils, the transitions, the developments, the omissions and hidden implications to consider. It is like Su Tung-p'o's prose which may be over ten thousand words long, yet the reader is reluctant to come to the end. It is the same method. When this is understood, one may paint large scrolls.

The highest mountain in a scroll is called the main mountain, and below it are ranged many bluffs and cliffs in different shapes and sizes which must be organized into a cohesive whole, so that even remote parts are connected like a green snake, disappearing here and reappearing there. The tallest tree in the foreground is called the 'host tree' *(tang-chia-shu)*. Above it spread the woods of varying density and age. These must

gradually diminish in size towards the distance in a connected manner. The disposition must be flexible according to individual requirements. The connecting points must be clear. By avoiding deadening uniformity or feeble, unclear connections and by daily practice, one develops the ability to invent and find one's way through, so that the result has a freshness of vision. Every picture must start out with this goal in mind. Gradually it will be possible to achieve the right disposition and proportions without loss of freedom and fluidity.

In a way, painting is like chess. An ordinary player may fight hard for some particular position, but the loss to the general plan is great. First-class players neither fight nor yield, but from the beginning to the end there is not one idle move. This applies to painting. For although the artist works alone, what he is aiming at and struggling for is like playing against an opponent. The smallest error may have grave consequences. When one's art reaches maturity, the artist feels like a first-class hand; he can give away certain advantages and yet is able to do what he wishes with freedom and ease.

Objects in nature have no front or sides except from the angle of the person looking at them – whether one views them sideways or directly. Hence the distinction between direct and side views. In direct views the main mountain sits like a ruler surrounded by the lesser hills, like courtiers, facing it. At the bottom of the scroll are houses and trees ranged in the valley, like the governed population. These must all be arranged properly in a related manner. Again it may be like the portrait of a scholar sitting squarely in his chair with a correct and austere demeanour. This is the most difficult kind of composition. The indirect or side view suggests at its best a whirling dancer, a whistling immortal, a darting hawk, or a frightened beast running for cover. Or it is like a gathering storm and changing clouds, with infinite variations of movement. Yet in the execution by brush and ink, the artist must show harmony, poise and calm. This type of painting is not easy.

It is desirable, however, to begin practising on direct views. Like the human picture of arms and legs, it would be easy to let them hang down or cross in any manner. It would be less monotonous. Yet this may easily lapse into a lazy, careless attitude, or else it may be novel and exciting, but this easily

leads into a glib superficial style and comes near to vulgarity. These are all serious faults. Therefore one should learn control and balance and weight with the direct-view type before proceeding to the side-view category.

In the case of the side-view type, all the woods and hill ranges may be seen from a slanted angle, and the slanting brush-tip must also be used. Among the Yüan masters, Huang Kung-wang, Wang Meng, and Wu Chen all faced the landscape directly from the front, while Ni Tsan and Fang Ts'ung-yi mostly looked at the view from an angle.

But this difference of angle may sometimes be combined with benefit. A picture showing everything from the direct angle may be flat and dull. Therefore one may introduce a slightly indirect angle in the adjoining parts for relief and a sense of life. A picture showing everything from an angle can easily appear ill organized and casual. It is desirable then to introduce squarely set bone-structures among the connecting areas, and thus create a better sense of stability. When the art is perfectly mastered, one can change and vary according to the fancies of the moment, and without even a thought of the angles create a live whole, without wooden stiffness or slapdash freedom.

An unusually compact composition is to have ranges of hills at the top, a thick wood at the bottom and suggestions of cloudy vapours or rivulets and mountain paths in the centre. Such a view calls for a well-balanced front view. But the danger of monotony is always there.* This must be relieved by the texture strokes coming from one side [of a mountain] and furthermore must be constantly varied. I learned this from Wang Yüan-ch'i. Yüan-ch'i's art lies in the ability to have slanting strokes counteracting his front-view compositions, and the result is that it becomes the more beautiful the closer the texture lines are. This is a way of counteracting front-view work by slanting strokes. Whether it be a jutting rock or a flying cataract, or old trees under the clouds, or encircling creepers, or hills or woods tensely struggling against each other, the side view is always best. But the strokes must not betray the least spirit of violence, or the whole picture jars. This must be corrected by the tip of the brush applied directly [not at a slant], like the seal script in

* See, for comparison, the works of Ma Yüan, which almost always prefer to present a view from an oblique angle.

calligraphy. I learned this from Shen Chou and T'ang Yin, because these two know how to apply straight strokes to a picture from an angle of perspective. Thus they did not create ill-balanced pictures. This shows the benefit of the combined use of front and sides.

In general, a flat scene calls for dexterous brush-work, but an exciting arrangement of objects calls for more common regular strokes. That would be about right. Where there is a multitude of crags and ravines, it is not necessary to choose a centre. The peaks, crests, clouds and vapours can change infinitely. Here the side perspective would apply, affording many opportunities for variation. Where a rock or a tree stands alone, the front view may be employed, showing the tree or a perpendicular peak going straight up towards the clouds, or a granite peak standing alone overhanging a void. Here it is not necessary to choose a side angle. For the idea is to give an impression of uplift. Without understanding this basic motive, a picture can easily become monotonous and repetitious, or it may lack power and substance. This is what must be borne in mind when studying the composition of the masterpieces.

In painting woods, have the branches cross and recross one another when the trees all go straight up. When they are of the bending and twisting types, paint a few branches that go straight towards the top. This makes for cohesion and tone and atmosphere. In painting flat, straight rocks, apply fluid slanting texture strokes for relief; in treating rocks that are themselves strange in shape, the contour should be laid in even, firm strokes to absorb the strangeness of form. Thus the direct and indirect angles correct and reinforce each other.

5. *Force and Life.* The underlying nature of the universe can be covered by the words 'open' and 'close'. From the movements of forces of the universe down to the movements of respiration, there is nothing which does not involve an opening and a closing movement. This point of view will help the understanding of composition in painting.

For instance, in a vertical scroll, the lower half represents the opening up, and the top half represents the closing movement. Let me explain. We begin by filling the foreground with rocks and trees and deciding where to put the houses, the bridge, the

springs and streams and the paths. Everything is full of life, ready for further development. This is the opening up. When the lower half is finished, we decide about the upper half, how the peak of the main mountain is to look, what areas the clouds will cover, or how the distant sandbanks will reflect and counterpoise the rest – how, in other words, the picture will be gathered up to form a united whole. This is the closing movement. To take an analogy from the seasons, we may say that the lower part is like spring when all things bloom and start to grow, the middle part is like summer, when all things thrive with life, and the upper part is like autumn and winter, when all living things prepare for conservation and rest. Just as there is a period of fresh growth and a period of harvest in a year, so there is a natural composition of beginning and completion in a painting. One may go further and see that in each section of the general scheme there is also its own opening up and completion. Besides the yearly alternation of the cold and hot seasons, there is the full moon and the dark moon in each month, and the alternation of night and day. Each hour and each minute there is the throb of life, the pulse of rising and falling movement. Applied to painting, each rock and each tree must have its initial and closing movement to represent the life movement of creation. Each part derives from somewhere and disappears into somewhere. All this should be clear and orderly in a good painting. To miss this vital point for effective control of the movement would result in a hodge-podge of light and shadows like a pile of firewood. Composition is then impossible. It is no longer art.

The combined work of brush and ink all depends on force of movement *(shih.)** This force refers to the movement of the brush back and forth on the paper, which carries with it and in it the opening and closing movements. Where something is starting up, that is the opening movement, but with every opening movement the artist must be thinking how it will be gathered up at the end. Thus the lines will be compact and will

* *Shih* means force of movement, advantage of position, the striking position in battle, influence in government, or leverage in jujitsu. It may refer to the quick force of an oncoming flood, or the latent danger of a collapsing wall, etc. It is always associated with movement and action, or their possibility.

not spread out in a meaningless sprawl. The gathering up is called the closing movement, and with each closing movement the artist is already thinking where the next growth is going to arise. Thus there is always a suggestion of further development. When the chalk sketch has been determined, there are the connections to consider. Sometimes the force of movement demands going in a direction which is not warranted by the nature of things, or the nature of the objects demands something not within the reach of the movement. Here one must stop to think and wait for the right idea when one stroke will open up many new possibilities of development. Immediately, however, one must already be thinking how the opening up of this new movement is going to be effected. Where a part of the scene is flat and dragging, one must think of a new movement. Since a conclusion is difficult at this place, a movement must start from somewhere else to avoid this flatness. It could come from a rock, or a tree, or houses or clouds, according to the exigencies of the moment, but should be in harmony with the force of movement and the nature of things in the picture. In short, there is not one moment in painting when the suggestion of opening up and conclusion is not involved. That is why I have especially dwelt on this for the benefit of fellow artists.

In calligraphy, there is the principle of beginning a vertical line with a horizontal and beginning a horizontal line with a vertical.* The same is true of the opening and concluding movements in painting. For instance, dip before going upwards, turn upwards before turning down. Precede the heavy touch with the light and precede the light with the heavy. Let go before pulling in, and pull in before letting go. These are all variations of the open-and-close principle. In respect of composition, usher in a dense, well-packed scene with a preceding sparse area; before proceeding to a flat and open country, create a few columns of soaring lines. Before a fade-away, make solid masses; before a deep, dark area, give the contrast of something light and clear. These are all applications of the same principle. The student should absolutely refrain from daubing on paper until he understands this. Study the ancient works carefully and see that every dot and every dash and the entire picture embody

* 'The crouch before the spring'.

this basic principle. Once this principle in the ancients' art is grasped, it will be easy to copy intelligently.

In planning a composition, look for the *shih*, force of movement. A foot-high scroll can be examined on the table, but scrolls several feet high must be hung and looked at from a distance. Chalk in the principal movement, or ink it on the wall or on the table, as you may prefer. Before the sketch, one must have a grasp of the whole rounded movement and know precisely what one is going to do. In this way, a sense of cohesion is assured. The difficult part in the upper half is the determination of the main or central peak; in the lower half the position, size and shape of the host tree. Water must come from a source, a road must disappear around something. Dark areas must have a ground surface and the lower half rarely shows a completely flat area. The (imaginary) veins of movement must be connected; the trees in woods should stand apart. Head streams should strike the eye, and the clouds' movements should please the spirit. The human figures should be simple and drawn in the archaic style. The houses should be simple and half hidden. This applies to direct views and views from an angle.

All matter is formed of accumulated force. Thus even the undulations of hilltops and every rock and tree are possessed by a life-force inherent in them. They are multifarious, yet orderly, perhaps they exist in small numbers, but they are never dried and dead. Each has its own shape, and together they have a related unity. All things differ in shape and manner, yet all are governed by this life-force and possess the beauty of life.* This is what we call *shih,* force of movement. When people, speaking of the six techniques, place first the 'lifelike tone and atmosphere', they mean exactly this. When we speak of the force of the brush *(pi-shih),* we mean that the life-movement of the brush brings out the body posture of the different objects. Only so can the work be called a painting. When one prepares to

* It is perhaps appropriate to call attention here to the fact that the first prerequisite of Chinese art, rhythmic vitality of line, comes from this fact. *All lines in nature are alive because all nature moves in some direction.* The beauty, for instance, of driftwood, or a curling vine, or even a drooping leaf shows that something is going on inside the vine, or driftwood or drooping leaf. A change, growth or decay or resistance is always implied. In fact, that is why one wants to paint at all. And that is why the line should never look as if made with a ruler, which is dead because it is perfectly straight.

put ink on paper, one should feel in one's wrist a power like the universe creating life. It flows out from one generously and freely, without obstruction and without deliberation. One puts a dot here and a dash there and the objects take form; anything is possible for one to pick up and carry along. This is the creative moment when hand and mind and brush and ink co-operate. As Wen Cheng-ming says, seize it, capture it at once before it vanishes, for speed is essential to catch that force of movement. Some may quote Tu Fu's line about taking 'ten days to paint a stream and five days to paint a rock', but the poet really means that art cannot be forced or done under pressure by a fixed delivery date. When the inspiration comes, it cannot be stopped, so insistent is the demand for expression. Wu Tao-tse was asked by imperial order to make a picture of the Kialing River valley, and he did it in one day, whereas it took others over a month. This is an example of achieving force of movement by speedy execution. The forms of hills and forests come from the life-force *(sheng-ch'i)* of the universe, and the ink marks and tracings of the brush come from the spiritual force of the artist's mind and hand. So where the life-force is, the force of movement is also. The life-force makes the force of movement, and the force of movement carries the life-movement. The force of movement *(shih)* can be seen, but the life-force *(ch'i)* itself cannot. Therefore it is necessary to have force of movement to bring out the life of things. When life-force circulates, the force of movement goes in harmony with it. So this life-force and force of movement come from the same source. Let it pour out and it will flow naturally and in graceful movements. There is no need to work carefully and yet it all fits in beautifully. Is it life-force? Or is it force of movement? Just pour it out. The insight of a moment may be thus committed to eternity, and the artist need not be ashamed of his work. Such pleasures of creation cannot be felt by an artist who slowly builds up his structures.

The moment of inspiration comes by itself, and brushes away all doubts and hesitancies. Like an arrow shooting out from the bowstring, it cannot be stopped; it is unfathomable, like rumbling thunder coming from the earth. One has no idea where it comes from, when it starts, nor whither it goes. It comes just at the exact moment, not a second sooner or later. When this

inspiration comes at the moment of painting, a true masterpiece is born. It cannot be repeated by doubled effort, it simply eludes it. For the effort to recapture that moment is born of man (artificial), not of heaven (inspired). Only those possessed of the natural expansive spirit have more of such moments; they can shut out the mental effort and let themselves go soaring in freedom to wherever the spirit may carry them. There is a co-operation of human skill and natural gift, and the work is done easily, without planning and design, not comparable with anything done by planning and design.

Some may ask, 'Granted that such inspiration comes by nature, beyond the contriving of the human mind, isn't the artist's desire to paint also a part of what belongs to man?' There is an explanation for this. This so-called nature ('Heaven') is also human nature. Man may not escape from nature, nor can nature for long escape from man. When the artist is turning ideas over in his mind and about to paint, he feels an awakening desire in his hand and in his mind to let go. This is the moment when inspiration comes. Obey the impulse and it will come out and grow and develop, the heart is seized with passion and the beautiful lines come out from his pen, flow out from his hand ('wrist'), as if he is guided by a mysterious force. The tip of the brush catches and records every exquisite impulse. It is something which never occurred before, nor is likely to occur again. At this conjunction of the artist's pen and mind, both assist each other, respond to each other. The artist himself does not know how it happens. This can happen only to artists of talent and skill. Those not so gifted with talent or without sufficient previous training must rely upon plan and design, and will never experience such moments in their lives. First they lack force of movement because of their inability to draw quickly, and then they cannot draw quickly because of their lack of the force of movement. They are tied up by technique and bound by rules; wherever they move, they are held back by the effort towards realistic portrayal. They are people described by the Buddhists as having a 'gross root' in their nature. They should have nothing to do with this business.

6. *Grain and Texture.* As woven fabric consists of warp and woof, so painting consists of horizontal and vertical lines. And

as a single unevenness in a thread is considered a fault in the fabric, so one false stroke is a fault in painting. The trees in a grove have all their textures, but all of them combine to present a uniform texture. The rocks on a hill have their own veins, but the rocks taken together have also a unified connecting vein. In making a painting, one should make a few strokes as the standard. So even when a hill is covered with the most diverse brush and trees, yet among them there is a consistent texture without disturbing lines. The branches of a tree, for instance, stretch in all directions and the leaves face up and down. Yet in a real forest, it may be seen that amidst the welter of twigs and boles, all tangled together, they really fall into a consistent pattern. Not a leaf or branch but is related to the rest. That is texture. That texture is the evidence of life. A pile of chopped firewood will not have that consistent texture because it is dead. The same is true of the veins of rocks. They grow by the life-force of nature and are now depicted in a painting. The life-force of nature and the nature and disposition of the brush and ink must combine and be shown in the art work. A good painting shows this consistency amidst the greatest confusion of objects. An artist must therefore have a general picture in his mind and paint it in one continuous impulse, with modulations of dark and light, so that the picture has a homogeneous effect. Some people today just pile up objects together and crowd them in without any plan or purpose. The result is a piece of paper full of soot marks, while the odd strokes stand alone like drifting duckweed, for behind the picture there is not the life-force which binds the different objects together. Even if one was a great artist like Ching Hao or Kuan T'ung, the beautiful tone and atmosphere desired would be lacking. So the artist should pay attention to the texture and the veins so that they all belong together, like a smooth fabric with all the lines in place, fine like silk or, even at the worst, like cotton. Only such is worthy of the name of painting.

Texture and veins are expressed by the four words, *t'iao, li, mo* and *lo. T'iao* is the leading thread; *li* is what holds the pattern in place; *mo* denotes the invisible veins and *lo* the visible arteries, sometimes spoken of as the 'main threads'. Such grain patterns not only exist in all things, but may be seen also in ink-work, with every movement. At the finest, the lines do not jar,

and at the most casual, the lines do not slip. Thus the lines are fine and distinct; one kind of stroke may be multiplied into ten thousand different strokes, yet they come back to the same basic stroke pattern.* As we say, you hit the head of a Chang-shan snake and its tail moves; strike its tail and its head moves. A general conception covers the entire picture; the strokes may be light or casual, yet the tone and spirit remain whole. That is because the conception dominates the ink-work. In a case like this, one need not worry about casual errors.

Sometimes this happens, as a line may be out of place, or the positions and sizes of things may be wrong, or perhaps the human figures are extremely well drawn yet the scenery is imperfect, or the bridges and houses are properly located but wrong in dimensions. All this does not detract from the picture as a whole. But if a mistake is made with regard to the brush-strokes, if at some point a stroke is made which does not belong, the picture is spoiled in spite of the fact that in regard to material presentation of forms it may be quite correct. I have often seen works of ancient artists containing many mistakes. Yet these do not spoil the picture as a whole because it is bound together by one unitary force of conception. The accidental errors therefore do not matter. I cannot think much of a painting which excels in extremely fine details but has a totally undistinguished conception. Such work may have its admirers among the stupid people, but will be laughed at by those who know.

There is one word which may describe the perfect state of mind of the artist at work: 'ease'. Ease suggests the easy mastery and absence of difficulties and of effort. It is like the pattern of ripples formed by a passing wind, or the carefree lifting of clouds from a recess in a high mountain. Beauty emerges where the brush touches the paper, and the paper moves in harmony with the beauty of the scene. One moves the other, responds to the other, and the beauty of nature is captured. When this happens, all considerations of texture, veins and arteries may be forgotten and yet they will be found to be all there. This comes from daily occupation with the heart and mind and with actual practice, and then when the moment of beauty comes, the artist can trace it on paper naturally and without too much thinking.

* As in personal signatures, which are of course highly individual.

(B) *Style and Taste*

7. *Get Back to Painting.* We may say that the principle of picturing forms among the six principles of the Chinese script is the origin of painting. Besides, the word *hua* for painting denotes a stroke *(hua)* of the brush. It catches the forms and shapes of things, which come from the wrist to the paper or silk and, with absolute naturalness, gets the form and spirit of things in a fluid movement. This is the original meaning of *hua.* To overdo the copying of ancient pictures and labour over the details would be mere delineation and depart far from the original meaning. Many people today just barely indicate the outlines of rocks and trunks and depend entirely on ink-spread to give the depths of shading. The result is a vague blotch of something, far from the original idea of painting. In respect of human figures, costumes, bridges, houses, boats and carriages, the effort is spent entirely on careful delineation, out of harmony with the general ink-work of the picture. The drawing of hill crests and woods may be excellent, yet the details of houses and figures do not fit in with the picture and therefore spoil it. Or some are preoccupied with getting a likeness, making many sharp lines and turns which do not harmonize with the general rhythm. This profuse ornamentation style is quite far removed from the true idea of painting.

Many of those who look at art do not really understand it. They decry the orthodox style, and praise those who follow the vogue of the day. The struggling artist who does not stand on his own is easily tempted to go with the crowd. One never can tell how it will all end. Some have a regular training under good masters and have a good grounding in technique, but because of special preferences, or for the sake of making a living, begin to submit but with a bad conscience, and end up by defending their tendencies. Thus they find themselves very popular and famous. But the moment they die, their work fades with them. They bathe in popular applause and bury their own high talent. It is as if these people worked their hearts out to please a public, only to be ignored by those who truly understand art. What difference then is there between an artist and a house painter or one who makes coloured festoons for a living? One must always keep in mind what a painting is and try not to

forget it and strive to perfect oneself, and in this way come near to the great masters.*

Chao Meng-fu says, 'Rocks recall the *fei-po* style (of dry, broken brush-strokes), and trees the *chou* script (firm, fairly even, curved lines). One should paint bamboos like writing the grass (rapid, cursive) script.' Again he says, 'When scholars paint, they should employ the principles of grass script and archaic style.' It is thus seen that calligraphy and painting are based on the same principles. Many writers today write a calligraphic style without any tradition, ignoring the styles of *chüan, li, ts'ao* and *chang-ts'ao*.† The tradition is all there, but even the so-called good calligraphers do not pay attention to it. It is therefore futile to point out that painting and calligraphy are based on the same principles.

Of course fashions change, and there are scholars in every age who respect the ancient tradition. But if all follow the popular vogue, abandoning the traditional principles, the ancient masterpieces will gradually be lost and their tradition forgotten. Where then will future scholars who want to do so be able to find the basis for recovering the past? I have for this reason tried to explain and expound what that tradition is, at the risk of boredom.

Here I am talking about the original meaning of painting. It may appear somewhat abstruse to others, but to me it is something very important. Why? Because true art work aims at archaic simplicity, but the modern age prefers novelty and excitement. The motivation of the two is diametrically opposed. If a scholar reads the classics of the sages every day and tries to follow their teachings, he may not be much more than a good

* The author was writing against both the quick-and-easy style of the decadent Chekiang School of his days, and against the spiritless art work of late academy painters, of which there were thousands. See the paragraph below where he bravely criticizes the popular Wang Hui, who was one generation before him. Wang Hui painted in the orthodox style, but he began to make uninspired, pretty pictures almost by formula. It is to be noted that the author gave recognition to the genius of T'ang Yin and Ch'iu Ying, who could hardly be classified as Southern School. He was not sectarian.

† *Chang-ts'ao* is the style of abbreviated characters initiated by Han Emperor Chang (A.D. 76–88). It is called *ts'ao* but is different from the usual rapid, curving *ts'ao* style.

scholar; but if one just follows what is popular today, one may end up as a worthless man.

We who live today should study the ancients and try to understand the original meaning of painting. Besides, to win the 'Oh! Oh!' of a hundred ignoramuses does not make up for the 'No! No!' of one who truly knows. We have the example of Wang Hui (*alias* 'Shih-ku', 'Ching-yen'). He was well educated, and brought up in the orthodox tradition. His work can be compared with that of ancient artists; at his best he can stand in the company of the Sung and Yüan masters. But the paintings he made for his ignorant admirers often bordered on pretty, showy brush-work. That is not what we would expect from a master. That is why so few of his works are good. He also ranked first in learning and artistic skill in the present dynasty, but his character-status *(p'in)* falls below that of Shih-t'ao. He is an example of one who tried to please the public and forgot the principles.

8. *Tone and Atmosphere.* Artists who do not understand the secret of brush-work and ink-work often go for striking monoliths, cataracts and very old trees to impress people by their bizarre forms, or merely to shock people by being outrageous. That is why modern art is sinking daily into vulgarity.

Now there is something strangely moving in a placid rush-covered autumn lake, or in distant hills beyond a woodland valley. Ancient poets often sang of this to express their moods and sentiments, and some recorded this in their paintings to express that detached, poetic mood. As a result, a few simple strokes are able to convey a flavour of which one never tires. Place such art work beside those intended to shock people, side by side on the wall, and you will see how inferior and even disgraceful the latter can be. Therefore I say that the straining for effect may not achieve such effect, but on the contrary give us some ghoulish forms.

Take, for instance, Tung Yüan. Certainly he was unique and incomparable. Certainly his work was impressive. But he took for his subject the ordinary, delicate and undulating hills of Kiang-nan that he loved. Or take Mi Fei, or Ni Tsan, or Fang Ts'ung-yi. What they painted were rather ordinary scenes, but

their work had a tone of quiet detachment, infused with a surprising sense of rhythm. They are the despair of later artists who tried to imitate them. That makes the way in which they succeeded in giving such effects all the more impressive. Many artists have painted since their time, each with his own variety of style, but only Tung Ch'i-ch'ang has succeeded. I have seen hundreds of Tung Ch'i-ch'ang's works, but have never found one single idiosyncratic brush-stroke in his work. It is just that there is something in his brush-work which impresses one, and whose beauty lasts for ever. Thus it is seen that the desire to shock people is a great error in artists. That which stands looking at again and again and quietly impresses one is truly outstanding work, to be attained by a fortunate combination of talent and hard work.

The ancients impress one by their brush-work, or by their special flavour, or by their style. These all come from the personality of the artist himself and cannot be learned. What can be learned are the basic rules. After the rules have been firmly learned, comes the artist's own development. The creative moment may come one fine morning, when the spirit moves the brush and ink, rich and vibrant. The moment comes as it comes and does not return. Such creative moments are the true marvel of the ages. When Wu Tao-tse was asked to paint hell, he got his inspiration from the sword display of General Pei. That was something fortuitous and could not be planned. Modern artists try to impress by concentrating on expressions and appearances, sometimes by making them unusual, or by distorting them. They seem to say, 'See? I dare!' This is only trying to be bizarre, and is not truly impressive. They are imitated by a host of shallow minds and drift farther and farther away from the true principles of art. They will be doing this kind of thing all their lives, unaware what the art of the ancients is all about. Is this not a pity?

Certainly, many things move us tremendously, all the things that surprise us and bring us to tears or laughter. Two men may be separated by generations or by geographic distances and feel attracted to each other. Or thunderstorms and rain may be invoked by certain [spiritist] influences, or there are times when the most stupid ones are moved. These are truly strange phenomena. Come to think of it, they all come from

human emotions. But these emotions are possessed by everybody, and they form our everyday life. What is so strange about these desires and feelings of human nature? Whosoever can penetrate into our common human nature can create something immortal. So what is most extraordinary comes from what *is* in everyday life. That is the way it is. To create effect apart from human nature ends always in bizarre or weird tricks. One can never be moved or touched at heart by such creations. Modern artists often think how they can be different from others, and distinguish themselves, and affect crazy ways to attract attention. If the work meets with popular approval, then they are proud of themselves, and are followed by ignorant imitators. Thus it goes on and on. They call themselves schools to mislead students. It is hardly worth a smile from the true connoisseurs, but how many connoisseurs are there? Alas! The true principles have been forgotten, and ghosts are walking in broad daylight.*

There is a difference between weakness and mellowness. This does not mean that weak clinging lines are 'weak' *(nen)*, and bold, aggressive strokes are necessarily 'mellow' *(lao)*. The difference is rather a difference in maturity. Beginners should try to observe how the ancients used their brush and ink, and how they disposed various parts in a composition. After a year, one has a certain kind of understanding, and after ten years at the craft, one has another, deeper kind of understanding. Maturity is not something which can be forced. Those who cannot wait will be forced to show massive strength, or wild fancies or take short-cuts. But looking back at such effects, one sees that such efforts are weak and immature. Therefore all rules of technique may be learned, but maturity necessarily depends upon practice. One should take some of the most lifelike and moving brush-work and try to copy it. One can make a good

* The above translation is quite literal. The author seems preoccupied with the idea of the decadence of art in his days. He was a classicist, aiming at the highest in art. His opposition to the 'bizarre' and 'shocking' art of his days is a recurrent theme in the rest of the essay. There were enough eccentrics in his days. Some of the eccentric art was just blotches of colour and ink. It was always possible to create a clownish effect and call it a new school, besides it was much easier to execute, not needing the usual disciplines. The great attraction of the later Chekiang School and the eighteenth-century eccentrics was that art had become easy.

imitation, but what is lacking will be the strength behind the graceful strokes. As one says, hard steel has been made soft to twine around one's fingers. This is something which is arrived at after years and years of practice. What seems soft in such brush-work is often mistaken by laymen; to those who understand art, it does not seem soft at all. A good art work may be considered ordinary by a superficial observer; it is better appreciated by one who knows something about art, and considered incomparable by those who are mature. What then appeared to be soft does not now appear to be soft, but reveals an inimitable mastery. So students must understand the witchery of the brush-strokes, for they come not only from the artist's hand, but overflow from his heart. One should neither be pleased by approval, nor worried by disapproval; his only concern should be whether he has achieved the flavour of the ancients. He should not follow the vogue of the day, nor go off into new-fangled styles, but collect his spirit by keeping quiet and watching for development when trying something. After a long apprenticeship, one has got hold of something. Then one paints naturally, like the silkworm spinning out his silk, or the banana leaves casting their natural shadows. The wind touches the water and ripples are formed; the stream comes out of the hills and possesses the force of a current. At this stage, the expression is always complete, even if the brush-strokes are not. The creation is half intentional and half unintentional, when the picture is at its very best. Ni Tsan has two lines which say, 'I wish to use the lines of insects and fish, mentioned in *Erh-ya*, and paint a picture of ancient trees in a giant forest.' By that he means the lines are lifelike and infinitely changing like those made by insects. This helps to explain what I have just said about apparently soft lines.

[A paragraph is omitted here, which somewhat repeats what has already been said.]

9. *Schools and Styles.* The climate differs with geography and so do people. In the south, the landscape is of the soft, peaceful, undulating type, and the men who absorb the best there are

kind and refined, while the unbalanced ones tend to become flippant and superficial. In the north, the topography is rugged, and the best of the men there are straightforward and honest, while the unbalanced ones are apt to be tough and rowdy. This is all very natural. In painting, this difference in temperament comes out as the Northern and Southern Schools. Neither school is necessarily better than the other, but inside each school there are the orthodox and the unbalanced types. Their merit as painters must depend necessarily upon their individual culture.

Furthermore, there are two classes which cannot be classified as Northern or Southern. Some northern people have the southern temperament and some of the south have the northern temperament. Some differences are due to training, such as children learning the style of their fathers, or the disciples learning that of the master.

It seems that the Southern School excels in an atmosphere of culture and ease and love for the normal and harmonious. So among the ancient works classified as *shen-p'in* (the best), one finds that the majority came from south of the Yangtse. The awe-inspiring and heroic qualities of the north are impressive, but when placed side by side with the work of the artist scholars and the [scholars'] string instruments and swords, they seem a little out of place.* Thus the best of the north can qualify only for the *neng-p'in* (second best). However, if a northern artist, in spite of his temperament, loves what is good and refined and is deeply influenced by his reading and the classical culture, he will show that refinement and culture in his heroic style. Such a one should not be condemned because of his being of the Northern School. For the art of painting begins with learning the basic disciplines, proceeds by correcting erratic tendencies and ends by a warm culture to smooth out the rough edges of spirit, enabling the artist to come near to the classical standard. Such matters as sweep of style depend upon the individual talent of the man. An artist of mediocre talent should improve himself by hard work. If he is allowed to go on in his lazy, boneless,

* Antique swords and the ancient string instrument *ch'in*, old inkstones, chess, and old editions are some of the things the scholars value in their studies by virtue of a long literary tradition. They give a particular 'flavour' to the place.

obscure, weak style, he will not be worth much, although he may be said to belong to the Southern School. As for those who, following the fashion of the times, mistake imbalance for force of personality, or the torrid and the bizarre for genius, these are no different from those hired to splash ink on house walls. What have they to do with the Northern School?*

Paintings of the early historical period consisted mostly of portrait work, depicting the doings and portraits of distinguished people. The theory of art of that period did not touch upon landscape. The division of Northern and Southern Schools began with Wang Wei (South) on the one hand, and Li Sze-hsün and his son (Northern) on the other. Carrying on the Wang (Southern) tradition were Tung Yüan, Chü-jan, the two Mi's (Sung period), Ni Tsan, Huang Kung-wang, and Wang Meng (Yüan period) and Tung Ch'i-ch'ang of the Ming Dynasty. Taking up the Li (Northern) tradition were Kuo Hsi, Ma Yüan, Liu Sung-nien, Chao Po-ch'ü, Li T'ang (all of Sung), and Tai Chin and Chou Ch'en of the Ming Dynasty. Unclassified, neither necessarily North nor South, were Ching Hao, Kuan T'ung, Li Ch'eng and Fan K'uan (all of the tenth century), Wu Chen of the Yüan Dynasty, and people like Shen Chou and Wen Cheng-ming – who were all worthy models for posterity. At the beginning of the present (Manchu) dynasty, there were many able artists, notably Wang Shih-min and Wang Chien. After them came Wang Hui (Shih-ku), Wang Yüan-ch'i, Huang Chun-ku, Chang Mo-ch'in and others, who all followed in the footsteps of Tung Ch'i-ch'ang and developed their own styles – all of the Southern School. Of the Northern School, there are few distinguished artists after Chou Ch'en and Ch'iu Ying. Even Wu Wei and Chang Lu must be regarded as deviates, much more so the lesser ones. For a hundred years† this school has gone from bad to worse. Why? Because the classicist principles have been replaced by new-fangled schools. Each created a different school of followers; for example, Wu Wei started the Yün-chien School, Lan Ying the Wu-lin (Hangchow) School, Shang-kuan Chou, Chin Ku-liang, Liu Pan-yüan and others

* The author's remarks here seem to be aimed at the uncontrolled ink and colour blotches of the decadent Chekiang School (so-called Northern).

† Ch'iu Ying and Chou Ch'en both belonged to the sixteenth century.

are called the Nanking School. There is such an abundance of schools.*

Chao Meng-fu named as the four great diseases of art: 'sweet-prettiness', 'erraticness', vulgarity and recklessness.† Alas! the end seems to have come. I hope there are serious artists who will rise up and make a clean sweep of all these popular tendencies and go back to the classicist tradition and the true principles of art. Then the end is not yet.

Although both work with the same artist materials, yet there is a vast difference which separates the cultured artist from the professionals. This is true not only of the difference between Wu Chen and Sheng Mou (Tse-chao).‡ For instance, T'ang Yin was a student of Chou Ch'en. His natural gift did not perhaps excel that of Chou, but his work stood so much higher. Moreover, T'ang Yin never claimed to be a member of the Southern School, but the least of his works are much more highly valued. The cause is to be found in the free, expansive spirit of the artist's work, and not in his character or training.

Whenever a new school started, it will be found that the founder was an exceptionally gifted man and that his talent and the character of his work deserved the reputation it created. The trouble is that when followers started to paint in his style, they missed the essential, peculiar beauty and copied only the faults, regarding them as justified. Thus there is a tendency for a new style to spread and be followed – and destroyed. As for those who held to the classicist tradition, it took all three factors of personality, goal, and scholarship to achieve immortality.

* The names of the schools come from the localities where the artists worked. The charge of starting schools among the Northern School is unfair. There were just as many 'schools' of the Southern denomination: Hua-ting, Sung-kiang, Wu, etc. That was the general condition of art in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. As a rule, the Northern School artists did not dilate upon art theories (Ma Yüan, Hsia Kwei, Tai Chin left no theories on their practice and Ch'iu Ying could not write), but the scholars of the Southern School, men like Tung Ch'i-ch'ang and Ch'en Chi-ju ('Mei-kung') wrote profusely.

† A mistake of the author. The saying is by Huang Kung-wang of the same period. See No. 17.

‡ Sheng was of the 'sweet' popular type. Wu Chen was poor and neglected. When Wu Chen's wife asked him why Sheng's works were in such demand and her husband's were not, he replied, 'Wait twenty years and see.'

There were some who were able to do this. But really the outstanding ones can be counted on the fingers of one hand. That is why a master in the old school is so much valued.

The times, however, have changed, and it is becoming more and more difficult even for those of the classicist school to attain that perfection of the gentle spirit. That of course is not the artist's fault. I have noticed that Tung Yüan (tenth century) was followed after several hundred years by Tung Ch'i-ch'ang (fifteenth century), and the latter was followed after a hundred years by Tung Tung-shan (Pang-ta). To have the same school represented by the same family of Tung is indeed remarkable. But again the times have changed, and it cannot be helped that each successor does not quite come up to the standard of his predecessors. However, talking of the true principles of painting, there is no one who could equal Tung-shan. What is true both of ancient and of modern times is that it is very rare and difficult to excel and be distinguished in the classicist school.

(C) *Foundations of Style*

10. *Avoid Vulgarity.* Both poetry and painting are scholars' occupations which help to express human moods and feelings. Therefore what can be a subject of poetry can also be a subject of painting, and what is vulgar in painting is like bad verse. It is important to avoid it.

There are five kinds of vulgarity: vulgarity of mind, of tone, of atmosphere, of brush-work, and of subject matter. Vulgarity of mental level refers to an artist who does not care to copy the old masters, nor is capable of originality, who paints in a routine, monotonous, spiritless fashion. By vulgarity of tone is meant an ink-wash picture which shows merely blotches of white and black, and where it is impossible to see any beauty in the brush-work. Vulgarity of atmosphere refers to a commonplace design, where the ink-work is clumsy and the picture is smothered by a dark atmosphere. When an artist is taught by vulgar teachers who do not understand the traditional principles of brush-work, his rapid strokes are like a sprung bow and his blunt strokes are like a brush. Having no talent, he likes to attract attention by shocking novelty, or make pointed projections to affect insanity. This type suffers from vulgarity

of lines. Again a painting may have for its subject not the events of history or other positive material, but only the luxuries of the rich and powerful and other unpoetic themes – this is vulgarity of subject matter. One must abandon these five kinds of vulgarity before attempting to be a cultured artist.

There are briefly five kinds of culture and refinement in art: the elevated, the classic, the exquisite, the genial, and the grand style *(kao-ya, tien-ya, chün-ya, ho-ya, and ta-ya)*. Elevated refinement means a style archaic, subdued and yet fresh, without a trace of artificiality. The classic type of elegance refers to good composition, good discipline and brush-work, and disciplined variations. Where one sees a picture of a valley with a few sparse trees, with distant hills and desolate sandbanks, half-seen hilltops and a clear lake in autumn, done without much ink and yet full of suggested beauty – this is the exquisite type. Where a picture shows a serene atmosphere, making one forget the love of violence – this is the genial type. Where an artist can combine the strength of the different schools and yet have a style of his own, without loss of natural dignity and refinement, this is the grand style.

Without getting rid of vulgar manners, there is no hope of achieving culture and refinement. One would not be able to liberate oneself from vulgar manners even by sitting before the work of the old masters like Tung Yüan, Chü-jan, Ni Tsan and Huang Kung-wang and copying them every day, for it is impossible to get away from vulgarity while one's mind is occupied with worldly values. To rid oneself of such preoccupations is the first step towards being cultured.

Hence those who have buried their innocence of mind should not paint.

Those who love luxury should not paint.

Those who fight for power and money should not paint.

Those who like to play up to the popular taste should not paint.

Those who have a low, vulgar mind should not paint.

All these types of people find themselves in the whirl of the world of fashion; they have nothing to do with culture and refinement.

An artist must have the passion of a hobbyist *(p'i)*. He is rid

of the opposite values of the world and is not dragged down by them.

An artist should feel infatuation *(ch'ih)*. He forgets the world and is not hurt by it.

An artist should be poor *(p'in)*. The world goes against his grain, and this leaves him free to attend to culture.

An artist should be abstruse *(yü)*. He keeps away from the world by choice and is able to perfect himself.

Those who wish to avoid vulgarity must read a great deal and understand philosophy. First it cleanses their breasts, then they lose themselves in it. They must strive to rid their hearts of all vulgar cares. If the slightest sign of superficial light-mindedness, or of heaviness of heart appears, they must suppress it vigorously. Genial refinement will then naturally be reflected in their art work.

Art work is all a matter of temperament *(hsing-ch'ing)*. What goes towards cultivating the temperament should be kept, what is harmful to it should be left out. In this way, one gradually gets away from vulgarity and comes nearer to culture. The cure may not be permanent or complete. For some people are constantly disturbed by things which make it impossible for them to attain the grand style. Students who aim at that high goal should as a matter of habit try to suppress their love of violence, of being clever and smart and of taking the short-cut. They should see how the ancients were able to reach that calm, mild and genial atmosphere and that sense of untrammelled freedom by abandoning all vain pursuits after glory and power, by turning against the common vogue and reaching out for a full understanding of Nature and human nature. They should steep themselves in such a culture, never forgetting it and never being impatient. Thus in time the vulgar manners will fall away by themselves and the cultured feeling will stay.

It may be objected, 'Painting is only an art. You are talking as if one was founding a philosophy of life. Isn't it difficult?' My answer is that all things in this world are covered by philosophy. Painting is an art, serving the ancients as a means of cleansing and refining the human spirit. Its purpose is thus like that of poetry. Therefore good artists can write poetry, and good poets can easily learn painting. It is like the art of alchemists who wanted to transform their bodies [into immortal

spirits]. They also made use of the material pill [of immortality] to keep check on their inner progress; as one says, when the external pill is formed, the internal pill is also completed. Those who understand this will naturally move in a spirit of cultural refinement above the workaday world. It isn't just a pastime. We have heard of the stories of ancient artists like Kuo Chung-shu, Huang Kung-wang and Fang Ts'ung-yi ascending to heaven. These may be mere stories without foundation, but we may be sure of the artists' spiritual elevation. When this elevated level is reached, the artist has passed beyond the discussion of avoiding vulgarity and cultivating refinement.

The men in the street, long lost in the counting of dollars and cents, are of course far removed from appreciation of culture. But there are those who are addicted to conventional concerns, and who wish to appear cultured. Such people should never learn painting. Huang Shan-ku (eleventh century) says well, 'Everything can be cured except innate vulgarity,' for this is deeply rooted in the character. From childhood, what a man sees and feels are the desires of the flesh. After entering school, he learns the clever ways to success and power, or the pleasures of the senses. After leaving school and entering adult life, again his thoughts are occupied with social activities and ways of getting along with people. Thus vulgarity of mind is firmly rooted in his character and impossible to eradicate. One day he thinks he wants to dabble in culture. He starts to daub, and says, 'This is axe-cut *ts'un*, that is spread-hemp *ts'un* (texture stroke).' And he begins to say, 'This is like Tung Yüan and Chü-jan, that is like Ni Tsan and Huang Kung-wang.' The poor artists are sunk in the business of making a living, and will be only too anxious to paint what is in fashion. They have no time to talk of the true principles of art. The well-to-do take a turn at pen and ink. They have no foundation, but begin to think highly of themselves. Those who know art keep quiet, but the flatterers begin to say how impressed they are by their work. These people are then caught in circumstances where they have no way of improving themselves, even though some may have hidden talent.

There are others – gifted scholars who take up painting as a pastime. They can create beautiful work, but without the proper training in basic disciplines, tend to be erratic. These

people are elegant, but in an erratic way. On the other hand, there are people who have studied under masters, gaining a rather limited view of art. They begin to talk as if they knew the whole and are prejudiced against all art work which is different from what they learned. They never disobey the rules, nor ever surpass them – always correct, and never better than average. Such people are correct, but not truly cultured. Between the two classes there is some hope for those who are elegant, but erratic, but those who are correct and smug are not so much removed from the vulgar, are they?

It comes then to this, that those who are gifted should seek freedom within the disciplines of art training, and supplement their natural talent with actual hard work. Thus they have the cultivated personality within, and understand the proper nature of things without. Their whimsical expressions will be based on a good technique, and their wanderings off the beaten track will conform to the nature of things. If the inner nature of things warrants it, one need not be bound by what the ancients did, nor by what the material eye sees. Where personal convictions are concerned, he is not worried by the disapproval of the world and realizes how rare and valuable it is to find someone who understands. He stands alone, above and beyond the material world. Such a man need not be concerned with how to be cultured, for he is automatically freed from vulgarity.

11. *Inner Worth.* All things that last have an inner worth and not merely a beautiful exterior. People always like to make good-looking things that please other people. In turn, the artist is pleased by the compliments he receives. This goes in a vicious circle, until the disease becomes incurable.

Serious art students should find out where the ancient artists had their footholds. They should study carefully the maturity of their brush-work, the build-up of ink-tone, the rhythm of tone and atmosphere, and again how the top and bottom are related, how the different sections are made clear, how the mists, hills and woods contrast with one another, and the contrast and mutual relations of mass and space, of sparseness and density, of light and shade. Again, they should observe the mutual postures of hills and crests, the struggle and the yielding among trees, the reflections of sandbanks and marshy grounds – and

how hamlets are positioned in the picture, how the houses face one another, as well as the leisurely attitude of the people in the picture, the arrangement of furniture, the course of rivers, the direction of springs, the routes of traffic and bridges, etc. They will perhaps feel that they themselves would probably not arrange everything so appropriately. Then they may start copying, not occupied with the thought that the old masters are inimitable, but finding out exactly wherein they would fail in comparison with the old masters. After a long time, the so-called 'foothold' is established.

To put it simply, it is merely a matter of reaching for the basic worth and forgetting the pretty appearance. For this external beauty of appearance is easily visible. People see it, but they cannot see beneath it and discover if the basic worth is lacking. The substance of real worth is underneath it all, and cannot be seen, except by artists. Thus the beauty of appearance may win the acclaim of the public for a time, but the inner worth will be appreciated by critics for ever.

It is clear that the student should never seek only external effects and neglect the inner substance. Besides, the showy effect gives rise to [intellectual] cleverness. This [intellectual] cleverness tends either towards minuteness of detail, when the picture loses in frankness of manner, or towards the bizarre and unusual, when the normal style will be sacrificed. Such pictures may be very beautiful to look at, enough to excite the ordinary public and shock the conventional, but actually belong to the category which Old Mi [Fei] speaks of as 'good for hanging in wine-shops and restaurants'. They have gone far away from painting and the occupation of scholars in expressing their moods and feelings.

The beauty of substance [on the other hand] is near the archaic, whose stuff is like gold and jade, and whose tone is like the marsh flowers. The lustre is inside which shines forth outside. It has a quality of eternal beauty. Such scraps of painting as are accidentally preserved are highly revered in the art galleries. This is the diametrical opposite of those who strive for garishness. Sun Kuo-t'ing says [of calligraphy], '[In one case], the man dies and his work lasts. [In the other], the man dies and his work is forgotten.' These are testimonies to the presence or absence of true inner worth.

By 'substance' *(chih)* I do not mean a picture packed with a lot of details. An artist who can cut out the superficial, meaningless frills in his work already understands something of the value of 'substance'. For sometimes an artist can make one stroke stand for several, or even for a dozen. He should try to capture the spirit and form of the subject and not labour after exact likeness at the sacrifice of rhythm and of brush-work. He should further pay attention to developing main life-movement and cohesion, so that everything is in place, which would be in the line of the great masters, and then give an expression of common solidity. That is what I mean by 'substance'. Here the danger lies in flatness and a deadpan straightness. Therefore those who wish to conserve substance in their work should first have a broad understanding coupled with fine observation and reinforced with learning and experience. Naturally they will exhibit an archaic beauty and a subtle rhythmic movement. This kind of art will have a beauty and a quality which stands looking at again and again. It represents the acme of artistic achievement. It is possible only when an artist returns to primitive simplicity after having studied all the schools and known all the variations.

By 'external beauty' *(hua)* is meant the beauty of attractive colours. It is a legitimate part of painting. What one must eschew is mere prettiness, loved by the vulgar, hated by the cultured, and tabooed by the principles of art.* Once the habit is formed it can never be lost. The student should realize its harm and make up his mind not to be contaminated. Where he goes from there will be so much gained. Just because there is always a temptation to create something attractive, it must be closely guarded against.

There used to be a time when nine-tenths of the scholars could distinguish between good and spurious work. Now these things are discarded like old hats. Some who like to be numbered among the cultured, do what they will in painting, and neither the critics nor the uneducated can exercise wise selection. All the tendencies are for what is superficially attractive. Even a little, insignificant piece is lauded to the skies, and the

* It may be noted that for a quiet, subdued and archaic effect, the best Chinese artists have always preferred a dull brown-red and pale blue-green.

artist is of course very satisfied with himself. Only when a true critic scorns it and a connoisseur pooh-poohs it can the artist come back to his senses. Is this not a deplorable state of affairs? But if an artist can see his mistake and is willing to change his direction, there is still hope for him. That depends upon his sense of perception.

Sun Kuo-t'ing (quoted above) says that there are three periods in the practice of calligraphy. I say this is true also of painting. At the beginning the student learns above all correctness, cutting out facile flightiness to conform to the basic rules, and preventing rich shading of ink from submerging the skeleton. In the second period, he should open up and develop his own tendencies and then seek a style to support his material. But he should base his work on ancient models and develop from there, and never do anything that is contrary to nature. In the last period, he returns from exuberance to simplicity. All that rich material at his command should be gathered up in an easy, simple style. That is when the picture will have a mild, but lasting flavour and a deceptively simple appearance. This is already the peak of artistic achievement.

[The following section is the best that has ever been written on copying masters. It makes the tradition of painting 'in the manner of' some past master intelligible.]

12. *Copying the Masters.* A student of painting must copy ancient works, just as a man learning to write must study good writing that has come down through the ages. He should put himself in a state of mind to feel as if he were doing the same painting himself. That is the way to learn with profit. Trying to make exact copies would be rather like plagiarism in writing. First he should copy one artist, then branch out to copy others and, what is more important, he should feel as if he were breathing through the work himself and should identify himself with what the artist was trying to say. Then he can find his own self ('Why I am I'). First he relies upon others, later he stands by himself. For instance, Chü-jan followed Tung Yüan, Mi Fei and his son also followed Tung, and Huang Kung-wang,

Wang Meng, Ni Tsan and Wu Chen all followed Tung. It was one and the same thing, yet there was not a sign of keeping to the rut, and each developed his school and 'found himself'. People nowadays often try to copy the exact contour and texture strokes, and yet the result is exactly on a par with what they paint independently. The reason is not to be sought in the contour and texture strokes themselves, but in their own general level of attainment.

If someone copies only one style or artist and never changes, after a while he gets into a rut, and forms an incurable habit. On the other hand, he should realize the danger of such limitation develop his own ideas to express his personality *(hsing-ling)*,* and open up his own individuality on the basis of the technique of the ancients. Thus he will not fall into a rut but will have an easy natural mastery. The same principles which were found in the ancient great artists will be found in him, and his work will last. That is the way to stand alone and create one's own style. After that, he may resemble some past master accidentally and call it 'in the manner of' so-and-so, yet it is his own style. I have seen famous artists do this when they 'copy the ancients'. That is the way of the true artist.

In the beginning, however, the student should copy every detail, so that it is almost like an exact reproduction, because only in this way can the student discover the ways and habits of the artist he is copying, where the ancient artist paid the greatest attention and where he apparently did not but really did. Of course after this stage of apprenticeship is over, he can go on his own.

Mi Fei refrained from making one stroke of his own in calligraphy until he reached the age of forty. His contemporaries said he was a 'collector of calligraphy' *(chi-shu)*. After the age of forty, he let himself go, and did fairly well. Examine Mi's calligraphy carefully. The influence of Chang Hsü, Chung Yu, Wang Hsi-chih, Wang Hsien-chih, Ou-yang Hsiu, Yü Shih-nan, Ch'u Shui-liang, etc., can all be found there. But one should not limit oneself to one particular artist. Does one expect another Chung Yu to be born after Chung Yu, or another

* *Hsing-ling* is the word used for the school of Yüan Chung-lang in literature, which emphasizes the development of the writer's personality above all rules of rhetoric.

Hsi-chih to be born after Hsi-chih? And if one did, he would be doing only 'slave calligraphy' *(nu-shu)*. Calligraphy and painting are the same here.

Why does one say that the moderns can never equal the ancients? The times are different, but the ancients and the moderns have the same heart, the same pair of hands, and the same laws of technique. Besides, the laws of technique have all been discovered by the ancients. People born today can follow the ancient laws of technique, and their heart and their hands will already have a superior, cultured flavour. There are no laws of technique apart from human nature and temperament, and these laws merely serve to express our own temperament. So although the times are different, the fact remains that technique is a means of expressing temperament and temperament is the basis of technique whether in ancient or modern times. Therefore one should not think of the ancients and forget one's own self in copying the ancients, because I have my own temperament. If my temperament agrees perfectly with that of the ancients, it is because the ancient technique is an expression of the temperament of the ancients. The same technique gives expression to the same temperament.

Therefore the important thing in copying the ancients is that I have my own temperament [and personality]. If I should forget myself to copy the ancients, I would be doing a disservice to both the ancients and myself.

What is most to be avoided in art is slavish copying. There are life movements, postures, developments, mannerisms of brush and ink which took shape and form by certain known rules in order to give a subtle expression. But there are also accidents, which it would be meaningless to insist on copying. The thing to emulate is their mastery of brush-work. It is both difficult and painful to copy every stroke. The painter's concern is how to make the art of the brush his own. If this is done, then what I express is only myself, a self which is akin to the ancients. I may paint one way today, another way tomorrow. Every picture is different, and every stroke is archaic. This is to find onself in copying the ancients.

The forgers of art do their utmost to copy ancient masterpieces and are able to deceive not only the innocent but even the connoisseurs. Once it is pointed out, however, it is easy to

see its artificiality without comparing it with the original. Those people spend their life-energy in youth and on reaching old age are not yet able to paint a stroke of their own. They are, as a matter of fact, quite talented. But while engaged in forgery their own concern is the exact reproduction of details without ever thinking why the original artist did it. Their object was to produce a superficial likeness, not to learn. And they learned nothing while facing the originals every day. After all there was the spirit of the past masters which was what made the paintings important. To occupy oneself with the superficial traces and miss the spirit in painting would be like seeking life and movement in a clay doll. Besides, the ancients did not know themselves why they did a particular thing, being moved by a momentary impulse. This is not something which can be copied. Therefore the slavish copiers will both miss the mystery of the ancient works and bury their own talent. All their lives they will never learn the true art of painting. The thing is to make use of the ancient techniques and models to express one's own personality. Thus one's work will have at least the mark of an individuality even if that may not be as good as that of the ancients.

13. *Self-Development.* I have spoken above of the importance of keeping in mind self-development while copying the ancient models. By that I mean developing one's imagination in accordance with the traditional principles of technique. Here I must emphasize that in developing one's own imagination one must never forget for a moment the ancient principles. Imagination always changes and varies, but the principles never change. It will then be possible in a moment of inspiration to go off on one's own, and yet never violate the fundamental principles. With every brush-stroke, one must have an idea what style of brush-work and what style of composition one wishes to use. Even with a totally dissimilar treatment, and on the most unrelated subject, the influence can always be felt and the relation is never lost. As they say, if one has 'eaten of the ancients and digested them', all new ideas may present themselves and one can paint easily in the ancient manner without correction. It will be possible to be accepted both now and hereafter.

However, the public taste has degenerated and there are not

many ancient works to serve as our models. The works of the North and South Dynasties (fifth and sixth centuries) and early Tang (seventh century) have disappeared. What remain are copies. But the antique manner of even these is inimitable. When you examine them carefully, you will find that the distinguishing feature is only that technically they conform absolutely. From Sung and Yüan down (eleventh to fourteenth centuries) the ideas were still largely like those of the ancients, but their technical excellence is even more surpassing. The further we come down to our own time, the more lax we find the discipline, until all the ancient concepts are gone. The reason is to be found in the fact that the [modern] painters derive less and less from the past and go off more and more on their own. They are not willing to work hard to learn the secrets of the ancients. Anxious to launch out on their own, they present weird and fantastic forms, and are proud of them. This goes on and on, the artists imitating one another and receiving the plaudits of the common folk. Their influence gradually spreads to one locality and becomes very popular. If one asks them, 'Where is the traditional technique?' the answer is, 'The ancients are ancients. I am myself.' Oh, that there could arise a serious scholar who would undertake to lead a lost cause, to clear away all this confusion and go back to the ancient models and give guidance to the artists of the future! . . .

Of course the plan and design of a composition come from ourselves, but unconsciously the paintings we have seen will suggest themselves. We may choose one for the general layout of composition. If an idea suggests itself for a certain section, that may be used too, though the style of the brush may be different. But care must be taken not to mix together the different styles of brush-work.

Every man has his own brush style. This means every man has his own habit. Once this habit is formed it becomes deadening for the brush-work. One must never rely on one brush style, but must look for a change, like the quest for change in one's basic structure through the magic pill. How can we do it? The method lies in seeing a great many schools and styles. One can close one's eyes and see all those different styles and how they derive from one another. The issues differ but originate from the same source. By a process of selection and elimination, one can

get at the very essence of what constituted beauty in the ancient art work. After long practice, one will begin to move freely in that field. This is the way to 'change the basic structure' . . .

If one examines one's own work at leisure, one will find that the pictures that the artist himself likes best are always those which agree with the techniques of a certain person in the past, but that those drawn with the express intention of copying a past master fail. The unintentional best do not come by accident; they are based on accumulated past experience and study. At the right moment, somehow it comes out right. This shows the importance of study. The serious-minded student should not do his work half-heartedly. Moreover, in regard to the old masters, he should copy not his known formulas, but his essential style and atmosphere. Thus one will gradually make progress, and approach, if not entirely achieve, the level of the old masters.

14. *Unconscious Rhythm.* All the phenomena in the universe are manifestations of some ideas. The superficial people see the minor ideas, and the more philosophical people see the major ideas, and make them into poetry, prose or painting. But whether put to one use or another, the inner nature of things, the *raison*, is the same. One cannot therefore be content to paint only the outward likeness of things. It is true, as is often said, that the idea of firmness is given by the tip of the brush in laying the basic structure in painting, the idea of vitality is given by the infinite changes of movement, the idea of lustre is given by the wet ink and the idea of depth is given by the bends and swirls. But these concern chiefly the minor ideas. For the universe is formed by the accumulation of spirit, and this spirit *(ling-ch'i)* shows itself in the forms and qualities of the mountains and streams, sometimes placid and broad, sometimes sharp and ragged, or again soaring skyward, exciting or massive and all-encompassing like a canopy. It is shown also in the infinitely and surprisingly varying beauty of movement and connected rhythms and postures, contrasts and reflections. It might be thought that it would be a stupendous task for the artist to capture and express all this. It is possible because man is the most spiritual of beings in the universe. If that spiritual light is not smothered or covered up, it will grow day by day

without limit. It should be possible therefore for the human spirit to express the spirit of the universe through the brush-work without difficulty.

For painting is only an art, yet it has the power of creation of the universe itself. This is something difficult for shallow minds to grasp. It must be understood that just as the spirit creates living things in the universe, so in man the same spirit creates pictures. Therefore the pictures painted by men are infinite even as the living things in the universe are infinite. Proceeding from the spirit, they partake of the whims of the spirit.

When the artist is ready to start a picture, his mind can plan only the general type of brush-work and composition. Yet as the splash of ink descends upon the paper, guided by the artist's spirit, it comes out in a myriad forms entirely beyond the original plan of the artist. It comes out one way today and another way tomorrow. If the artist insists on doing what he did yesterday, he cannot do it. Why? Because, when an artist *insists* on something, he is already obstructing the free flow of the spirit. Wang Hsi-chih wrote the best calligraphy in his life when he wrote the *Lan-t'ing-hsü*. He tried several dozen times to do it again, but could not match his first effort.* Because later he was *insisting*. The less gifted and stubborn artist will do a so-so painting today, another so-so painting tomorrow, and through all his life do nothing better. For he is doing a stereotype of work, without the moving of the spirit and that is an artisan's job. A scholar painting starts out with nothing in his mind, but when his spirit begins to move the brush, forms of objects present themselves on paper, for it is the circumstance of a moment, totally unexpected, and hard to explain in words. In a brief moment the depths and heights appear, all well expressed by the brush-work, and the disposition of different objects is perfect, too, better even than the actual scenery. This is because the grand idea [of the universe] has been thereby expressed.

* This is the most famous piece of calligraphy in all Chinese history. The best rubbing was done at Ting-wu in the eleventh century, some six centuries later. This stone inscription, based on the first copy, now contains all the corrections and insertions of the first copy, which Wang could not better himself. Of course, much is already lost even in the Ting-wu rubbing.

Depths, heights and surfaces are the forms of the mountain, but the grand idea does not lie in the depths, heights and surfaces. The curves, dots, dashes and ink-washes are methods of painting, but the idea does not lie in the curves, dots, dashes and ink-washes. This so-called grand idea is what the artist sees in the overall scene of a place. It is not a matter of dots and dashes, or heights and depths, but the idea suggested by them. This power to see it must come from the daily training through reading and reflection, so that when the brush moves it is already far from the ordinary world that we see, but something bigger than all. Therefore two paintings may be exactly alike in composition and technique and contain the same things in the picture, yet one is raw and shallow and the other has a beauty and a flavour which come out the better the longer you look at it. Therefore preoccupation not only with realistic details, but even with the schools and styles and derivations, without knowledge of the grand spirit of the ancients, will prevent one from reaching the great heights of achievement. . . .

Artists who are used to doing tawdry work can hardly understand what is meant by a higher standard, and in time forget entirely this higher standard of distinction on an elevated level. Therefore 'when the common scholar hears the truth, he laughs at it' (as Laotse says). The really good artists seem to have disappeared and it is difficult for serious students to get proper guidance. They easily mistake a competent artist and, irrespective of standards, admire him greatly, submerging thus whatever individual capacity he has in him. After a while they get so used to such inferior standards that they cannot really appreciate good work when they see it. This comes from their limitation in experience. It happens in all fields of human endeavour. One should look for the quality of work, and learn to distinguish clearly what is tawdry and common from what is work of superior quality. This is the first important point for the beginner to learn.

15. *Set the Goal High.* The standing of an artist varies with a man's character. In past history, there were only a few people among thousands in each generation who were really outstanding. That imortality came from the outstanding quality of their works. There are four ways to reach the high goal: (1) Keep

your mind pure, rid of all earthly thoughts; (2) Read well to gain true understanding of the world of inner laws; (3) Avoid early popularity in order to reach a higher goal; (4) Befriend the men of culture in order to keep to the classic forms. With these four precautions, one cannot help reaching a high level in art.

Let me explain. Art is just an expression of the person's mind. The mind may be cluttered with worldly considerations, which make impossible a state of detachment, or it may be filled with pride, which makes impossible concentration and calm. Kuo Chung-shu and Huang Kung-wang are reputed to have become immortals. We do not know if this is true, but they certainly stood out in mind and character far above their generation. Their works are now prized like jade. They could not have reached such a position just by hard work or by talent, but because their character was great. Therefore I say, Keep your mind pure, rid of all earthly thoughts.

The nature of the world is infinite, especially as seen through paintings, where only by subtle observation can we grasp what it is all about. Now this subtle penetration is not for shallow, uncultured minds. Unless helped with reading, one's mind remains crude and superficial, without the depth of the thinkers, or common, without the flavour of the poets. Paintings by scholars have always been valued because the artists were steeped in book learning, and their tastes were cultivated and of the highest order. Therefore I say, Read well to gain true understanding of the world of inner laws.

Chao Meng-fu says, 'A child hardly weaned starts to paint in the morning and in the evening boasts of his skill.' Really such a person still smells of his mother's milk. It takes generally ten years for an artist to gain familiarity with painting materials, another ten years to complete the general training and yet another ten to be able to develop his own style. The open-minded student is too busily concerned with corrections of his shortcomings to be thinking of sudden popularity. The reward will come to him inevitably with maturity of his craft. Therefore I say, Avoid early popularity in order to reach a higher goal.

The ancient kings had collections of paintings on the left and historical records on the right. Thus one should surround oneself

with paintings and books. Therefore a good artist draws strength from his own spirit, but still must depend upon the company of cultured friends [or a cultural environment]. So when he sucks his brush before a window or starts to paint on a fine morning, he moves in that poetic mood and spirit. The work thus has a lasting flavour and a firm foundation. Such an environment makes for true refinement of spirit and for the highest goal of art. He will spurn the work of the academy artists of Southern Sung and regard the realistic or over-embellished (rococo) type on a par with house painters and makers of silk festoons. Therefore I say, Befriend the men of culture in order to keep to the classical forms.

I do not see how a man who goes by these four criteria can fail to enter into the secret of the ancients' art. A student should make a wise choice, hold firmly to it, not be distracted by outside appearances, or by short-cuts, and when maturity comes he will have a certain grandeur of his own. He cannot lower his standards to please the public and the public will gladly pay him homage.

The most difficult point in this matter of learning art seems to be to find the happy medium. There are brilliant students who are already talking of personality and tone and atmosphere without going through the basic disciplines. They are very pleased with their work, but [without the foundation] soon give up and accomplish nothing. There are others who never set their goal very high and are content with catching the likeness of things and are not interested in the principles of brush-work. They may do some creditable pieces and are perfectly satisfied when someone asks for them. They are totally uninterested in seeing the old masters and reading about the theory of art, or perhaps have never heard about it in their whole lives. This latter type goes not far enough, as the other type goes too far and too fast. In learning anything, the important thing is the goal. It is like target practice in archery. There must be a target. At first one may hit it once in ten tries but after a time one can hit it every time. What one should do is to set the goal for only the highest performance, and then proceed slowly and methodically, without relaxation but also without hasty impatience. If the goal is not set, one may just as well not learn it at all, and be free. Those who go too fast have talent, and those who go not

fast enough are wasting their time. How rarely does one find the happy medium!

The first-class artists are sometimes arrogant or entirely too romantic. It makes the students despair of ever learning their art. But their art is really worth seeing; the more you understand, the more you see its suggestive power and its charm of simplicity. The path they have trodden to reach such austere heights is hardly what the modern students would undertake. The reason is twofold. Some people lack the perspicacity to appreciate such art and their work falls into the common rut. They perhaps admire such work but despair of such effort. So they dare not. Others are perfectly satisfied with mediocrity and are comfortable in it, having already buried the sparks of inspiration and being occupied with worldly considerations. When they see paintings of really antique grandeur, they are rather shocked by them. These people will not learn. Those who dare not may change their minds once their minds are opened by a good master, and there is hope for them. As for the smug type, they are perfectly contented with their state. They will scoff at the true principles. Even if you take some examples from the Sung and Yüan periods to explain to them their subtleties, they will run away, for their minds are out of touch with these things. Such people are incurable. A serious student should avoid these two pitfalls, being alert to correct them and search without cease for the best and the highest. Progress will be made gradually. This is only being fair to themselves.

The great trouble of modern people is that they are ready to show a painting or give it or sell it when there is a request for it. The ancients showed their status and character through their art work, and people later acquired an admiration for their status and character through seeing their paintings, almost like seeing the persons themselves. Is this something one can afford to be careless about? The brush and ink are merely instruments for revealing the spirit of the man. If the goal is not set high, the work of the mind will be shallow. It will please the children, but will not be acceptable in the hall of fame. Such is the harm that is done to one's art.

16. *Mellowness.* Now all the details of a painting – the wooded hills, mists, light and shadow, springs and streams, footpaths,

fences, ferries and bridges – all these have been planned and everything is in its place. Here, if the work is done hastily, it will not only be superficial in tone, but also reveal a spirit of violence. The rhythm and composition may be fine, but what will be lacking is a flavour of quiet contentment and serenity. At this point, one must stop to think and consider, and observe calmly and carefully, so that the distribution of light and shadows, of masses and space, may be perfect in every respect. How does one give the impression of depth and solidity, of vitality? How can one make it antique in mood and aspect? How make it rich in suggestive power? How to have a thread of cohesion running through the whole picture? How should the top be related to the bottom? These are all questions which have to be considered and not disposed of quickly. For the same man paints different styles in different moments; a quiet style when he is quiet and calm, and a violent style when he is in a violent mood. The inspiration and excitement may be recorded there, but there will be a suggestion of haste. The ancient works that have come down to us always reveal, after the first surprise at their delightful mobility, a substratum of depth and mellowness of spirit. Their painters have gone through I do not know how many stages of training and reserve and restraint to reach this point. Modern artists, talented though they may be and pleased with themselves, often end up by being casual – a disease which is incurable.

What I call mellowness refers to the building up of reserve strength. Restraint makes for depth, and reserve makes for strength. Then the man's spirit is revealed whole. The hasty can grow to be conservative through restraint and reserve, and violent spirits can conceal and conserve their light in the same way. Conserving the spirit makes for lasting energy, and restraint and reserve make for solidity. When a man achieves lasting energy and solid strength, he need not worry about catching up with the ancient great ones.

There is the mellowing that takes a whole lifetime, and that of a moment. A man in his youth picks up knowledge and data right and left. He is anxious to know everything, learn everything, as if he could never have enough and learn fast enough. When he has all this material, rich and well chosen, he must then calm down and suppress his energy a little, in order to

attain that mellowness of personality seen in the ancients, and have an impressive personality of his own. This is a pot that must simmer slowly. This is the mellowing that takes a lifetime.

There is also the momentary impulse, the sudden, irresistible inspiration, which must be seized and recorded before it disappears. At the moment when a rough sketch has been made and the objects have taken form, one must take a pause, to consider the possible flaws and weed out the jarring and irrelevant elements. One must mentally fuse it and melt it into something fine and deep and of lasting flavour. This is the mellowing of a moment. In short, a painting starts with a rapid sketch in the beginning and finishes with a merged, well-integrated product. When it is done quickly where it should be speedily done, and slowly where it should be slow, it will surely be worth looking at.

[The *Mo-lin Chin Hua (Biographies of Modern Painters)* has a paragraph about the author which outlines his noble character:

'Shen Chieh-chou of Wu-hsing (South Kiangsu), a scholar. Name: Tsung-ch'ien. In his youth he travelled in Kiangsu and Chekiang with his calligraphy and art work, and enjoyed a high reputation. He settled down at Yen-shan Bay of Wu-t'ing, and called himself "Old Vegetable-Grower of Yen-ch'i". He lived in a simple house, surrounded by water and bamboos, furnished with wooden couches and paper windows and lined with stacks of books and drawings. It looked a fitting home for a recluse scholar. His calligraphy was modelled on that of the two Wangs, and he painted both landscapes and portraits. His great goal was to reach the level of the ancients and his work showed a very firm foundation. His work was highly valued by the illustrious ones of the day. He wrote *Chieh-chou Hsüeh Hua P'ien* in four volumes, upholding the orthodox tradition and denouncing the vulgarizations of his day. The work is a good guide for artists. His two great masterpieces are: "Spring Morning in the Han Palace" (human figures) and "A Thousand Bamboos in Mist and Rain". These were highly valued by connoisseurs, graded as first class *(Shen-p'in)*. The latter work is said to be in

the home of Wen-ch'uan Chi-t'ien (in Japan). His brush-work is both delicate and lustrous, of the level of Huang Kung-wang and Tung Yüan. In his old age, he painted only with highly concentrated ink.']

Table of Dynasties

LIST OF MAIN LINE DYNASTIES

Emperor Yao (T'ang) 2357–2256 B.C.
Emperor Shun (Yu) 2255–2206 B.C.

Three Dynasties (or *Pre-Ch'in*, embracing Hsia, Shang and Chou) 2205–247 B.C.
- Hsia 2205–1767 B.C.
- Shang (Yin) 1766–1121 B.C.
- Chou 1122–247 B.C.
  - 'Warring Kingdoms' 481–247 B.C.

Ch'in 246–207 B.C.
Han 206 B.C.–A.D. 219
- Western Han 206 B.C.–A.D. 24
- Eastern Han A.D. 25–219

'Three Kingdoms' A.D. 220–264 (Wei, Shu and Wu; *see* chart b on page 214)
Six Dynasties (embracing Wei, Chin, Sung, Ch'i, Liang and Ch'en) 220–588
- Wei 220–264
- Chin 265–419
  - Western Chin 265–316
  - Eastern Chin 317–419
- 'North and South Dynasties' 386–588 (North 386–581; *see* chart c on page 214)
- South, or Main Line Dynasty:
  - Sung (Liu-Sung) 420–478
  - Ch'i (Nanch'i) 479–501
  - Liang 502–556
  - Ch'en 557–588

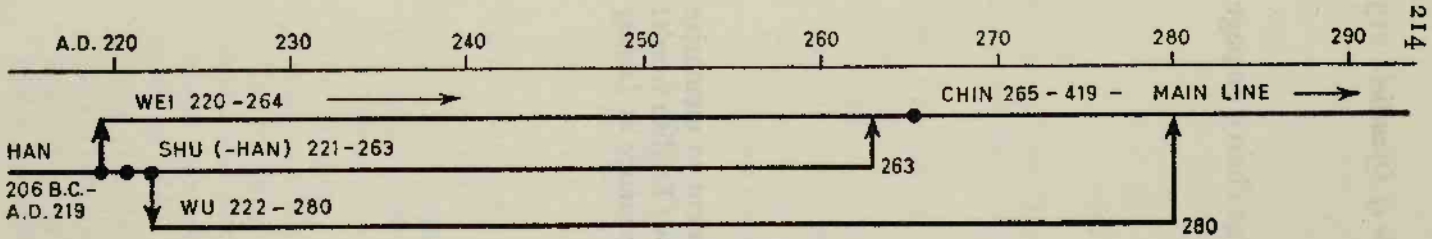
Sui 589–617
Tang (T'ang) 618–906

Five Dynasties (and Ten Kingdoms) 907–959 (*see* chart d on page 215)
- Hou Liang 907–922
- Hou Tang 923–935
- Hou Chin 936–946
- Hou Han 947–950
- Hou Chou 951–959

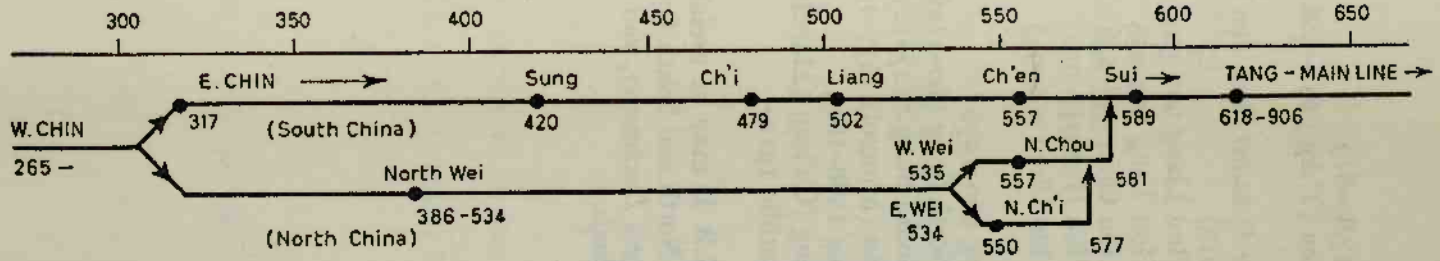
Sung 960–1276
- North Sung 960–1126
- South Sung 1127–1276

Yüan (Mongol) 1277–1367
Ming 1368–1643
Ching (Ch'ing) (Manchu) 1644–1911
Republic 1912–

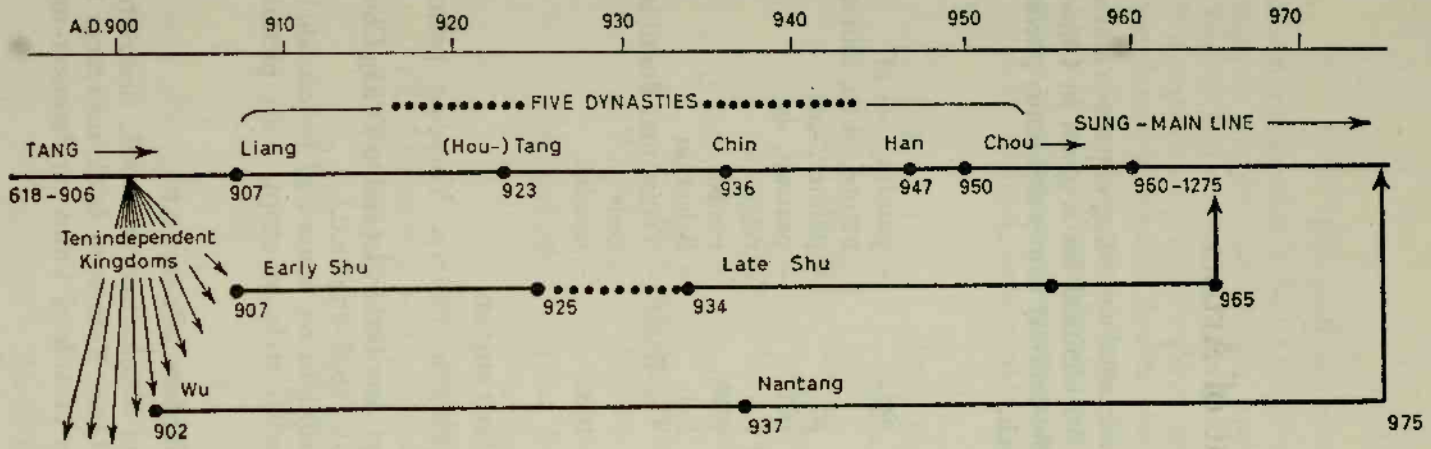
N.B. It may be useful for the Western student to memorize the North and South Dynasties sequence as two English words: *Sungehi Liachenswey,* and the Five Dynasties sequence as *Liatang Jinhanjo.*



THE THREE KINGDOMS



NORTH AND SOUTH DYNASTIES



FIVE DYNASTIES

List of Artists

The artists listed here are arranged according to periods and are numbered for reference. An identical list is given in Chinese characters, including all the courtesy names and many poetical names necessary in research.

Abbreviations

Acad.	– Academy artist	nat.	– painting, -er of nature, birds, animals
b.	– born		
budd.	– buddhas	p.	– painter, -ing
c.	– *circa*	por.	– portrait, -ist
call.	– calligrapher, -ist	r.	– reign
d.	– died	real.	– realist
exp.	– expressionist	Sel.	– Selection
fig.	– human figures	Tao-Budd.	– Taoist and Buddhist gods
fl.	– flourished		
imp.	– impressionist	ton.	– tonalist
land.	– landscape, -ist		

Early artefacts

1–2 millennia B.C. Polychrome pottery. Yingshao pottery probably 2500 B.C.

Invention of pictorial script, ascribed by legend to Ts'ang Chieh under Emperor Huang-ti (2698–2598 B.C.).

C. 1400 B.C. Earliest inscriptions on bones and tortoise-shells, embodying earliest known style of script, with pictorial elements formalized.

Warring Kingdoms (481–247 B.C.)

Earliest extant painting of human figures on silk, discovered in Changsha around 1954. Numerous book references to portraits and paintings of animal forms on banners and ceremonial robes.

Han (206 B.C.–A.D. 219)

Numerous references in books to portraits of ancient rulers and sages in temples and palaces, such as Lingkuang Hall and Yünt'ai Terrace. Art galleries and art centres under Emperor Wu (140–87 B.C.) and Emperor Ming (A.D. 58–75).

Stone friezes of human figures and chariots, particularly at Hsiao-t'ang-shan mausoleum, Shantung, certainly before A.D. 129, and at Wu-shih-ts'e, mostly in A.D. 147–149.

Genuine Han frescoes of human figures and plants and animals in tombs in Hopei, discovered in 1954. Good use of brush and ink.

1. fl. 33 B.C. Mao Yen-shou, court painter of ladies

100 2. A.D. 78–139 Chang Heng, poet, rationalist, astronomer

3. A.D. 133–192 Ts'ai Yung, gifted por., call. and musician

Three Kingdoms (220–264)

200 4. fl. 181–234 Chu-ko Liang, general, painter of albums

5. fl. 238–280 Ts'ao Pu-hsing, by tradition, first famous por.

Chin (265–419)

East Chin from 317–419; barbarian occupation of North; division of North and South; culture flourished in South.

6. fl. 280 Wei Hsieh, por., pupil of 5; first class

7. 223–262 Chi K'ang, recluse, Taoist; p. lions, elephants

300 8. fl. 300–337 Wang Yi, animals and fig.; teacher of 9, 10

9. r. 323–325 Chin Ming-ti, emperor; historical and rel. subjects

10. 321–379 Wang Hsi-chih, greatest call., por.

11. 344–388 Wang Hsien-chih, son of 10

12. *c.* 345–411 Ku K'ai-chih, great land. and fig.; sophisticated

13. 334–416 Hui-yüan, first Budd. landscape painter

14. 385–433 Hsieh Ling-yün, 6 Bodhisattvas; family of poets

North and South Dynasties (386–588)

South (420–588)	North (386–581)	
Liu-Sung 420–478	N. Wei 386–534	
Nanch'i 479–501		
Liang 502–556	W. Wei 535–556	E. Wei 534–549
Ch'en 557–588	N. Chou 557–581	N. Ch'i 550–577

N. Wei: Buddhist influence; great stone sculptures at Yünkang; famous for calligraphy inscribed in stone.
S. Dynasties; art and art theory flourished.

Liu-Sung (420–478) – so-called from House of Liu, to be distinguished from North Sung or South Sung.

400 15. fl. 420 Ku Chün-chih, first to paint sparrows, cicadas

16. 375–443 Tsung Ping, land.; fig.; freer, stronger brush-work

17. fl. 440 Wang Wei, land., fig.; *not* the great Wang Wei, 40

18. fl. 465–472 Lu T'an-wei, consummate p.; many followers; rivalled 12

Nanch'i (479–501) – to be distinguished from N. Ch'i

500 19. fl. 490 Hsieh Ho, enunciator of 'Six Laws'; real. por.

Liang (502–556)

20. *ca.* 480–549 Chang Seng-yu, versatile p.; first influenced by Hindu p.

21. r. 552–554 Liang Yüan-ti, emperor; fig.; passionate collector

Ch'en (557–588)

22. fl. 557–588 — Yao Tsui, able author of *Hsü Hua-p'in Lu*

Sui (589–617)

23. fl. 550–600 — Chan Tse-ch'ien, 'father of Tang p.'; buildings, horses, country
24. fl. 500–600 — Tung Po-jen, superior camp scenes; rival of 23
25. fl. 550–600 — Cheng Fa-shih, superior por. and fig.
26. fl. 550–600 — Sun Shang-tse, ghosts; specialized wavy lines
27. fl. 550–600 — Yang Ch'i-tan, court scenes
28. — — Anon, over 100 caves of p. at Tunhuang

Tang (618–906)

Eighth century was the great period of poetry, also creative in art, rich and varied.

600
29. fl. *c.* 650 — Yen Li-teh, with brother, 30, p. histor. subjects
30. d. 673 — Yen Li-pen, great portraitist of important people

700
31. r. 713–755 — Tang Ming-huang, ink bamboo; great poets, p., during his reign
32. 651–716 — Li Sze-hsün, gold line and blue-green style
33. fl. *c.* 670–730 — Li Chao-tao, son of 32, land., nat., equally illustrious
34. *c.* 690–760 — Wu Tao-tse, probably greatest por. and land, p.; rapid strokes
35. fl. *c.* 730 — Yang T'ing-kuang, Budd. anecdotes, land.; rivalled 34
36. *c.* 713–755 — Han Kan, famous for horses, 'flesh without bones'

	37. *c.* 713–755	Ts'ao Pa, horses; celebrated by poet Tu Fu
	38. fl. 713–742	Chang Hsüan, plants, birds, ladies, court scenes
	39. fl. *c.* 750	Lu Ling-chia, Budd. anecdotes; p. Wu Tao-tse style
	40. 699–759	Wang Wei, poet; 'founder' of Southern School
	41. fl. 730	Lu Hung-yi, recluse; substantially same style as 40
	42. 723–787	Han Huang, teacher of 48; rural scenes
	43. *c.* 750	Wei Yen, horses in broad, twisted strokes
	44. *c.* 750	Cheng Ch'ien, land, fish, water scenes
	45. fl. 750	Chang Tsao, important; rapid, rhythmic, inspired brush-work
	46. *c.* 760	Chang Chih-ho, largely water scenes; was fisherman
	47. fl. 785–804	Wang Tsai, pines and rocks
	48. fl. 780–800	Tai Sung, buffaloes; fine details; rural scenes
	49. 721–781	Yang Yen, pines, rocks, land.; cabinet minister
	50. *c.* 780–804	Chou Fang, distinguished por., especially ladies
800	51. *c.* 800	Pien Lüan, unprecedented birds, insects, woods
	52. *c.* 800	Wang Hsia, ink-wash; influence on Mi Fei
	53. fl. 847	Chang Yen-yüan, author, important art history, Sel. 9
	54. fl. 760	Chu Ching-hsüan, author, Tang art history

Five Dynasties (907–959)

Part of important tenth century; original landscapists of permanent influence; consummate nature painters.

(Main Line)	(Among Independent Kingdoms)
Later Liang 907–922	Early Shu 907–925
Later Tang 923–935	Late Shu 934–965 in Szechuan
Later Chin 936–946	
Later Han 947–950	Nantang 937–975 at Nanking
Later Chou 951–959 Capital in Honan	

Liang (907–922)

900 55. d. 922 — Chao Yen, emperor's son-in-law; high standards

56. fl. 920 — Ching Hao, initiator land. style; great influence

57. *c.* 920 — Kuan T'ung, student of 56; mountains and ravines

Nantang (937–975) – distinguished from Tang and Later Tang.

58. 937–978 — Li Yü (Hou-chu), ruler; great poet, call.; p. powerful strokes

59. *c.* 961–975 — Chou Wen-chü, excellent p. ladies; wavy lines

60. *c.* 961–975 — Hsü Hsi, first-class nat. p., insects, flowers

Tung Yüan and Chü-jan, *see under North Sung*

Early Shu (907–925)

61. *c.* 920 — Kuan-hsiu, monk; p. Hindu lohans

62. *c.* 920 — Teng Ch'ang-yu, nature painter, flowers, fruits

Late Shu (934–965)

63. *c.* 910–965 — Huang Ch'üan, court p.; all plants, animals

64. 933–993 — Huang Chü-ts'ai, son of 63; birds, flowers, bamboo

North Sung (960–1126)

Beginning of *Hua-yuan* (Academy of Art); similar academies existed in Tang *(Han-lin-yuan)* and during Five Dynasties.

	65. 907–960	Tung Yüan, important p. Kiang-nan hills; soft tone
	66. *c.* 975	Chü-jan, student of 65; land.; heavy ink-work
	67. *c.* 916–967	Li Ch'eng, original land.; level perspective
	68. *c.* 950–1026	Fan K'uan, important land.; crowded, close view
1000	69. 967–1044	Yen Wen-kuei, Acad.; realistic scenes
	70. fl. *c.* 1004	Wang Huan, Tao-Budd. por.; Wu Tao-tse style
	71. fl. 1006	Huang Hsiu-fu, author of book on Szechuan School
	72. *c.* 1008–1053	Kao K'o-ming, Acad.; nat. p., all genres
	73. *c.* 1016–1055	Hsü Tao-ning, Li Ch'eng style; level perspective
	74. XI cent.	Chao Ch'ang, nature painter, flowers
	75. d. *c.* 1065	Yi Yüan-chi, all insects, wild animals
	76. *c.* 1020–1090	Kuo Hsi, Acad.; high perspective, involutions
	77. *c.* 1070	Hui-ts'ung, monk; water-birds, miniatures
	78. X cent.	Kuo Chung-shu, blue-green style; 'ruler-lined' buildings
	79. 1036–1101	Su Tung-p'o, poet; founder *literati* school
	80. d. 1079	Wen T'ung, bamboo; cousin of 79

81. fl. 1080 — Wang Shen, friend of 79; lovely land., bamboo

82. 1040–1106 — Li Kung-lin, versatile, many styles, incl. thin lines

83. 1051–1107 — Mi Fei, original ink-wash hilltops

1100 84. 1082–1165 — Mi Yu-jen, son of Mi Fei, 83; developed style

85. fl. 1070–1080 — Kuo Jo-hsü, author of important art history, Sel. 12

86. 1068–1080 — Ts'ui Po, Acad.; nat. p., especially water-birds

87. fl. 1080 — Liu Tao-ch'un, excellent author two art books

88. fl. 1080–1100 — Chao Ling-jang, lake views, miniatures

89. 1082–1138 — Hui-tsung, emperor-patron; himself great p. birds

90. *c.* 1120 — —, *Hsüan-ho Hua-p'u*, catalogue of No. 89 collections

91. *c.* 1121 — Han Chuo, mediocre author of book on art

South Sung (1127–1276)

More than in any other period, the Academy artists did better than those outside the Academy and counted great artists among them.

The four great masters of this period are:

Li T'ang, No. 93 — Hsia Kwei, No. 98

Ma Yüan, No. 97 — Liu Sung-nien, No. 104

92. r. 1127–1161 — Kao-tsung, emperor-patron; himself first-class p.

93. *c.* 1050–1130 — Li T'ang, Acad.; land., buffaloes, rocky surfaces

94. fl. 1125–1162 — Su Han-ch'en, children; Tao-Budd. por.

95. fl. 1131–1197 — Li Ti, Acad.; fine land.; Mi style

96. 1120–1192 Chao Po-ch'ü, realistic land.; fine details

97. *c.* 1150–1225 Ma Yüan, creator own style; tonalist, sublimation

98. *c.* 1190–1230 Hsia Kwei, same style as 97; a great master

99. *c.* 1246 Ma Lin, son of 97; continued same style

100. *c.* 1130–1180 Ma Ho-chih, land.; simple, flowing lines, level persp.

101. *c.* 1163–1189 Yen Ts'e-p'ing, Acad., after Li T'ang, 93

102. 1168–1243 Li Sung, realist, details

103. fl. 1170 Teng Ch'un, author of book on Art Academy

1200 104. *c.* 1180–1220 Liu Sung-nien, land.; fine lines and shading

105. *c.* 1181–1239 Mu-ch'i, extraordinary Zen p.; economy, harmony

106. fl. 1250 Liang K'ai, same style as 105 and contemporary

107. 1199–1295 Chao Meng-chien, fine lines, flowers, narcissus

108. fl. 1240 Mou Yi, fine lines, flowers, birds, bamboo

Kin (independent kingdom in north)

109. XII cent. Wang T'ing-yün, land., forests; great style

110. *c.* 1195 Wu Yüan-chih, land.; very fine style

Yüan (1277–1367)

The 'Four Masters' of the Yüan period are:

Huang Kung-wang, No. 116 Wang Meng, No. 120
Wu Chen, No. 118 Ni Tsan, No. 119

Chao Meng-fu, No. 114, although recognized as a great master, was not included for a special reason. As a clan member of the defeated Sung Royal House, he served the new Mongol Dynasty.

	111. *c.* 1235–1301	Ch'ien Hsüan, real. flowers, insects
	112. 1245–1320	Li K'an, bamboo; excellent book on bamboo p.
	113. 1248–1310	Kao K'o-kung, misty land.; Mi influence
	114. 1254–1322	Chao Meng-fu, master; tranquil scenes on plains
	115. 1264–1319	Madame Kuan, wife of 114; land., bamboo
	116. 1269–1354	Huang Kung-wang, land.; object of Ming imitators
1300	117. 1272–1355	Ts'ao Chih-po, impressionist; level perspective
	118. 1280–1354	Wu Chen, master, imp.; washes and strokes
	119. 1301–1374	Ni Tsan, recluse; typical romantic (*yi*) tranquillity
	120. *c.* 1308–1385	Wang Meng, nephew of 114; crowded, restless land.
	121. *c.* 1313–*c.* 1362	Sheng Mou, land., sweet and pretty
	122. *c.* 1350	Fang Ts'ung-yi, Taoist; romantic style, land.
	123. fl. 1328	K'o Chiu-sze, bamboo
	124. fl. 1328	T'ang Hou, fairly good book on art
	125. fl. 1360	Wang Yi, author, book on p. portraits
	126. 1287–1366	Wang Mien, plum flowers, etc.; eccentric, romantic

Ming (1368–1643)

Atmosphere in Academy stifled originality; great ones left. The 'Four Great Masters' of early Ming, generally fifteenth century, are:

Shen Chou, No. 130 — T'ang Yin, No. 133
Wen Cheng-ming, No. 134 — Ch'iu Ying, No. 140

After 1600, the school of Tung Ch'i-ch'ang, No. 145, set a dead pattern of Huang Kung-wang for servile imitators.

1400	127.	1361–1415	Wang Fu, poet, famous for bamboo
	128.	*c.* 1390–1460	Tai Chin, founder of Chekiang School
	129.	fl. 1413–1428	Pien Wen-chin, Acad.; birds, flowers in colour
	130.	1427–1509	Shen Chou, master of brush-work; head of Wu School
	131.	1459–1508	Wu Wei, Acad.; follower-up of 128 in Chekiang School
	132.	fl. 1500–1535	Chou Ch'en, realist; teacher of 133 and 140
	133.	1470–1523	T'ang Yin, best elements of N. and S. Schools
	134.	1470–1559	Wen Cheng-ming, prodigious influence; whole family of p.
	135.	1483–1544	Ch'en Ch'un, expr., flowers, birds, land.; Mi style
	136.	fl. 1488–1505	Lü Chi, Acad.; exp., flowers birds
1500	137.	1495–1576	Lu Chih, nat. p., realistic flowers
	138	*c.* 1500	Lin Liang, Acad.; exp., birds, flowers
	139.	1501–1583	Wen Chia, son of 134; Ni Tsan style
	140.	*c.* 1500–1550	Ch'iu Ying, artistic genius; por. of ladies

	141. 1521–1593	Hsü Wei, poet; highly exp. bamboo
	142. 1526–1593	Wang Shih-cheng, poet; first edited collection art essays
	143. 1535–1612	Li K'ai-hsien, sole defender of Chekiang School
	144. 1532–1610	Sun K'o-hung, land., flowers with contour lines
	145. 1555–1636	Tung Ch'i-ch'ang, master copyist of Tung Yüan
	146. 1558–1639	Ch'en Chi-ju, fine style land., Wu School; friend of 145
	147. 1565–1635	Li Jih-hua, friend of 145; art essayist
	148. 1567–*c.* 1601	Mo Shih-lung, author book on art, associated with 145
	149. fl. 1570	Ku Ning-yüan, high-class artist; Sel. 19
	150. fl. 1521–1593	Kao Lien, amateur art lover; Sel. 18
1600	151. 1582–1680	Wang Shih-min, consummate copyist Southern School
	152. 1585–1664	Lan Ying, last representative Chekiang School
	153. 1597–1645	Yang Wen-ts'ung, artist, famous for 'Peach-Blossom Fan'
	154. 1598–1677	Wang Chien, genius absorbed by tradition
	155. 1599–1652	Ch'en Hung-shou, sophisticated por.; great influence
	156. XVII cent.	Tseng Ching, unusual portraitist
	157. fl. 1607	Yüan Hung-tao, leader of Kung-an School, individualist
	158. *c.* 1607	Hsieh Chao-cheh, author, *Five Jars of Pot-pourri*, Sel. 21

159. fl. 1620 — T'ang Chih-ch'i, author, serviceable book on art

160. fl. 1640 — Chang Feng, exp.; free strokes

161. *c.* 1650 — Shen Hao, author, good book on painting

(Nos. 162–168 lived on into the following Ching period, but in deference to their unchanging loyalty to the Ming House, are generally regarded as Ming escapees from the Manchu régime, living mostly as monks or recluses.)

162. 1602–1683 — Fu Shan, Taoist cave-dweller; exp. land., bamboo

163. *c.* 1603–1663 — Hung-jen, monk; land. after Ni Tsan, 119

164. *c.* 1610–*c.* 1693 — K'un-ts'an, monk; unusual, tight land.

165. 1616–1689 — Kung Hsien, wet-ink technique

166. 1623–1697 — Mei Ch'ing, old pines, mountain-tops

167. 1625–*c.* 1705 — Pata Shanjen, extraordinary expressionist

168. 1641–*c.* 1717 — Shih-t'ao, completely original genius

Ching (1644–1911)

The 'Four Wangs' who all tried to copy Tung Yüan and Huang Kung-wang are:

Wang Shih-min, No. 151 — Wang Hui, No. 171
Wang Chien, No. 154 — Wang Yüan-ch'i, No. 173

The dates of the three important reigns are:

Shun-chih (1644–1661) — Chien-lung (1736–1796)
Kang-hsi (1662–1722)

169. r. 1644–1661 — Shun-chih, emperor, became monk; p. with fingers

170. 1632–1718 — Wu Li, Christian, but uninfluenced style

171. 1632–*c.* 1717 Wang Hui, very popular, often uninspired

172. 1633–1690 Yün Shou-p'ing, good p. poetic style, land., flowers

173. 1642–1715 Wang Yüan-ch'i, dominant p. in Kang-hsi reign

174. fl. 1652 Ta Ch'ung-kuang, author, long poem on art

175. *c.* 1660–*c.* 1749 T'ang Tai, distinguished p.; pupil of 173

176. 1662–1734 Kao Ch'i-pei, exp.; finger p.

177. fl. 1679 Wang Kai, author, *Mustard Seed Garden*

1700 178. 1681–*c.* 1759 Shen Ch'üan, influence in Japan

179. 1682–1765 Hua Yen, first-class fig., land., nature

180. 1686–1772 Tsou Yi-kwei, nat. p. from life, without contour

181. 1687–1764 Chin Nung, exp. and eccentric

182. 1688–*c.* 1768 Lang Shih-ning, Giuseppe Castiglione at Chien-lung's court

183. 1693–1765 Cheng Hsieh, poet, bamboo, exp.

184. 1699–1769 Tung Pang-ta, ranked one of 3 Tungs with 65 and 145

185. *c.* 1711–*c.* 1756 Li Shan, exp. nat. p. from life

186. fl. 1720 Ch'iao Ping-tseng, p. Western influence

187. fl. 1720 Leng Mei, p. Western influence

188. 1733–1799 Lo P'ing, eccentric exp., student of 181

189. r. 1736–1796 Chien-lung, great patron-emperor

190. 1736–1799 Fang Hsün, author of good book on art

191. 1746–1803 Hsi Kang, simple lines, tranquil atmosphere

	192. 1763–1844	Ch'ien Tu, all genres, Wu School
	193. fl. 1750	Chang Keng, serious author on art
	194. fl. 1781	Shen Tsung-ch'ien, author, Sel. 23; considered first class
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	196. 1801–1860	Tai Hsi, imp., style of 172
	197. 1802–1850	Fei Tan-hsü, popular portraitist
	198. 1825–1884	Ch'in Tsu-yung, land.
	199. 1835–1902	Wu Ta-chen, poetic land., flowers
1900	200. 1844–1927	Wu Chün-ch'ing, specialist flowers, rocks, infl. on 203
	201. 1852–1924	Lin Shu, transl. Western novels; land. after 196
	202. fl. 1850	Chiang Chi, author book on portrait p.
	203. 1863–1957	Ch'i Pai-shih, great p. exp., flowers, insects
	204. 1875–1923	Ch'en Heng-ko, modern classicist
	205. 1887–1964	P'u-ju, exp., land.
	206. 1895–1953	Hsü Pei-hung, horses
	207. fl. 1898	Sung-nien, good treatise on art
	208. 1899–	Chang Ta-ch'ien, versatile; expert on Shih-t'ao

Republic 1912–

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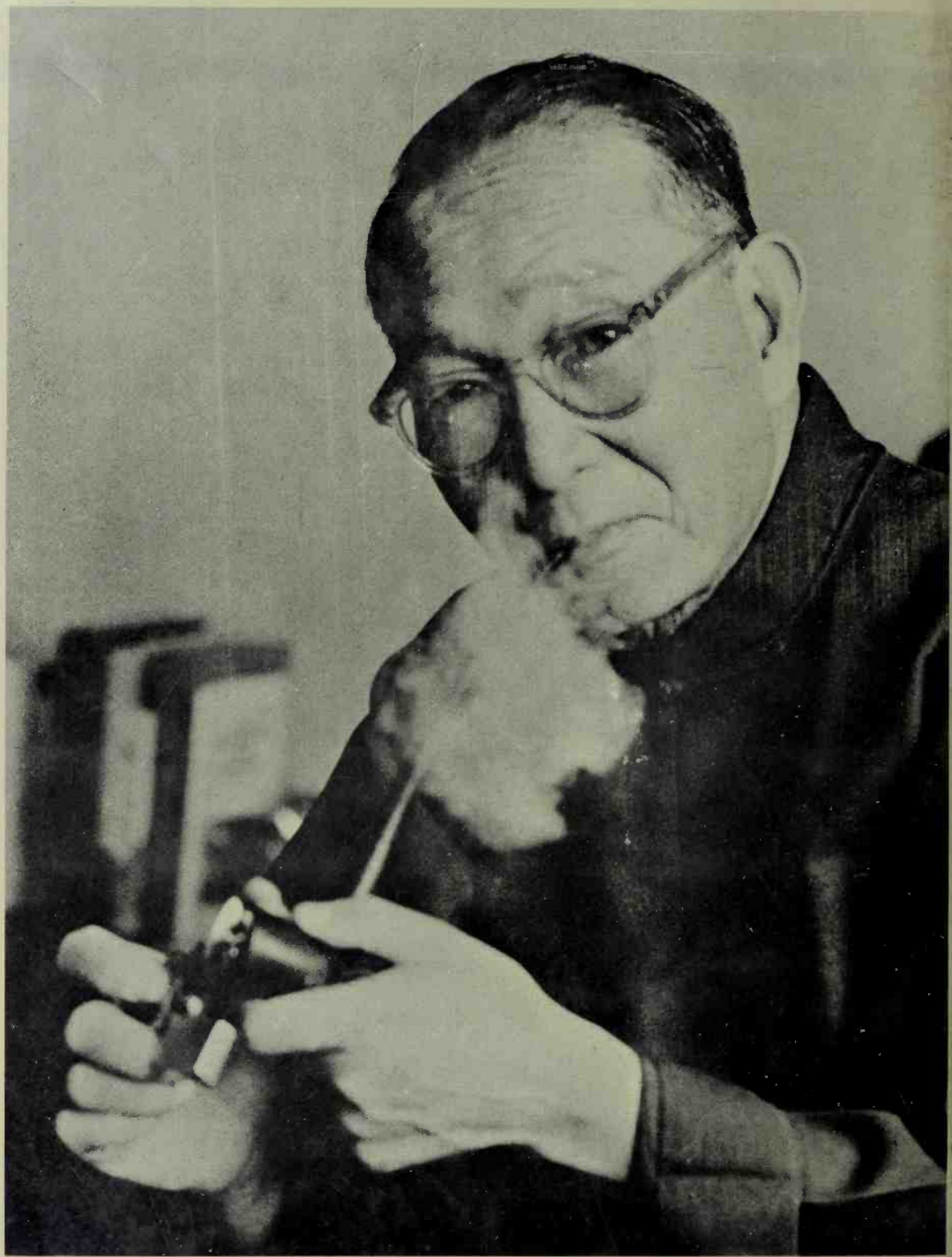

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