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Confronting Dynastic Change: Painting after Mongol Reunification of North and South China  
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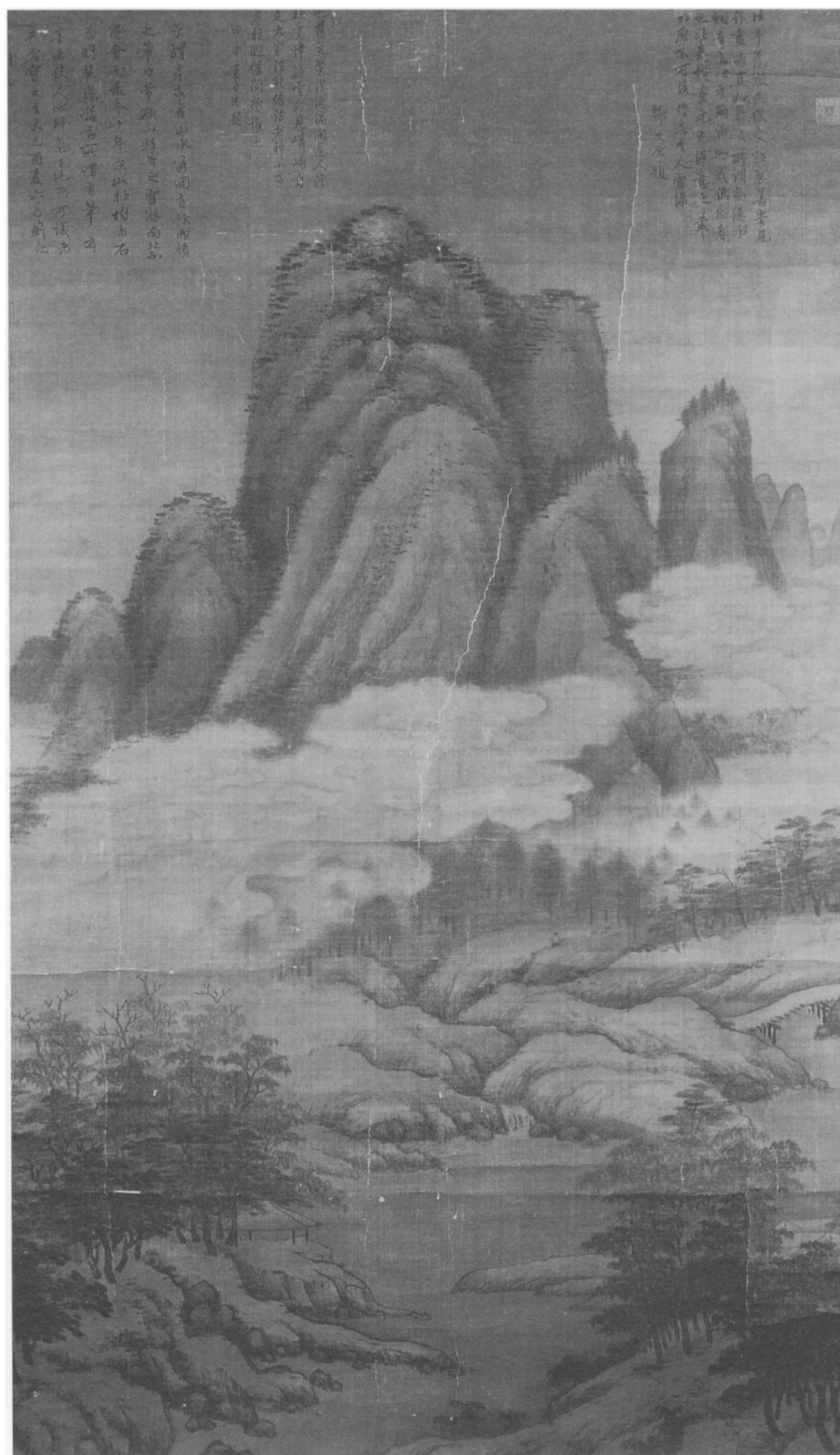


Figure 12. Gao Kegong (1248–1310), *Clouds Encircling Elegant Peaks*, inscription dated 1309. Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, 182.3 x 106.7 cm. Collection of the National Palace Museum, Taiwan, Republic of China.

# Confronting dynastic change

## *Painting after Mongol reunification of North and South China*

PETER CHARLES STURMAN

The Mongol conquest of South China in 1276 reunited a country that had been divided geographically and politically for 150 years and inaugurated an era of tense acculturation. Former subjects of the Song dynasty (960–1279) grappled with their outsider status under foreign rulership, while representatives of the new Yuan dynasty (1279–1368) serving in the south, including Mongols, Central Asians, and Chinese from the north, adapted to a cultural climate that possessed a specific and longstanding historical character. This period, which more or less coincided with the first 20 to 30 years of Mongol rule, is also notable for an extraordinary diversity of subject matter and style in painting. To date, this diversity has largely been accepted at face value—a consequence of the forced mingling of cultures—with little, if any, dialogue perceived as taking place between compartmentalized styles and genres. But dialogues were taking place, in reaction to the difficult circumstances that arose from the change of dynasties, and paintings that appear to occupy distinct spheres occasionally reflect shared concerns.

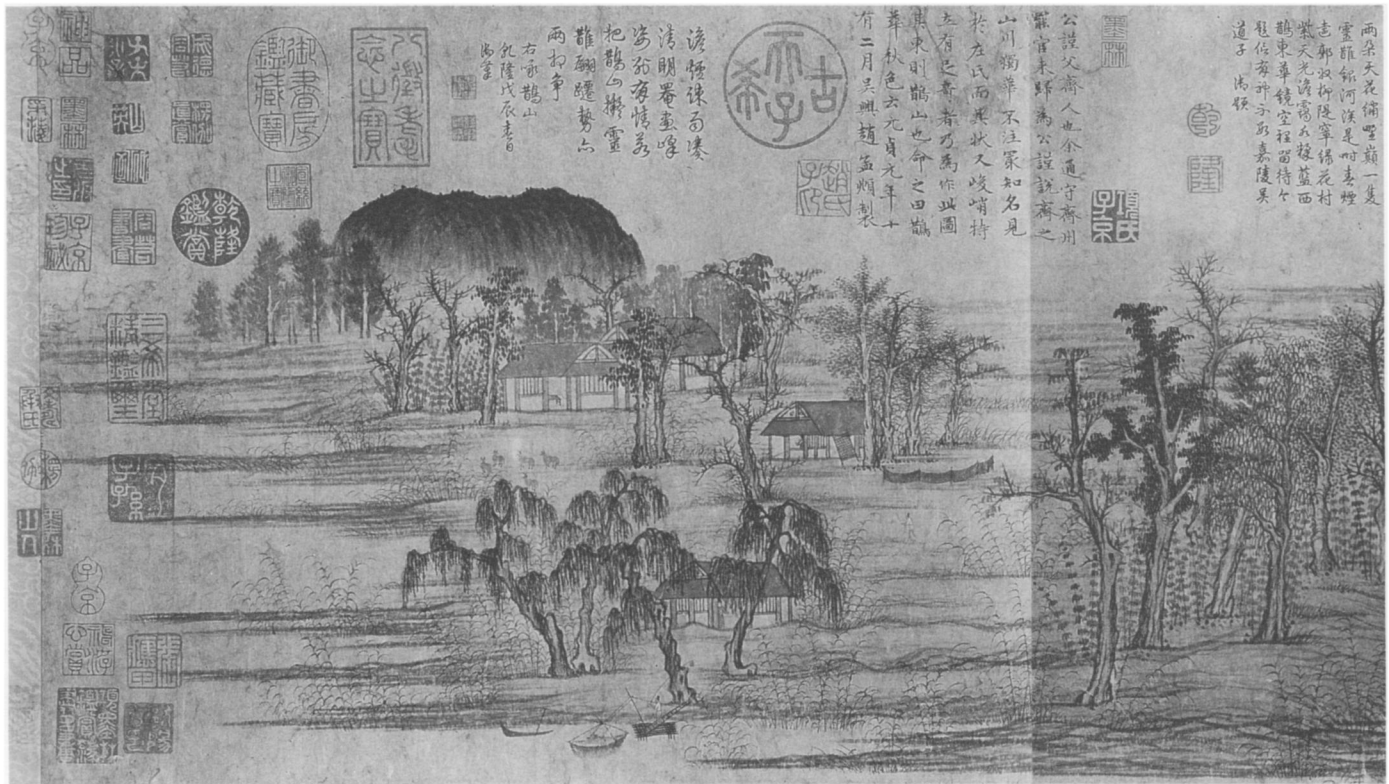
This essay provides a closer look at a number of paintings of early Yuan date that, although well known, have not been viewed collectively as individual voices mutually engaged in the issues of their day. The art of two southerners, Qian Xuan (circa 1235–before 1307) and Gong Kai (1222–1307), will be the primary focus. Landscape paintings by Zhao Mengfu (1254–1322), another southerner, and the Central Asian Gao Kegong (1248–1310), will act as bookends to the main argument, providing an introduction and conclusion. In the background, connecting these individuals, is the writer and connoisseur Zhou Mi (1232–1298). Zhou Mi's active social engagement in and around Hangzhou with most of the prominent cultural figures of the day, including these four artists, helped foster the north–south intercultural dialogue that shaped painting's development in the early Yuan.

### North and South

More than thirty years have passed since Chu-ting Li's landmark study of Zhao Mengfu's *Autumn Colors on the Qiao and Hua Mountains* inaugurated the detailed study of the resurgence of literati painting that took place at the onset of the Yuan dynasty (fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> The monograph emphasized Zhao Mengfu's application of "antique concepts" (*guyi*) to his painting, building upon colophon writers' observations of how Zhao was inspired by the famous Tang dynasty poet and painter Wang Wei (699–759). Vital to Zhao's innovations was his trip north, responding to the Yuan court's invitation to serve the new dynasty, and his consequent exposure to collections of earlier paintings by Tang (618–907), Five Dynasties–period (907–979), and Northern Song (960–1127) artists. Zhao was also exposed to the distinct traditions of painting practiced in the north during the century and a half of geographical and political division that followed the fall of the Northern

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1. Chu-ting Li, *The Autumn Colors on the Ch'iao and Hua Mountains: A Landscape by Chao Meng-fu* (Ascona: Artibus Asiae Publishers, 1965). I am much indebted to Professor Li's many studies on Zhao Mengfu, as well as those of a number of his students, who have followed Dr. Li's path through the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Among the studies that I have consulted are Arthur Musen Kao, "The Life and Art of Li K'an" (Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas, 1979); Curtis Hansma Brizendine, "Cloudy Mountains: Kao K'o-kung (1248–1310) and the Mi Tradition" (Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas, 1980); Ankeney Weitz, "Collecting and Connoisseurship in Early Yuan China: Zhou Mi's *Yunyan guoyan lu*" (Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas, 1994). A special note of debt is owed to Marilyn Wong-Gleysteen, formerly publishing under the name Marilyn Wong Fu, for her work on Xianyu Shu (1257?–1302) and the north–south cultural interchange in the early Yuan. Her published work includes "The Impact of the Re-unification: Northern Elements in the Life and Art of Hsien-yü Shu (1257?–1302) and Their Relation to Early Yuan Literati Culture," in *China Under Mongol Rule*, ed. John D. Langlois, Jr. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp. 371–433, and "Hsien-yü Shu's Calligraphy and his 'Admonitions' Scroll of 1299" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1983). See also her "Calligraphy and Painting: Some Sung and Post-Sung Parallels in North and South—A Reassessment of the Chiang-nan Tradition," in *Words and Images*, ed. Alfreda Murck and Wen C. Fong (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1991), pp. 141–172.



Song. The literati styles of such Northern Song amateurs as Su Shi (1037–1101), Wen Tong (1019–1079), and Mi Fu (1057–1107/08) were of particular importance. These styles were perpetuated by painters of the Jin dynasty (1125–1234) and in many ways were considered antithetical to the academic style of professional painting practiced at the court during the Southern Song (1127–1279).<sup>2</sup> Consciousness of a schism that was geographical, ideological, and cultural was a prominent factor behind Zhao Mengfu's transformation of painting at the end of the thirteenth century.

*Autumn Colors* well deserves its accorded status as representative of Zhao's art, personal style, aesthetic

ideas, and historical position, to paraphrase the objects of Chu-ting Li's attention 30 years ago. But perhaps we can go a step further and affirm its importance beyond the painter's personal achievements, for Zhao Mengfu's landscape comments directly and uniquely on the cultural schism between north and south, Song and Yuan, and thus serves as a monument of the period.

The painting is dedicated to Gongjin, or Zhou Mi, the prominent cultural figure of the late Southern Song and an established "loyalist" during the early years of Mongol rule.<sup>3</sup> In Zhao Mengfu's inscription on the painting, dated 1295, we learn that Zhou Mi's family hailed from Qi, in the north (corresponding to the

2. Susan Bush, "'Clearing After Snow in the Min Mountains' and Chin Landscape Painting," *Oriental Art*, n.s., 11, no. 3 (1965):163–172; id., "Literati Culture Under the Chin," *Oriental Art*, n.s., 15, no. 2 (1969):103–112.

3. For information on Zhou Mi, see Jennifer W. Jay, *A Change in Dynasties: Loyalism in Thirteenth Century China* (Bellingham: Western Washington Press, 1991), esp. pp. 195–242; Weitz (see note 1). Chu-ting Li's scholarship in his monograph on *Autumn Colors* (see note 1) is another important source of information on Zhou Mi.



Figure 1. Zhao Mengfu (1254–1322), *Autumn Colors on the Qiao and Hua Mountains*, dated 1296. Handscroll (right to left), ink and color on paper, 28.4 x 93.2 cm. Collection of the National Palace Museum, Taiwan, Republic of China.

north of modern day Shandong Province). Zhao, having served as *tongshou* (Vice-Governor) of Qizhou (central Shandong) from 1292–1295, became familiar with the scenery of Zhou Mi's ancestral homeland, which Zhou Mi, as a southerner, never had the opportunity to know. Zhao singles out Mount Huafuzhu (Hua for short), which is mentioned in the ancient *Zuo Commentary* to the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, as the most famous mountain in the region. "Lofty and precipitous, it rises isolated in a most unusual manner," Zhao Mengfu writes. He ends his inscription thus: "To the east, that is Mount Qiao. I establish the painting's title 'Autumn Colors on the Qiao and Hua Mountains.'"

*Autumn Colors on the Qiao and Hua Mountains* was later owned by the Qing dynasty emperor Qianlong (r. 1735–1795), and it attracted his attention like few other paintings in the vast imperial collection. He titled it in large running script in a frontispiece attached to the

scroll, added four inscriptions directly on the painting's surface and another five among the earlier colophons that follow. Qianlong's inscriptions, totaling almost 900 characters (copious even by the standards of his fast-moving brush), reveal that much of the emperor's appreciation of the painting stemmed from his opportunity to do what Zhou Mi could not: visit the Qizhou region. Passing through the area on an imperial inspection tour, Qianlong suddenly thought of the painting and ordered that it be sent by courier in order to compare it with the region's genuine landscape. Doing so, he discovered an interesting problem in Zhao Mengfu's relative placement of the two mountains. Qianlong does not directly chastise Zhao Mengfu in the first of his many inscriptions, but he subtly corrects the earlier painter's mistaken geography with the phrase "Eastern Hua(fuzhu), Western Qiao." In later inscriptions he elaborates on Zhao's error, which he refers to as "a slip of the brush."

Did Zhao Mengfu remember incorrectly? Suzuki Kei, unsettled by Zhao Mengfu's apparent error, as well as by a number of elements in the painting that he considers problematic (ranging from spatial inconsistencies in the depiction of the landscape of Qizhou to Zhao's seals), rejects the "brush slip" theory and suggests that *Autumn Colors on the Qiao and Hua Mountains* should be treated with prudent skepticism. He suggests the possibility that the painting is heavily retouched, possibly a later recension, and that Zhao Mengfu's inscription may have been rewritten by a follower of Wen Zhengming (1470–1559), expert in the writing of small, standard calligraphy, but ignorant of Shandong geography.<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, while Chu-tsing Li also recognizes the inconsistencies of space and scale in *Autumn Colors*, for him, the painting's intimacy and unity, combined with the presumption of describing an actual place, earns the landscape the label "realistic."

These two perceptions at first seem at odds with one another, but it is not difficult to see their individual merits. Without necessarily accepting Suzuki Kei's suspicions concerning the integrity of *Autumn Colors*, one can agree with his general assessment that the painting is decidedly unclassical by Song standards. At the same time, others have also been struck by the painting's overall unity, achieved largely through Zhao's careful exploration of a continuous groundplane.<sup>5</sup> The painting presents a world in which various perspectives coexist, and no one would have appreciated this more than the person for whom Zhao did the painting—Zhou Mi.

As Chu-tsing Li noted, one of Zhou Mi's sobriquets was the "Hermit of Mount Huafuzhu." This is the mountain Zhao Mengfu singles out in his inscription, describing it as lofty and precipitous, isolated and unusual. It is also the first major element encountered

as the painting opens at the right. With its nearly symmetrical treatment, fronted by trees and peopled waterways, Mount Huafuzhu establishes a primary formal unit for the painting; we should recognize it as a metaphor for Zhou Mi, lofty and precipitous.<sup>6</sup> Painted only 20 years after the collapse of the Song in 1276, Zhao Mengfu was well aware of the sensitivity of his subject—the northern landscape—and equally sensitive to the issue of direction. Facing the north implied acquiescence, if not allegiance, to the Mongol overlords of the new dynasty. One is reminded of the ardent loyalist Zheng Sixiao (1241–1318), whose sobriquet "Suonan weng" (the Old Man who Faces South) directly politicized the north–south dialectic.<sup>7</sup> Zhao avoids the indelicacy of siting the viewer of the painting facing north by deliberately placing Mount Qiao to a fictitious east. Zhou Mi thus encounters his mountain facing south. He also faces a landscape that, colored by the stylistic motifs and atmospheric spirit of the tenth-century painter Dong Yuan, looks remarkably like the southern landscape of the Yangzi River delta.

There can be no question that Zhou Mi understood Zhao Mengfu's geographical liberties; why else would

4. Suzuki Kei, *Chūgoku kaigashi* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kobunkan, 1988), first of the middle volumes, pp. 39–42, and plate volume, pp. 18–19, n. 28. Suzuki's objections to the painting include an unrealistic handling of space, overly pronounced wavy "hemp-fiber" strokes in the foreground, an awkwardness in the painting of some of the trees, irrational discrepancies of scale, a small standard style of calligraphy closer to Wen Zhengming than Zhao Mengfu, and discrepancies between Zhao's seal impressions and similar ones seen on other works.

5. Most notably by Wen Fong, who has emphasized this feature in a number of publications. See his "Toward a Structural Analysis of Chinese Painting," *Art Journal* 28 (1969):388–397, and *Images of the Mind* (Princeton: The Art Museum, 1984), p. 68.

6. In Zhou Mi's preface to his *Qidong yeyu*, Songren xiaoshuo zhi shi (reprint, Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1990), p. 1, he mentions that in the past his ancestors lived at Mount Huafuzhu. Chu-tsing Li suggests that Zhou Mi adopted the sobriquet after receiving this painting from Zhao Mengfu (see note 1, p. 22). While this remains a possibility, it seems more likely that Zhou Mi already was the Hermit of Mount Huafuzhu, and that this was the primary reason why Zhao chose to paint *Autumn Colors*. Another possibility is that Zhou adopted the sobriquet in conjunction with Zhao Mengfu's painting of the landscape. In this case, there would have been communication between Zhao and Zhou during the process of making the painting—Zhou commissioning the painting upon Zhao's return from the north. I find it unlikely that Zhao's motivation would simply have been to show Zhou Mi the "real landscape" of Qizhou. The painting is too unreal in too many ways for that option to be acceptable. Moreover, this was only one of a number of sobriquets adopted by Zhou Mi after the fall of the Song that reflected his preoccupation with his ancestral origins. See Jay (see note 3), pp. 236–237, n. 1.

7. See Chu-tsing Li's biographical entry on Zheng Sixiao in Herbert Franke, *Sung Biographies*. Vol. 2, *Painters* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1976), pp. 15–23. See also Jay (see note 3), pp. 186–190. Jay corrects the mistaken perception that Zheng's original given name was Mo. Sixiao is a play on characters that allows the reading "Pining for the Song." It is recorded that Zheng's frequent adoption of such loyalist sobriquets resulted in people forgetting his given name. Zheng Sixiao lived in Pingjiang (Suzhou, Jiangsu Province), not far from Zhou Mi's principal residences at Huzhou and Hangzhou.

Zhao, in his inscription, emphasize his placement of Mount Qiao to the east? Of course, by facing south, Zhou Mi now inhabits the north—equally untrue—but an untruth balanced by yet another displacement, this one of time. Zhao Mengfu's reminder that Mount Huafuzhu is known in the ancient classic *Zuo Commentary*, as well as his adoption of an archaic mode of painting, allows Zhou Mi to visit his ancestral homeland in a more permanent space and time than the infelicities of the present would have allowed. The relevant passage from the *Zuo Commentary* narrates a vignette of personal courage in the face of great physical suffering during a decisive battle with the forces of Qi in 588 B.C.<sup>8</sup> It is impossible to determine the degree to which Zhao Mengfu intended it to be specifically relevant, but presumably Zhou Mi would have been motivated to recall it after finding it mentioned in Zhao Mengfu's inscription. Then, facing his own difficult times, he would have been encouraged by this tale of ancient valor. Of course, the timelessness of Zhao Mengfu's landscape is a decorous facade. The subject matter and question of positioning raised charged issues related to the new dynasty, and for this reason *Autumn Colors on the Qiao and Hua*

8. "On *guiyou*, both the armies were drawn up in array at Gan. The charioteer of the marquis of Qi was Ping Xia, with Feng Choufu as spearman on the right. Jie Zhang was charioteer to Xi Ke, with Zheng Qiuhan as spearman on the right. The marquis said, 'Let me exterminate those, and then I will take my breakfast.' With this he galloped forward, without having his horses covered with mail. Xi Ke was wounded by an arrow, till the blood ran down to his shoes, but he never let the sound of the drum cease. [At last], he said, 'I am in pain.' Zhang hou [Jie Zhang] said, 'At the first encounter one arrow pierced my hand, and another my wrist. But I broke them and continued my driving, till the left wheel is of a deep purple, not daring to speak of the pain. Do you, Sir, bear yours?' Huan said, 'From the first encounter, whenever we have come to difficult ground, I have got down and pushed the chariot along. You, Sir, have not known it because of your distress.' Zhang hou said, 'The eyes and ears of the army are on our flag and drum. It will advance or retire as our chariot does. While there is one man left to direct this chariot, we may achieve success. Why should you for your pain cause the failure of our ruler's great enterprise? When one dons his armour and takes his weapons, it is to go in the way of death; you are not in pain to death—strive to combat with it.' With this he held the reins with his left hand and with the right took the drumstick, and beat the drum. The trained horses urged on, unable to stop, followed by the army. The army of Qi received a great defeat; [and the marquis] was pursued thrice all round [the hill of] Huafuzhu." *The Chinese Classics*, trans. James Legge (reprint, Taipei: Southern Materials Center, 1983), vol. 5, p. 345 (with romanization changed).

*Mountains* should be considered an oblique comment on contemporary affairs. North or south, Qiao or Huafuzhu, to serve or not to serve. Zhao Mengfu's landscape is a presentation of choices that generate a tangible, emotional space.<sup>9</sup>

Zhao Mengfu's painting would have been inappropriate had Zhou Mi possessed the kind of uncompromising loyalty to the fallen Song that characterized Zheng Sixiao, but as recent scholarship has clarified, such ardent patriotism was generally short-lived in the first decades of the Yuan dynasty. Zhou Mi was what Jennifer Jay refers to as a "marginal loyalist." Hailing from a prosperous and eminent clan that had provided a number of important office-holders during the Song, he passed the *jinshi* exam in 1260 and served in a number of posts, though none of particular consequence. His achievements were, rather, in the arts, both as a writer and collector. In the late years of the Southern Song, Zhou Mi rode the crest of high society as a host and participant of numerous "elegant gatherings." After the collapse of the dynasty, Zhou Mi's personal fortunes were drastically reduced, and he was deeply embittered. Expression of his sorrow is evident in the highly allusive *ci* poems, collectively titled *Yuefu buti* (*New Subjects for Lyric Songs*), written together with 13 other loyalists to express outrage at the desecration of the Song imperial tombs by the Lamaist monk Byansprincan-skya.<sup>10</sup> The generosity of Yang Dashou (fl. 1270–1300), a relative of Zhou Mi's wife, allowed Zhou to reestablish a semblance of his old existence,

9. The iconic pairing of the two mountains is strongly reminiscent of what is seen in and suggested by Zhao Mengfu's *Sheep and Goat* (Freer Gallery). For the presumed subtext in this painting regarding the Han dynasty generals Su Wu and Li Ling, and the question of loyalty versus collaboration, see Chu-ting Li, "The Freer *Sheep and Goat* and Chao Meng-fu's Horse Painting," *Artibus Asiae* 30, no. 4 (1968): 279–346.

10. Huang Zhaoxian, *Yuefu buti yanjiu ji jianzhu* (Hong Kong: Xuewen chubanshe, 1975). See also Chia-ying Yeh Chao, "On Wang I-sun and His *Yung-wu Tz'u*," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 40, no. 1 (1980):55–91; Kang-i Sun Chang, "Symbolic and Allegorical Meanings in the *Yüeh-fu pu-t'i* Poem Series," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 46, no. 2 (1986):353–385. Dai Biaoyuan's preface to Zhou Mi's "Bianyang shi," a now-lost collection of his late poetry (early 1280s), remarks upon the moving quality of his late verses, born from Zhou Mi's misfortunes. Dai Biaoyuan, "Zhou Gongjin Bianyang shi xu," *Shanyuan ji* (Siku quanshu reprint, Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1987), *juan* 8, 9b–11a.



once he came to accept the demise of the dynasty and his own change of lot. From the mid-1280s to his death in 1298, Zhou Mi again served as a key figure in cultural activities, the center of a circle of acquaintances that grew to include not only loyalists, but collaborators, northern Chinese, Mongols, and Central Asians alike, all of whom served the Yuan in official capacities.<sup>11</sup>

Short of becoming unqualified hermits, the *yimin* (leftover subjects), in fact, could not avoid contact with the new dynasty. The time for other absolutist solutions—suicide or martyrdom—had passed by the mid-1280s.<sup>12</sup> Zhou Mi never assumed office under the Mongols, but a number of his compatriots did—a sure sign of shifting sentiments over time.<sup>13</sup> Such sentiments did not necessarily imply disloyalty to the fallen dynasty, but they did reflect the ambiguities and complexities that accompanied the process of resituating oneself in the new age. Zhou Mi exemplifies the former Song subject—now host of and participant in gatherings of a decidedly intercultural nature. However, while these gatherings included individuals from various ethnic backgrounds, the cultures represented had little to do with ethnic or racial difference. The divisions, rather, took place in the broader field of Chinese culture, oriented by the inalienable fact of dynastic change. Primary among them is the north–south dialectic, made very real by both the experiences of those who sojourned north, such as Zhao Mengfu, and the presence of northerners in the old capital at Hangzhou.

Previous studies concerned with the impact of reunification have focused on artists whose perspective

is largely focused on the new dynasty's establishment.<sup>14</sup> In contrast, I propose to look primarily at the paintings of two southerners with strong and lasting links to the fallen Song dynasty, Qian Xuan and Gong Kai. Both fit under the general rubric of "loyalist," yet differences in their responses to the change of dynasties reveal the shortcomings of this traditional characterization. Together with Zhou Mi and the other "leftover subjects," Qian Xuan and Gong Kai can be mapped on a sliding scale between the polities represented by the cultures of the north and south.

### The feminine object

While much has been written on the enigmatic Qian Xuan, this important transitional artist will always remain difficult to approach—a consequence of his own decision to remove himself from the prominent circles of social intercourse.<sup>15</sup> An early magnet of scholarly attention was Qian Xuan's reported switch from scholar-official status under the Song to professional painter under the Mongols, a transformation that has been difficult to reconcile with the general trend of painting style at the end of the thirteenth century. As the "professionalism" of Qian Xuan seems to have been associated primarily with his bird-and-flower painting,

14. Most notably, Marilyn Wong-Gleysteen's work on Xianyu Shu (see note 1).

15. Among the many publications on Qian Xuan, see Richard Edwards, "Ch'ien Hsüan and Early Autumn," *Archives of the Chinese Art Society of America* 7 (1953):71–83; James Cahill, "Ch'ien Hsüan and His Figure Painting," *Archives of the Chinese Art Society of America* 12 (1958):11–39; Wen Fong, "The Problem of Ch'ien Hsüan," *Art Bulletin* 62 (September 1960):173–189; Shih Shou-ch'ien, "Eremitism in Landscape Paintings by Ch'ien Hsüan (ca. 1235–before 1307)" (Ph.d. diss., Princeton University, 1984); Richard M. Barnhart, "Ch'ien Hsüan and the Memory of Lost Gardens," in *Peach Blossom Spring: Gardens and Flowers in Chinese Paintings* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1984), pp. 36–47; Robert E. Harrist, Jr., "Ch'ien Hsüan's *Pear Blossoms*: The Tradition of Flower Painting and Poetry from Sung to Yüan," *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 22 (1987); John Hay, "Poetic Space: Ch'ien Hsüan and the Association of Painting and Poetry," in *Words and Images*, ed. Alfreda Murck and Wen C. Fong (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1991), pp. 173–198. The best attempt at producing a biography of Qian Xuan is found in Shih Shou-ch'ien's dissertation (see above, this note), pp. 25–91. Qian himself comments on his lack of social skills in a line from the poem he included on *Dwelling in the Mountains* (Beijing Palace Museum): "I do not get along with people, and they in turn dislike me."

11. The various dates of 1298, 1299, and 1308 have been proposed for the death of Zhou Mi, though there is substantial evidence arguing for 1298 above the others. See Jay (see note 3), p. 240. For Zhou Mi's circle and activities in art, see Weitz (see note 1), especially pp. 51–101.

12. This subject is explored in great detail by Richard Davis, *Wind Against the Mountain* (Cambridge: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1996).

13. These included Wang Yisun (1232–1291) and Qiu Yuan (1247–1327), two of the participants of the *Yuefu buti* poem series. Wang served as Instructor Second Class for the Qingyuan Circuit (Zhejiang Province) and Qiu as an Instructor in Liyang (Jiangsu Province). Jennifer Jay (see note 1) has pointed out that such service in minor educational posts should be distinguished from more important commissions. Moreover, typically such positions were assumed only due to straitened economic situations.





Figure 2. Qian Xuan (circa 1235–before 1307), *Pear Blossoms*. Handscroll (right to left), ink and color on paper, 31.1 x 95.3 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, The Dillon Fund Gift, 1979.

discussion of this painting in the past was largely relegated to questions of style and connoisseurship.<sup>16</sup> This perception of Qian Xuan's bird-and-flower painting changed with the careful examination of his *Pear Blossoms* (fig. 2), or more accurately, of his poem that follows the painting:

The lonely tear-stained face, teardrops drenching the branches,  
Though washed of make-up, her old charms remain.  
Behind the closed gate, on a rainy night vainly sorrowing,  
How differently she looked bathed in golden waves of moonlight before darkness fell.<sup>17</sup>

Richard Barnhart and Robert Harrist established that Qian Xuan's elegy is a metaphorical lament for the fallen Song dynasty. Of course, Qian Xuan was always known to have possessed loyalist sentiment, but the degree to which he shared it with the broader loyalist community—as opposed to being the solitary hermit

portrayed in his landscape paintings—only became clear with publication of his *White Lotus* (fig. 3), a painting excavated from the tomb of the early Ming prince Zhu Tan (d. 1389) in 1970.<sup>18</sup> The painting provides a clear connection to the *Yuefu buti* poems composed by Zhou Mi and the other loyalists of 1279, as the white lotus was one of the objects that served as foci for their lyric songs (*ci*). The *Yuefu buti* poems were composed during five clandestine meetings; Zhou Mi and 13 other mourners each time wrote *ci* set to a particular tune on a particular object.<sup>19</sup> Three of the objects—ambergris perfume, water shield, and crab—are interpreted as allegorically related

18. Shandong Provincial Museum, "Fajue Ming Zhu Tan mu jishi (Report on the Excavation of the Tomb of Zhu Tan of the Ming Dynasty)," *Wenwu* 5 (1972):25–37. See also Jan Fontein and Tung Wu, *Unearthing China's Past* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1973), pp. 235–237.

19. Thirteen of the fourteen poets are known: Zhou Mi, Wang Yisun (1232–1291), Zhang Yan (1248–1320), Chen Shuke (1258–1339), Tang Jue, Zhao Rubing, Li Juren, Feng Yingrui, Tang Yisun, Lü Tonglao, Li Penglao, Wang Yijian, and Qiu Yuan (1247–1327). Wang Yingsun is sometimes proposed as the fourteenth poet. Altogether there are 37 poems on the subjects of ambergris perfume, white lotus, water shield, cicada, and crab. None of the poets composed *ci* for every occasion, and presumably they were not all present for each meeting; the meetings took place at the mountain studios of Chen Shuke, Lü Tonglao, Wang Yijian, and two unidentified locations. See Chang (see note 10); Zhaoxian (see note 10).

16. In particular see Fong (see note 15). There are dozens of Qian Xuan attributions, especially of bird-and-flower subjects, mostly in Japanese collections. Shih Shou-ch'ien suggests (untenably, in my opinion) that a distinction be made between Qian Xuan's landscape paintings, which he considers personally expressive, and the bird-and-flower paintings, which may have provided the means for Qian Xuan to make a living. Shih (see note 15), p. 75.

17. Translation by Harrist (see note 15), p. 64. See also Barnhart (see note 15), p. 40.

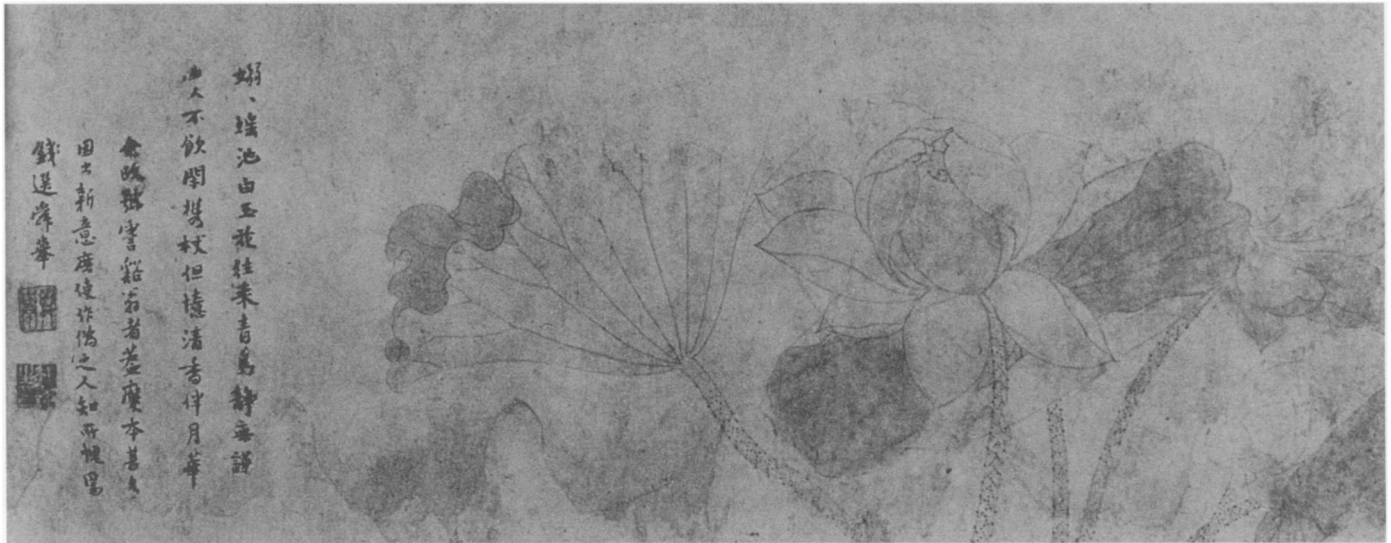


Figure 3. Qian Xuan (circa 1235–before 1307), *White Lotus*. Handscroll (right to left), ink and color on paper, 42 x 90 cm. The Shandong Provincial Museum. From *Wenwu* 5 (1972).

to the desecration of the tombs of the Song emperors. White lotus and cicada, in contrast, are believed to refer to the empresses and imperial consorts whose bones were strewn in the woods. Altogether, ten *ci* were composed on the subject of the white lotus during the second meeting, which took place at the Floating Verdancy Mountain Lodge (Fucui shanfang).<sup>20</sup> The poem that Qian Xuan added to his painting of the white lotus differs in that it is a *shi* lyric, but it shares some of the images and the underlying symbolism of the *ci* composed by Zhou Mi and company:

Delicate and graceful, Jasper Pool holds the jade flowers;  
The blue bird flies back and forth, peacefully, without  
clamor.  
The hidden man, abstaining from his cups, holds his staff at  
ease,  
Remembering her pure fragrance that accompanied the  
moonlight.<sup>21</sup>

20. The poems were composed by Wang Jisun (2), Zhou Mi, Wang Yijian, Lü Tonglao, Li Juren, Chen Shuke, Tang Jue, Zhao Rubing, and Zhang Yan.

21. The short comment that Qian Xuan added after the poem has attracted more attention than the poem itself: "I have changed my sobriquet to 'The Old Man of Zha Stream' because more and more forgeries of my work have appeared. Thus, I have come up with this ruse to put the fakers to shame!"

Jasper Pool (Yaochi) and the blue bird (*qingniao*) refer to the legend of the Queen Mother of the West, a deity of ancient times believed to reside in Mount Kunlun of the distant Himalayas.<sup>22</sup> Jasper Pool, along with other references to the Queen Mother (though not the blue bird specifically), also figures prominently in the *Yuefu buti* lyrics on the white lotus theme.<sup>23</sup> As Kang-i Sun Chang has shown, these *ci* lyrics operate on a number of levels of allusion and allegory, of which the Queen Mother of the West should not be considered primary.

22. Harrist makes the connection, though he downplays the significance of the Queen Mother imagery, noting its frequency in contemporary poetry (see note 15). On the Queen Mother of the West, see Suzanne Cahill, *Transcendence and Divine Passion: the Queen Mother of the West in Medieval China* (Stanford: Stanford, 1993). Jasper Pool, atop Mount Kunlun, is the site where the Zhou Emperor Muwang is said to have toasted the Queen Mother. The blue bird is said to be a three-legged retriever of food for the Queen Mother. In some accounts there are three. The blue bird also serves as a harbinger for the Queen Mother's imminent arrival. *Ibid.*, pp. 91 ff.

23. Yaochi appears specifically in the *ci* of Chen Shuke, Lü Tonglao, and Li Juren; other references to the Queen Mother's paradise include the fairy maiden Feiqiong in the *ci* of Zhou Mi and Li Juren. Huang (see note 10), p. 26ff. See also Kang-i Sun Chang's discussion, which singles out the white lotus group in her discussion of allegory and symbolism in the *Yuefu buti* poems (see note 10).

More prominent are references to the famous Tang imperial courtesan Yang Guifei (d. 756), who is evoked in all ten poems on the white lotus.<sup>24</sup> Yang Guifei's seductive charms were associated with the downfall of Emperor Xuanzong's reign (712–756) and the near collapse of the Tang dynasty. As such, her evocation in these *ci* poems by the Song loyalists carries a suggestion of censure directed at the late Southern Song court, which, since the reign of Emperor Ningzong (1194–1224), was noted for the prominent role of imperial women in the handling of court affairs.<sup>25</sup> But the poems are much more notable for their direct expression of sympathy for the tragic Yang Guifei. The tone they adopt owes much to Bo Juyi's (772–846) famous poem "Changhen ge" (Song of Everlasting Sorrow), in which Emperor Xuanzong magically meets with the spirit of his dead lover, now apotheosized as a fairy inhabitant of an immortal isle. During this meeting, everlasting love is sworn. Xuanzong returns to the world of mortals, forlorn, and is reminded of Yang Guifei's face by the lotus of Lake Taiyi in the gardens of the capital.<sup>26</sup> This is the immediate source of the lotus metaphor used in the *Yuefu buti* poems and Qian Xuan's poem/painting.

Bo Juyi's description of Xuanzong's and Yang Guifei's brief spiritual tryst in "Changhen ge" resonates strongly with legendary tales of meetings between the Queen Mother of the West and the earlier mortal rulers Zhou Muwang (r. 1001–946 B.C.) and Han Wudi (r. 140–80 B.C.).<sup>27</sup> The Song loyalists used this connection to add a layer of complexity to their poems. More important, the Queen Mother and her immortal paradise allowed the poets to elevate the allegory to a level of purity and otherworldliness far beyond what Xuanzong's and Yang Guifei's story, with its associations of corporeal lust could deliver by itself. Ultimately, as commentators have noted, the subject of the white lotus poems should be the Song court women, with an anecdote told of the desecration of the tomb of Empress Meng (1077–1135), consort of Song Zhezong (r. 1085–1100), providing the

pivotal connection.<sup>28</sup> As such, it is essential that an image of purity, chastity, and propriety be presented, which is precisely what the Queen Mother of the West overlay achieves. The loyalist poets and Qian Xuan adopt the tragic role of the pining lover—Tang Xuanzong—lamenting not the Song imperial women specifically, but the lost, feminized dynasty that the court women represent.

Such an abbreviated account of these dense, complex poems by the *Yuefu buti* authors hardly does them justice, but it is appropriate in this context since Qian Xuan's painting is precisely an exercise in shorthand. Beautiful to regard, evocative to read, certainly nothing seems to be lacking in *White Lotus*, yet one is astounded to learn how much is merely hinted once the proper context of the *Yuefu buti* poems is uncovered. *White Lotus* is hardly an isolated example of Qian Xuan tapping into this wealth of symbolism centered on Yang Guifei. In fact, the more one looks, the more this symbolism seems to play *the* prominent role in Qian's paintings, at least those that are not landscapes. Most obvious is the direct illustration of Yang Guifei mounting a horse, with Tang Xuanzong watching from the side (fig. 4).<sup>29</sup> A Qian Xuan painting of birds and flowers in the Tianjin Art Museum includes a peony—a flower commonly associated with Yang Guifei because of its luscious bloom—and an accompanying poem that alludes to the Lord of the East, consort of the Queen Mother of the West.<sup>30</sup> Robert Harrist noted a suggested

28. Chang (see note 10), pp. 375–377, citing in part Xia Chengtao's "Yuefu buti kao," in *Tang Song ciren nianpu* (Shanghai 1961), pp. 377–378. As Kang-i Sun Chang narrates, Zhou Mi records the anecdote of the desecration of Empress Meng's tomb in his *Guixin zashi* (reprint, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1988), 263–266. A woodcutter later found a lock of hair on the gravesite, with an emerald green hairpin still in it. The hairpin becomes a recurring image in the loyalist poems. By fortuitous coincidence (?), hairpins are also key images in Bo Juyi's "Changhen ge": when Yang Guifei is executed, her hair ornaments fall to the ground. Later, Yang's hairpin becomes a pledge of love between her and Emperor Xuanzong.

29. See Thomas Lawton, *Chinese Figure Painting* (Washington: Freer Gallery of Art, 1973), pp. 171–173; Cahill (see note 15).

30. The scroll is divided into three sections: peach with bird, peony, and prunus. The poem for the peach possibly alludes to the paradise of the Queen Mother of the West, where immortal peaches grew. The poem for the section of prunus is missing some characters due to damage of the painting surface. There are no direct references to Yang Guifei of which I am aware in this poem. The authenticity of this painting remains to be verified. According to the inscription, it was painted in 1294. See *Zhongguo meishu quanji, Huihua bian* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1989), vol. 5, no. 2.

24. Chang (see note 10), pp. 365ff.

25. Davis (see note 12), pp. 27–42. Hui-shu Lee, "The Domain of Empress Yang (1162–1233): Art, Gender and Politics at the Late Southern Song Court" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1994).

26. Chang (see note 10), pp. 366–367; Bo Juyi, "Changhen ge," *Bo Juyi ji* (reprint, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979), *juan* 12, 235–239.

27. Cahill (see note 22), pp. 122–142, 147–183.



allusion to Yang Guifei in *Pear Blossoms*. The first line of Qian Xuan's poem—"The lonely tear-stained face, teardrops drenching the branches"—borrows directly, once more, from Bo Juyi's "Song of Everlasting Sorrow," in which Yang Guifei's teary face is likened to a branch of pear blossoms wet with the spring rain.<sup>31</sup> Another painting of pear blossoms in the Cincinnati Art Museum (fig. 5), this time depicted with a pair of male turtledoves, lacks a poem by Qian Xuan, but that which is attached by Ke Jiusi (1290?–1343) refers directly to Yang Guifei (Taizhen):

The dream returns lightly, snowy fragrance anew,  
Secluded birds on the branches, their manner filled with  
spring.  
Unsettled by the light overcast, they call that the rain is  
coming;  
Taizhen's sadness is unbearable, painted eyebrows knit.<sup>32</sup>

31. Harrist (see note 15), p. 64. The image of pear blossoms also appears in Zhou Mi's *ci* on the white lotus: "Imagine when the mandarin ducks were just having / A fine dream of pear blossoms in the clouds, / Suddenly the west wind came, biting cold, / To awaken them . . ." Translation by Chang (see note 10), p. 357.

Ke Jiusi's poem helps to explain how the turtledoves fit into the allegory. As the third line of his verse alludes, the call of the male turtledove, which is anxiously seeking its female companion, was associated with impending rain.<sup>33</sup> The drenching that is about to denude the blossoms in *Pear Blossoms* is made more unsettling in *Doves and Pear Blossoms* by the apparent complacency of these birds and the absence of their mates. The theme of loss, in other words, is given a double edge.

A number of points can be made about Qian Xuan's paintings once their symbolism is understood, particularly in relation to the *Yuefu buti* poems. First, paintings and poems, including those on white lotus in

32. Transcriptions of the inscriptions to this painting are found in *Kō Kōbō, Gei San, ŌMō, Go Chin*, Bunjinga suihen, vol. 3 (Tokyo, 1979), no. 62.

33. According to the *Pi ya* of the Northern Song author Lu Dian, "When overcast skies form, the male turtledove anxiously chases after its mate. When it is clear, he calls out saying, 'It is going to rain.'" Lu Dian, *Pi ya* (*Siku quanshu* ed.), *juan 7*, 6b.



Figure 4. Qian Xuan (circa 1235–before 1307), *Yang Guifei Mounting a Horse*. Handscroll (right to left), ink and color on paper, 29.5 x 117 cm. The Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution.

the *Yuefu buti* collection, almost always adopt a perspective of memory, retrospection, and distance. Qian Xuan *remembers* what the pear blossoms looked like before the destructive rains. He *recalls* the “pure fragrance” of the white lotus in the moonlight. With a removed perspective, memories become selective and emphasized. Consequently, one notes a consistent theme in all of the poems related to the white lotus and pear blossoms: purity—a lack of heavy adornment. The poems often emphasize how the makeup of the lotus or pear is light or stripped entirely away, revealing a natural and pure beauty underneath. In Qian Xuan’s poem on pear blossoms, makeup is washed away by the rain. Tang Jue’s opening lines of his *ci* on the white lotus are representative of the *Yuefu buti* offerings: “With light makeup she is even more lovely, / By the evening mirror she cleans away the heavy rouge and leaden powder.”<sup>34</sup>

34. Huang (see note 10), p. 31. In Zhou Mi’s *ci* the makeup of the fairy Feiqiong is light (Chang [see note 10], p. 357; Huang [see note 10], p. 26). Lü Tonglao’s begins: “Pristine skin unblemished, natural and true. . . . Fashionable makeup is washed clean away” (ibid., p. 33).

Lastly, Qian Xuan’s compositional approach of creating shorthand renderings, combined with the removed perspective and selective thematic emphasis, results in the elevation of his subjects to iconic status. His paintings eschew discourse or narrative, isolating his subjects in a timeless tableau, creating, in essence, altars dedicated to an idealized memory of the fallen Song dynasty.

Together with Zhao Mengfu, Qian Xuan is often credited as being a key figure in reestablishing literati painting at the beginning of the Yuan. Yet, if this implies that Qian Xuan created something radically different from what preceded in the Southern Song then such accreditation should be reevaluated. Qian Xuan’s paintings are firmly based on the Southern Song tradition, and not simply because his bird-and-flower

Zhao Rubing’s begins: “Dew blossoms thoroughly wash away common makeup. . . .” (ibid., p. 34). One of Wang Jisun’s *ci* alludes to Yang Guifei bathing: “Leaden makeup washed clean away, / Gracefully, she leaves the bath. . . .” (ibid., p. 42). The other *ci* on white lotus all have some similar image.

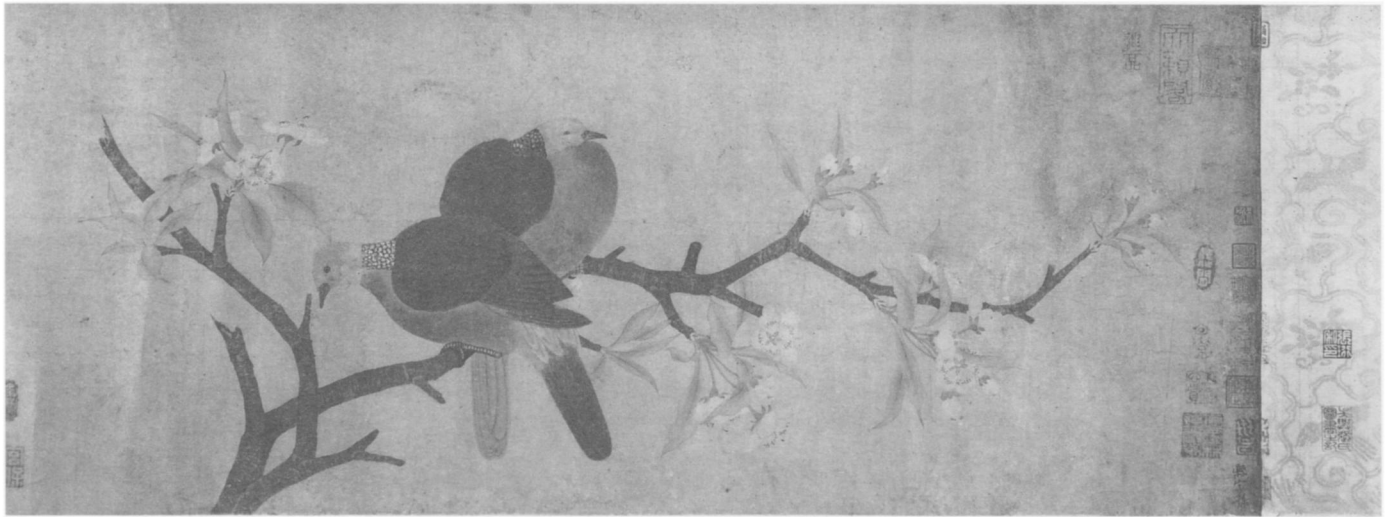


Figure 5. Qian Xuan (circa 1235–before 1307), *Doves and Pear Blossoms*. Handscroll (right to left), ink and color on paper, 30.5 x 97.8 cm. Cincinnati Art Museum, Museum Purchase: J. J. Emery Endowment.

subjects stem directly from the heritage passed down by such Academy painters as Li Di and Lin Chun (both active in the late twelfth century). Qian's interest in a reduction of the pictorial and semantic vocabulary can be juxtaposed with the abbreviated modes of representation common in late Southern Song painting. What differs is that Qian Xuan is not abbreviating an experience or perception of the physical world, but rather an idea or a theme. He paints what is no longer there—the Southern Song. To state the obvious, Qian Xuan was a true *yimin*; his art was an extension of the Southern Song in the early years of the Mongol conquest. It is useful to group him conceptually together with the *Yuefu buti* poets, circa 1279, in representing a response to the fall of the dynasty that remains purely focused on the past, or to put it geographically, on the south.

Before leaving Qian Xuan, a brief comment should be offered on his literal, as opposed to metaphorical, portrayal of Yang Guifei (fig. 4). As at least two other early paintings of the theme of Concubine Yang mounting a horse demonstrate, Qian Xuan's treatment is again abbreviated, resulting in an image that appears removed from its original context and frozen for the purpose of highlighting.<sup>35</sup> Here, however, the

iconic status of Yang Guifei, as well as her lover, Xuanzong, gazing with erotic interest at the sight of the plump beauty attempting to climb atop a horse, is hardly so lofty. Forty years ago, James Cahill pointed out the vulgar association of Yang Guifei with the mule that Xuanzong mounts in the last lines of Qian Xuan's short poem accompanying this painting: "With four hundred thousand horses in the Kaiyuan [Imperial Stables], / What brings him now to ride a mule on the road to Shu?" Yang Guifei was barren, as are mules.<sup>36</sup> How does one explain this painting, with its coldly critical presentation of these two historical figures? Certainly, it differs radically in underlying tone from the paintings discussed above. Without attempting to answer this question, let us simply note that *Yang Guifei Mounting a Horse*, for all of its differences from Qian Xuan's other paintings, expresses sentiments that were far from unusual in the early Yuan. This will become clear presently.

period, is in the collection of Deng Tuotong. See *Yiyuan duoying* (Shanghai: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1986), vol. 28, cover, pp. 4–5. A related fan, also of Southern Song date, is in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. See Wu Tung, *Tales from the Land of Dragons: 1,000 Years of Chinese Painting* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1997), no. 82.

36. Cahill (see note 15), esp. pp. 20–21.

35. A lovely handscroll of the theme, probably of Southern Song date though in the past attributed to Zhou Wenju of the Five Dynasties



At first glance, Gong Kai would seem to share much with Qian Xuan. A dedicated loyalist with scholarly credentials and a modest career as an official under the Song, Gong Kai retired to a life of semireclusion in the Suzhou area after the fall of the dynasty, supporting himself, apparently, by writing and painting.<sup>37</sup> He was particularly celebrated for his paintings of horses, which, Zhou Mi reports, Gong painted with the paper spread on the back of his son, being too poor to own a proper writing desk.<sup>38</sup> Gong was said to have painted “Tang horses,” which is not merely a designation of painting style but of subject as well.<sup>39</sup> Gong’s focus on the Tang, which through allegory or contrast becomes a comment on the Song, is a shared point with Qian Xuan’s flower paintings discussed above. Yet, as a brief look at Gong Kai’s *Zhong Kui’s Outing* will show, there are significant points of difference in Gong’s perspective (fig. 6).

The subject of the *Demon Queller*, Zhong Kui, was another of Gong Kai’s specialties. In fact, according to the late Yuan critic Xia Wenyan, “black demons, Zhong Kui and such, bizarre and totally original,” were what he enjoyed painting most.<sup>40</sup> The deservedly celebrated scroll in the Freer Gallery includes Gong Kai’s long poem and inscription (written in the clerical script, another of his eclectic fortes), along with those of more than a dozen contemporaries. The following translation,

which owes much to that of Thomas Lawton, is rendered purposely informal, in keeping with the spirit of Gong’s poem and painting.<sup>41</sup>

The home of the Bearded Lord is in the Central Mountains;  
Mounting a carriage for an excursion, where might he be  
going?  
He says it’s just a bit of a hunt, without falcon or dog;  
Wherever his whim might take him, a place to set up house.  
Little Sis wants her lovely face to be presented at its best;  
Of the various colors for makeup, black is most  
appropriate.  
On the road they come to a post house; they need to take  
a rest,  
But who, in this ancient chamber, can serve the wine and  
food?  
Red Turban and Black Shirt are certainly good cooks,  
Yet in the end fresh blood from a beauty is hard to  
obtain.<sup>42</sup>  
Better to return and drink the Central Mountain brew;  
Once drunk, for three years one’s myriad cares retreat.  
But alas, there are creatures out there coveting the high  
and mighty;  
Bayi used her wealth to buy the homes of others.  
We await the Bearded Lord to awake and make a clean  
sweep,  
At Mawei the “Golden Burden” disappeared without a  
trace.

Zhong Kui is the strange character said to have appeared in a feverish dream of Tang Xuanzong during the Kaiyuan reign (713–742). Pestered in his nightmare by a pint-sized demon named Xu Hao, Xuanzong calls for help. In place of the imperial bodyguards comes a large hirsute fellow, who proceeds to dismember and eat the imp who had just pilfered the emperor’s jade flute and was making a mess of the palace. The emperor learns that his savior is Zhong Kui, an unsuccessful

37. See James Cahill’s biography in Franke (see note 7), pp. 64–69. Primary source materials for Gong Kai are found in the later compilation of his writings, *Guichengsou ji* (*Chuzhou congshu* ed., n.d.). The only official position Gong Kai is known to have held is with the Board of Salt Revenues for the Liang Huai Region. Gong Kai was a friend to Lu Xiufu (1236–1279), the minister who committed suicide holding the child emperor by leaping into the sea at Yaishan in 1279. Gong later collected Lu’s literary works, adding a preface, and composed his memorial biography, as well as that of the loyalist Wen Tianxiang (1236–1283).

38. *Guichengsou ji*, addendum, 1a, citing *Wulai sang hai yilu*.

39. Xia Wenyan, in *Tuhui baojian* (*Huashi congshu* reprint, Shanghai: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1982), *juan* 5, 126, reports that his horses were modeled after the celebrated Tang horse painter Cao Ba. Zhou Mi calls them “Tang horses.” A painting by Gong recorded in Wang Feng’s *Wuxi ji* was of the horses of Tang Taizong. See Chen Gaohua, ed., *Yuandai huajia shiliao* (Shanghai: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1980), p. 295. In the case of the famous “Emaciated Horse” in the Osaka Municipal Museum, the immediate subject is ambiguous—the “former dynasty” of Gong Kai’s inscription possibly referring to either the Tang or Song—though at a symbolic level the haggard horse’s implied identification with the Song yimin is clear.

40. See note 39.

41. Lawton (see note 29), pp. 142–149. Gong’s inscription, as well as those of a number of colophon writers from Gong Kai’s time and later, are recorded in Bian Yongyu, *Shigutang shuhua huikao* (reprint ed., Taipei: Zhengju shuju, 1958), *juan* 15, 90–92. In addition to Lawton’s research, I have also benefited from a paper written by Yoohyang Do, “Gong Kai’s (1222–1307) *Zhong Kui Travelling: Exorcising Demons*,” for a seminar I led at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, in the autumn of 1997.

42. I suspect that Red Turban and Black Shirt, who are two of the characters in the painting, are derived from the early compilation of ghost tales *Soushen ji*. Similar characters appear in a story concerning a haunted pavilion south of Anyang, one wearing black clothing and the other named Red Turban (Chiji). *Zhongwen da cidian* (Taipei: Zhongguo wenhua daxue, 1973), vol. 8, 1446.





Figure 6b



Figure 6c



Figure 6a. Gong Kai (1222–1307), *Zhong Kui's Outing*. Handscroll (right to left), ink on paper, 32.8 x 169.5 cm. The Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution.

exam candidate of a century earlier. Zhong Kui had committed suicide, despairing at his failure, but because he was posthumously awarded a degree, his spirit vows to rid the world of demons like Xu Hao.<sup>43</sup> Zhong Kui became a popular cultural figure closely associated with the seasonal exorcism of malignant spirits at the New Year. His popularity grew in the early Yuan—no doubt because his special talents were wistfully seen as useful skills during this period of foreign occupation—and it extended to the literati, who must have felt a kinship with Zhong Kui's scholarly background. Yoohyang Do has suggested that a personal identification with the Demon Queller could well have been fancied by Gong Kai. Gong was noted for his large, gaunt frame and flowing white beard, which earned him the label Ran Gong, or "Bearded Gong." By the time one finishes

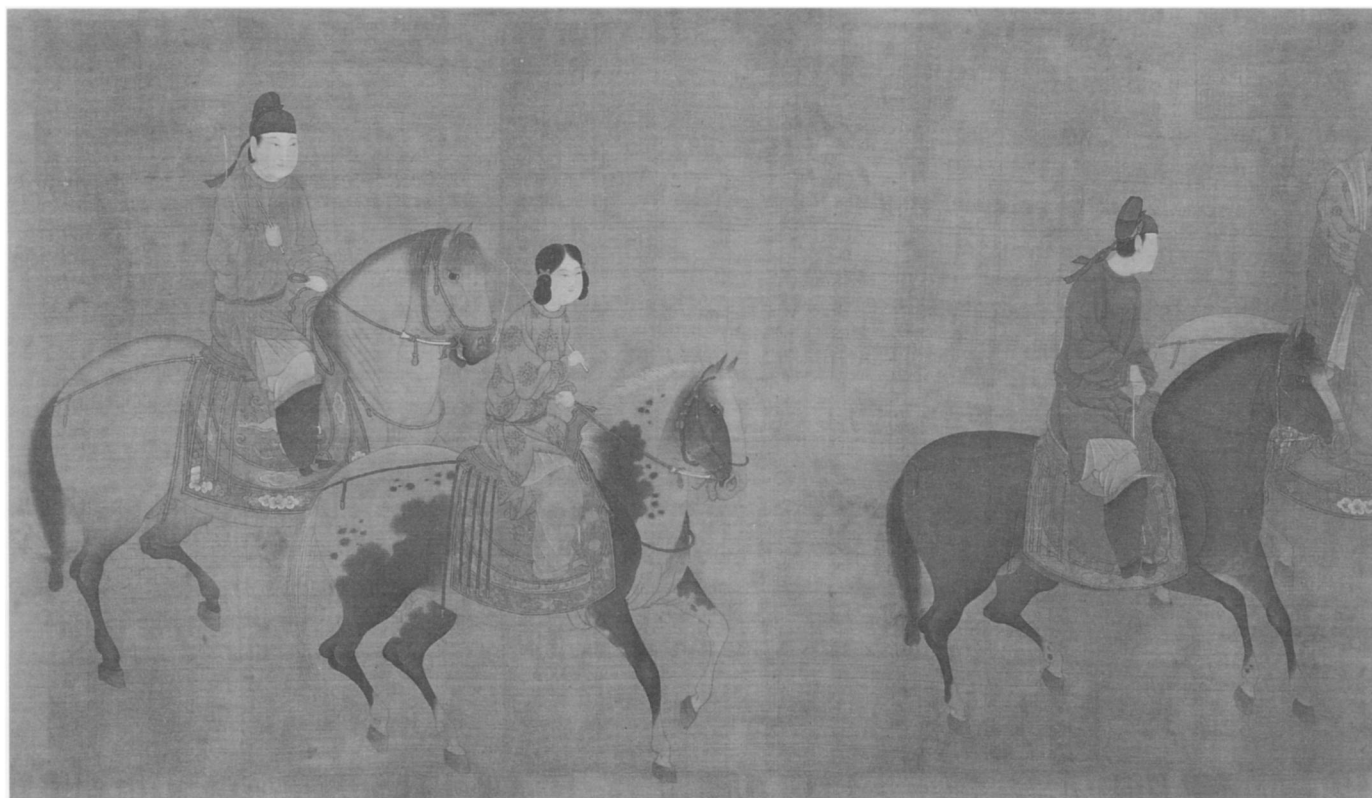
reading Gong Kai's poem and the various colophons that follow, repeated references to Ran Gong (Gong Kai) and Ran jun (Bearded Lord, or in other words Zhong Kui) strongly imply an intended conflation of the two.<sup>44</sup>

It has long been assumed that Gong Kai's painting is a thinly veiled expression of hope that a new Zhong Kui will arise and rid China of its new demons, the Mongols. And yet, as Thomas Lawton observed, allusions in Gong Kai's poem suggest that at least one of the demons in question is none other than Yang Guifei.<sup>45</sup> Mawei, in the last line, is the site of Yang Guifei's execution at the hands of Tang Xuanzong's imperial guardsmen during the journey to Shu amidst the An Lushan Rebellion, and presumably the "golden burden" refers to her. Earlier in the poem, we learn that Zhong Kui dines on the fresh blood of beauties—most likely a reference to Yang Guifei and her exceptionally beautiful sisters. Bayi (Maiden Eight), otherwise known

43. The story is narrated in the sixteenth-century compilation *Tianzhong ji* and is said to be based on one found in the earlier text *Tang yishi*. See Mary H. Fong, "A Probable Second 'Zhong Kui' by Emperor Shunzhi of the Qing," *Oriental Art* 23/24 (Winter 1977):427–428.

44. Yoohyang Do (see note 41), pp. 26–27. *Guichengsou ji* (see note 37), addendum, 6b–9b.

45. Lawton (see note 29), p. 145



as the Lady of the Qin Realm (Qinguo furen), was one of the notorious three elder sisters of Yang Guifei. Reputedly gorgeous and unscrupulous, the sisters followed extravagant and licentious lifestyles, taking full advantage of Xuanzong's patronage. It is said that they used 100,000 in copper cash each month for cosmetics alone.<sup>46</sup> A well-known composition associated with the Tang painter Zhang Xuan (active first half of the eighth century), titled *The Spring Outing of the Lady of the Guo*

46. Great Maiden, who married into the Cui clan, was given the title Lady of the Han Realm. Maiden Three, who married into the Pei clan, was given the honorary title Lady of the Guo Realm. Maiden Eight married into the Liu clan. The bestowal of honorary titles all took place in 748. See Xu Daoxun and Zhao Keyao, *Tang Minghuang yu Yang Guifei* (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1990), pp. 374–375. See also the various commentaries to Su Shi's poem "Guoguo furen yeyou tu," *Su Shi shiji* (reprint ed.; Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), *juan* 27, 1462–1464.

*Realm* and presumed to depict the three sisters, may well be tangentially related to Gong Kai's scroll (fig. 7).<sup>47</sup> Another Zhang Xuan composition, titled *The Night Outing of the Lady of the Guo Realm*, was particularly famous through the Song dynasty, having collected a number of early inscriptions, including a poem by Su Shi. This scroll entered the imperial collection of Song Huizong (r. 1100–1025), changed hands among collectors of the Southern Song, and eventually ended up in the collection of the notorious Southern Song

47. This particular version is attributed to Li Gonglin (ca. 1049–1106), though as James Cahill noted years ago, the composition reverts back to Zhang Xuan. Another version in the Liaoning Provincial Museum has been called a copy of Zhang's painting by Emperor Huizong (r. 1100–1125). See Liu Zhongcheng and Su Liping, "Zhang Xuan yu Guoguo furen youchun tu," *Yiyuan duoying*, vol. 40 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, 1989), p. 4.



Figure 7. Attributed to Li Gonglin (circa 1049–1106) (composition associated with Zhang Xuan, eighth century), *The Spring Outing of the Lady of the Guo Realm*. Handscroll (right to left), ink and color on paper, 33.4 x 112.6 cm. Collection of the National Palace Museum, Taiwan, Republic of China.

minister Han Tuozhou (1152–1207).<sup>48</sup> Later it entered the collection of Zhao Yuqin, as is duly noted by Zhou Mi.<sup>49</sup> Whether or not Gong Kai saw this particular scroll, he was probably familiar with the general composition of such “outing” paintings, just as, in all likelihood, he knew Su Shi’s poem. An alternative title for this painting was *The Ladies [of the Realms] Qin and Guo*, revealing that Bayi, or Maiden Eight, was

48. The painting was first attributed to Zhang Xuan by Huizong. It reportedly was originally in the collection of Li Yu, ruler of the Southern Tang, before being owned by Yan Shu (991–1055). Huizong gave the painting to Liang Shicheng (d. 1126). During the Southern Song, the painting was owned by Qin Kui (1090–1155) among others. See the commentary to Su Shi’s poem (see note 46), 1462.

49. Zhou Mi, *Yunyan guoyan lu*, in *Huapin congshu*, ed. Yu Anlan (Shanghai: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1982), p. 324. See Ankeney Weitz’s brief discussion of Zhao Yuqin’s collection (see note 1), p. 268, n. 2.

represented in the painting.<sup>50</sup> Su Shi’s poem also makes direct reference to Bayi. All of this suggests a curious relationship between *Zhong Kui’s Outing* and that of the Tang maidens.

Chen Fang, one of the Yuan colophon writers for *Zhong Kui’s Outing*, describes in his verse Gong Kai’s misery at the fall of the dynasty, how Gong’s brush, equaling 1,000 generals, creates myriad strange creatures “to expel the inauspicious.” “Alas,” he continues, “people of the Xianchun reign were unaware, / Night after night in the palace playing jade flutes.”<sup>51</sup> The Xianchun reign (1265–1274) was one of the last of the Southern Song; a jade flute, we are reminded, was what the demon Xu Hao stole from Xuanzong. Once again, Tang dynasty affairs serve as an

50. This was the title handwritten by Song Huizong. See note 48.

51. Bian Yongyu (see note 41), painting, p. 92.

allegory for the fall of the Song. But instead of Qian Xuan's bittersweet elegy, Gong Kai creates a parody of enormous sarcasm, and one that bites much harder than Chen Fang's poem suggests.

Gong Kai paints an outing: Zhong Kui, his sister, and their various ghoulish attendants, who present themselves in hilarious contrast to the handsome picture of Tang female equestrians attributed to Zhang Xuan. Zhong Kui's sister and her female attendants mimic the legacy of expensive cosmetics for which Yang Guifei's sisters were so famous; the color of choice here, however, is black.<sup>52</sup> (How different a picture Gong Kai paints in contrast to Qian Xuan's emphasis on the clean, unadorned beauty of the imperial flower!) The goal of their outing is to rid China of the inauspicious, which, judging from Gong's poem, can only be understood to be those responsible for losing China: the selfish, the incompetent, the feminine. But the mockery here is also self-directed. Zhong Kui, the leader of an entourage of clowns, is equally incompetent. Hardly the dedicated hunter of demons, he disappears for three years, drunk on the home brew. Gong Kai is criticizing his own kind—the scholar-officials who did little or nothing to prevent the disaster that befell China. The painting, in my opinion, has little to do with the Mongols. Rather, it is a scathing exercise in self-recrimination. These are, after all, demons chasing demons.

### The masculine voice

Little is known of Gong Kai's activities in the early years of the Yuan, but he appears to have been more receptive to social intercourse than the reclusive Qian Xuan. In this regard, he is more typical of the Song loyalists, many of whom, after the first decade of Mongol rule, made some accommodation with the new order. Gong Kai, like Qian Xuan, must have made his livelihood primarily as a painter, but his circle of acquaintances was broader. He resided for some time in the old capital of Hangzhou, which remained the center of cultural activities, and here Gong Kai knew and

painted for Zhou Mi.<sup>53</sup> In all likelihood, Gong Kai knew Zhao Mengfu, who was more than thirty years younger.<sup>54</sup> In 1294 Gong Kai joined Xianyu Shu (1257?–1302) and Sheng Biao in a visit to the painter/poet Ma Zhen (b. 1254), who was precisely Zhao Mengfu's age.<sup>55</sup> There were others considerably younger who were attracted to Gong Kai: Liu Guan (1270–1342), later to become one of the most prominent of Yuan scholar-officials, made a point of seeking out Gong.<sup>56</sup> Huang Jin (1277–1357), another exceptional young scholar, met Gong in 1298; there was a difference in their age of more than a half century.<sup>57</sup> Gong Kai was first and foremost a visually arresting character, exceedingly tall, broad-framed, and with that long, flowing beard. He must have seemed a venerable and curious relic of the previous dynasty.

But Gong Kai's loyalist sentiments did not prevent him from forming friendships with those who more openly embraced the Mongols. The most notable example is the early collaborator Fang Hui (1227–1307), to whom Gong Kai presented a painting and poem.<sup>58</sup> Judging from the recorded visit to Ma Zhen, Gong Kai was on friendly terms with the prominent northern scholar and calligrapher Xianyu Shu. And certainly, through Zhou Mi and Xianyu Shu, Gong Kai would have been conscious of, and probably conversant with, a number of the other northern Chinese and non-Chinese who came to the south to help administer Khubilai's China. In the realm of painting, the most prominent figures were Li Kan (1245–1320) and Gao Kegong, both

53. Liu Guan records what appears to have been a landscape painting titled *Jiang ji*, which Gong Kai painted for Zhou Mi. See Chen Gaohua (see note 39), pp. 291–292.

54. See Zhao Mengfu's poem inscribed on a landscape painting by Gong Kai, "Ti Gong Shengyu shanshui tu." Chen Gaohua (see note 39), p. 95.

55. Ma Zhen, "Ti lianju shijuan hou." Chen Gaohua (see note 39), p. 293. Ma Zhen was particularly close to Gong Kai, writing a number of poems that reveal a close friendship. See in particular his "Ku Yan weng Gong chushi ershou." Chen Gaohua (see note 39), p. 294.

56. Huang Jin, "Hanlin daizhi Liu gong mubiao." Chen Gaohua (see note 39), p. 292. Liu Guan, with Yu Ji, Huang Jin, and Jie Xisi, are considered the Four Stalwarts of the Forest of Letters.

57. "Ba Cuiyan hua." Chen Gaohua (see note 39), p. 292.

58. *Guichengsou ji* (see note 37), p. 1a. Fang Hui, who surrendered his prefecture with little hesitation following the collapse of Hangzhou, was rewarded with official posts under the Mongols. Nonetheless, Fang Hui harbored loyalist sentiment and remained on close terms with many of his old friends. See Jay (see note 3), pp. 134–135, 190.

52. Yoohyang Do, citing Chen Fan-pen's Ph.D. dissertation "Yang Kuei-fei: Changing Images of a Historical Beauty in Chinese Literature" (Columbia University, 1984), notes that the households of five of Yang Guifei's relatives were each distinguished by a color, and that the "five-colored cosmetics" of Gong's poem possibly alludes to them specifically.

of whom were close members of Zhou Mi's circle. Gong Kai was senior to all of these people, including Zhou Mi, but that does not mean he was unreceptive to their ideas and concerns. We find in Gong Kai's painting and inscription a number of concepts that strongly suggest a dialogue with the northern culture by evoking the earlier tradition of literati art during the late Northern Song, a tradition that had been maintained in the north during the Jin dynasty prior to the Mongol conquest. *Zhong Kui's Outing* is largely directed towards the Southern Song, and in this regard, it reveals Gong Kai's allegiance with Qian Xuan. It is also, however, a painting concerned with the present and, as such, reflects the intercultural climate of Hangzhou at the turn of the fourteenth century.

We turn to the remainder of Gong Kai's inscription for *Zhong Kui's Outing* (fig. 8):

Some say that painting demons in ink is being merely playful with the brush, but this is certainly not true. This type of painting is like the work of the most divine of the cursive script writers among calligraphers. There is none in the world who can write the cursive script without first excelling in the formal script. Of old, those who excelled in painting demons in ink were Si Yizhen and Zhao Qianli. Qianli's "Dingxiang gui" is certainly extraordinary. The only pity is that it is so far removed from figure painting that people have looked upon it as a playful painting. Yizhen's demons are very skillfully done, but his intention is vulgar. Recently, it has reached the point where a painter has depicted the Bearded Lord in a field privy being approached by a porcupine while his sister, with stick in hand and her clothing flying open, comes to drive it away. Now what kind of a painting is that? My aim in painting "Zhong Kui's Outing" is to wash away Yizhen's vulgarity and hopefully preserve the pure joy of brush and ink. In calligraphic terms, the painting combines the regular script and the semi-cursive (*xing*) script. Matters concerning Zhong Kui are exceedingly few. [Consequently, even though] I had composed verses to go before and after the painting, they seemed unavoidably repetitive. So now I finish the colophon with a discussion of other matters, with the purpose of saying something new. Written by Gong Kai of Huaiyin.<sup>59</sup>

59. Translation by Thomas Lawton with a few additions and modifications (see note 29), pp. 144–145 (in particular, Lawton dropped the line near the end of the inscription concerning the lack of literary precedents with regard to Zhong Kui). Si Yizhen was a Song specialist of ghosts and demons. Xia Wenyan, *Tuhui baojian* (see note 39), *juan* 3, 87. Lawton and others read his surname as the similar character Miao. Si Yizhen seems to have been active late in the

The fact that Gong Kai is interested in saying something new establishes his perspective as being rooted in the present. What is new is the introduction of a discourse from calligraphy into his painting. Gong Kai refers to the cursive script (*caoshu*) and its relationship to the formal, or standard, script (*zhenshu*, *kaishu*). What goes unmentioned is the source of this discourse in a notable discussion that took place in the late eleventh century among the most lionized of the Northern Song literati, including Su Shi and Huang Tingjian (1045–1105). The debate concerned wild cursive calligraphy (*kuangcao*) and centered specifically on the famous eighth-century master of the wild cursive, Zhang Xu (circa 700–750). The criticism of wild cursive calligraphy was its superficial attraction. Associated with uninhibited behavior inspired by wine, this was calligraphy at its most dynamic. Unfettered cursive writing could be divine, to use Gong Kai's characterization, but it could also be exhibitionist and pretentious.<sup>60</sup> To defend the highly admired Zhang Xu, and to differentiate him from the many pretenders who imitated his art, Su Shi and Huang Tingjian emphasized that Zhang's wild cursive calligraphy was built on a solid foundation of orthodox study. Proof lay with a stele exhibiting Zhang Xu's *kai* standard script, which was considered a model of Tang discipline.<sup>61</sup> This example of Zhang's standard writing validated his unconventional cursive, because it proved that the calligrapher was steeped in rules and methods.

We can understand Gong Kai's introduction of the calligraphy discourse into painting as a reflection of a broader contemporary concern to reassert the literati tradition, a concern, again, that must have been shaped by influences from the north. More significant, we

Northern Song, as *Tuhui baojian* notes that Huang Tingjian once inscribed one of his paintings. Zhao Qianli is Zhao Boju, the well-known early Southern Song painter. The subject "ghost of the *dingxiang* tree" remains unidentified.

60. The term *caosheng* (divine cursive writer) commonly refers specifically to Zhang Xu. I discuss the late Northern Song debate concerning cursive writing in my book *Mi Fu: Style and the Art of Calligraphy in Northern Song China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 129ff.

61. The stele is known as "The Langguan Stone," dated 741. A rubbing of the stele is reproduced in *Shodō zenshū* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1954–1961), vol. 8, pl. 100–103. For Su Shi's comments, see "Shu Tang shi liujia shu hou," *Su Shi wenji* (reprint, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986), *juan* 69, 2206. For Huang Tingjian's, see "Ba Zhai Gongzhuhan suocang shike," *Shangū ji* (*Siku quanshu* ed.), *juan* 28, 20a and "Ba Zhou Zifa tie," *juan* 29, 17a–b.



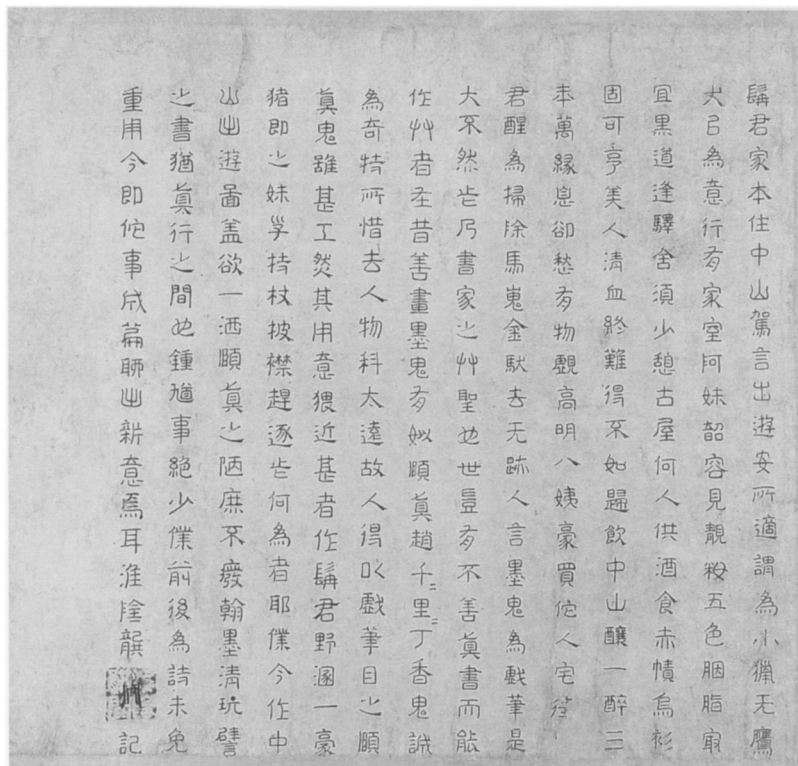


Figure 8. Gong Kai (1222–1307), *Zhong Kui's Outing* (detail). Handscroll, ink on paper, 32.8 x 169.5 cm. The Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution.

recognize in Gong's allusion to the cursive calligraphy debate a clever positioning of his art in an effort to define an appropriate voice. As his inscription reflects, the *Zhong Kui* theme was decidedly "low." Gong Kai adopts and explores it in an effort to establish as strong a contrast possible with what Qian Xuan's painting eulogizes: the "high" art of the Southern Song. In place of the refined bird-and-flower subject matter so popular at the Southern Song court, we find amusing demons. In place of subtle colors, there is an emphatic use of ink, and in place of feminine charm, we encounter masculine bravado. Critics derided Gong Kai's style of painting as being overly coarse, presuming, it appears, a simple failing of the hand.<sup>62</sup> But a choice was being

made here. Gong's bare-bones style, his sharp contrasts of tone, reducing the imagery of his paintings to black and white with hardly any intermediary values, was the graphic corollary to the frank and direct action that was all too absent at the court during the late years of the Southern Song. In stylistic terms, this was an extreme position that threatened to reduce Gong Kai's status as a scholar to that of a common painter trying to earn a dollar by appealing to popular taste. By recalling the earlier Zhang Xu apologia, Gong Kai effectively tempers his pictorial voice and legitimates his position.

*Zhong Kui* was not the only legendary action figure that Gong Kai illustrated. According to Zhou Mi, he also painted individual portraits of Song Jiang and the other 35 bandits of the "water margin" active during the late

62. Xia Yanwen: "His manner of drawing is extremely coarse." *Tuhui baojian* (see note 39), *juan* 5, 126. Tang Hou: "His horse painting was modeled after that of Cao Ba, and [Gong Kai] was able to attain the idea of divine liveliness, but in his use of the brush he

tended to be rather coarse, and this was unsatisfactory." *Hua jian*, in *Huapin congshu*, ed. Yu Anlan (Shanghai: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1982), p. 425.



Northern Song.<sup>63</sup> Gong Kai's lengthy preface makes clear his admiration for these men of action, "capable, perhaps, of pacifying the chaos that reigned in the southeast." And again we note Gong's sensitivity concerning such "low" subjects. He begins the preface by mentioning that if the story of the 36 heroes were only the stuff of idle street chat, it hardly would be appropriate subject matter. Precedents, both in painting and writing exist, however, "and scholars do not dismiss it." At the other end of the spectrum, Gong Kai also painted portraits of Su Shi and Huang Tingjian.<sup>64</sup> For Gong Kai, swashbuckler and cultured scholar-official co-existed in a single ideal.

Gong Kai's painting reflects the search for an appropriate voice to sound forth the frustrations of the Song loyalists. It is a masculine voice, hinting of rawness and ferocity, but also a voice consciously tempered by reference to the civility and culture that the Northern Song literati represented. It is a voice that speaks to the reality of a unified China and hence can be said, at least in part, to address the north.

### Cultural positions

Writing a few years after the fall of the Yuan dynasty, Tao Zongyi (b. 1316) commented on the calligraphers of past generations, including Qian Xuan: "Although his small-sized standard script has method, it is unable to free itself of the decadent airs of the late Song" (fig. 9).<sup>65</sup> This comment, too, alludes to a calligraphy critique of the Northern Song—an oft-repeated refrain that asserted a parallel between dynastic decline (in this case the Tang) and the loss of standards and spirit in calligraphy.<sup>66</sup> But whereas Ouyang Xiu (1007–1072), Su Shi, Mi Fu, and numerous others established this theory

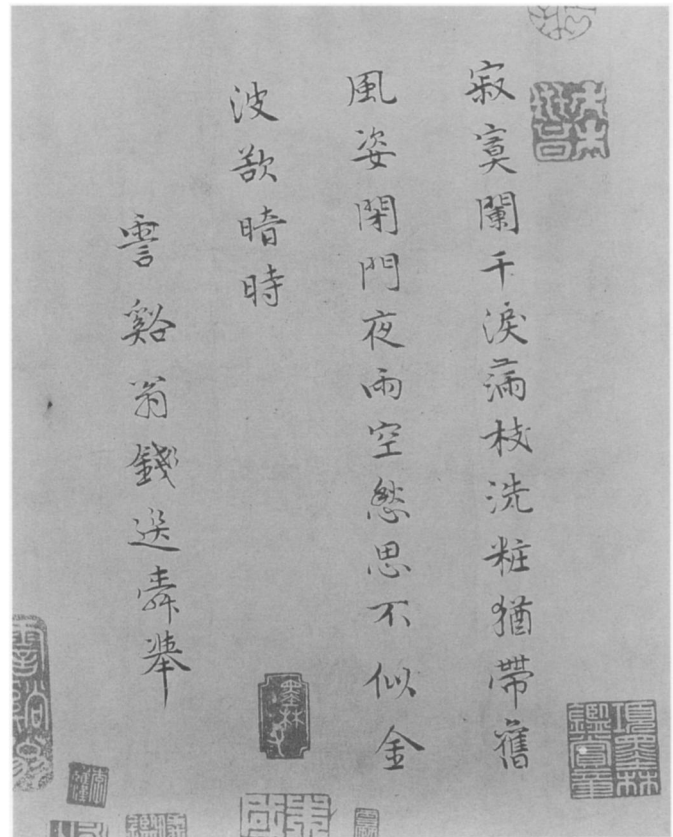


Figure 9. Qian Xuan (circa 1235–before 1307), *Pear Blossoms* (detail). Handscroll, ink and color on paper, 31.1 x 95.3 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, The Dillon Fund Gift, 1979.

of parallel degeneration on the basis of numerous calligraphers active from the late Tang through the early Song, interestingly, Tao Zongyi reserves this specific criticism for Qian Xuan alone. Perhaps Tao's comment was made on the basis of Qian Xuan's painting inscriptions, especially those accompanying his bird-and-flower painting.<sup>67</sup> The images, together with the content of Qian Xuan's poems, would have strongly reinforced the association of the artist with the lost Southern Song. In contrast, Gong Kai's calligraphy is praised for its individual approach: "[Gong Kai] was broadly informed and knowledgeable. Resolute of character, he was unlike the common and vulgar. His

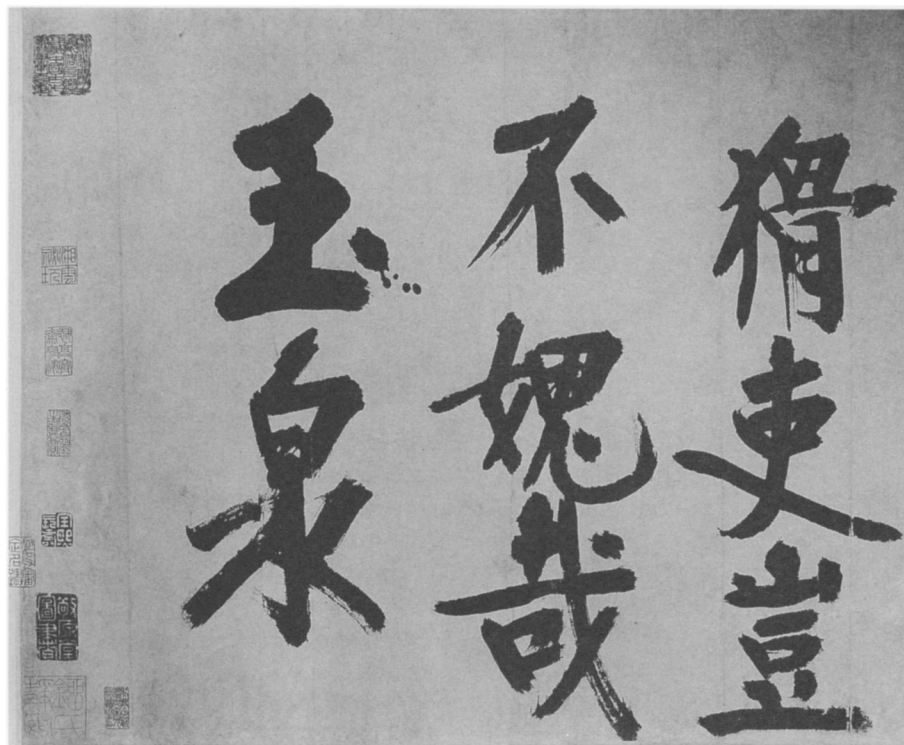
63. Zhou Mi, *Guixin zashi* (see note 28), 145–151.

64. "Ti zixie Su Huang xiang," *Guichengsou ji* (see note 37), 3b–4a.

65. Tao Zongyi, *Shushi huiyao* (reprint, Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1984), *juan* 7, 6b.

66. Su Shi: "After the deaths of Yan [Zhenqing] and Liu [Gongquan], the methods of the brush declined to the point of being severed with the past. Add to this the despairing chaos that accompanied the end of the Tang dynasty, the withering and obliteration of human talent, and [what might have existed of] the beauty of letters and élan during the ensuing Five Dynasties period was completely swept away." "Ping Yang shi suocang Ou Cai shu," *Su Shi wenji* (see note 61), *juan* 69, 2187. See the discussion in my book *Mi Fu* (see note 60), pp. 22ff.

67. To the best of my knowledge, these are the only reliable examples of Qian Xuan's calligraphy extant today.



ancient clerical script writing attains the brush-ideas of the Han and Wei [periods]" (fig. 8).<sup>68</sup> As one finds for his painting, Gong Kai chose a style of calligraphy—the archaic clerical script—that declares distance from the Southern Song court. Formal, distinct, perhaps a bit eccentric, Gong Kai's clerical script calligraphy occupies an ambiguous position between the two dynasties, its only certain allegiance to a distant past.

From Tao Zongyi's retrospective viewpoint, it may have been readily apparent whose writing represented the new dynasty, whose represented the old, and whose was in between, much as it must have been apparent in the early years of the Yuan. The northerners serving in the south would have been equally sensitive to the nuances of voice their calligraphy or painting presented in this early phase of a new dynasty. Perhaps they would have been more sensitive given their location and the general negative perception of the Mongol overlords they represented. Take, for example,

the calligraphy of the Khitan Yelü Chucai (1190–1244), famous advisor to Chinggis Khan, loyal servitor to the Mongols, and the great intellectual champion of Chinese culture prior to the Mongol conquest of the Southern Song (fig. 10).<sup>69</sup> Yelü's large-character calligraphy, as noted by Wen Fong and Zhu Renfu, overlays the blunt force and angularity of the Tang masters Yan Zhenqing (709–785) and Liu Gongchuan (778–865) with the gauntly eccentric forms of the Northern Song individualist Huang Tingjian.<sup>70</sup> An

69. See Igor de Rachewiltz, "Yeh-lü Ch'u-ts'ai (1189–1243): Buddhist Idealist and Confucian Statesman," in *Confucian Personalities*, ed. Arthur F. Wright and Denis C. Twitchett (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962), pp. 189–201.

70. Wen Fong, *Beyond Representation* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992), pp. 416–417. Zhu Renfu, *Zhongguo gudai shufa shi* (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1992), pp. 410–412. Yang Renkai, "Masterpieces by Three Calligraphers: Huang T'ing-chien, Yeh-lü Ch'u-ts'ai, and Chao Meng-fu," in *Words and Images*, ed. Alfreda Murck and Wen C. Fong (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1991), pp. 21–44.

68. Tao Zongyi (see note 65), *juan 7*, 6a.

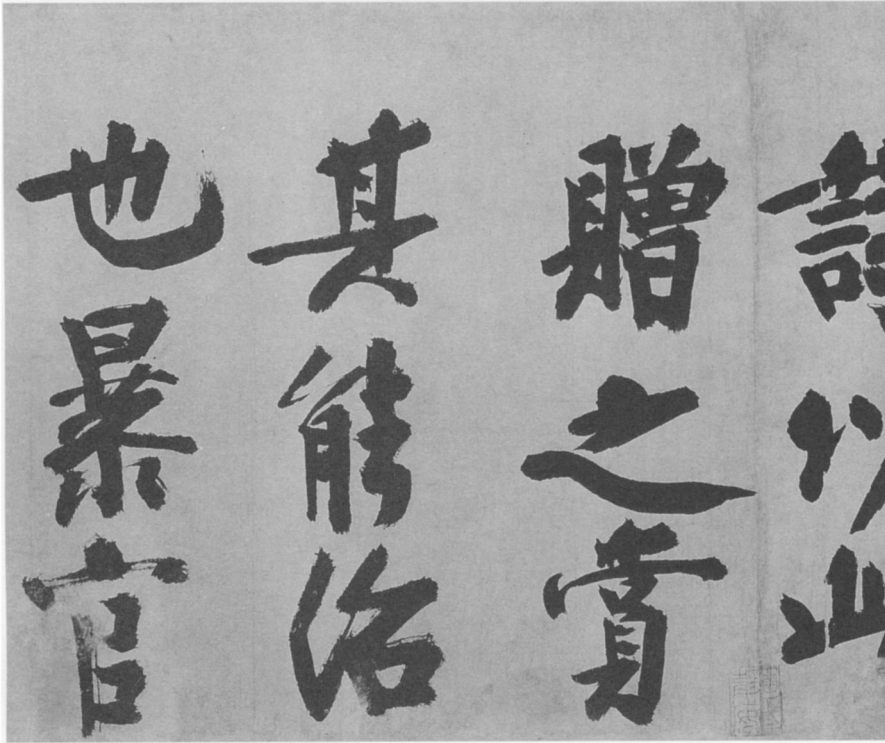


Figure 10. Yelü Chucai, *Poem of Farewell to Liu Man* (detail), dated 1240. Handscroll (right to left), ink on paper, 36.5 x 274.5 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, bequest of John M. Crawford, Jr., 1988.

official under the Jurchen Jin dynasty, prior to shifting allegiance to the conquering Mongols, Yelü Chucai was nurtured as an intellectual under the Jin and hence well exposed to the continuing tradition of Northern Song literati styles, such as that of Huang Tingjian. It would be interesting to know what Yelü's calligraphic style looked like prior to 1231, when he began to serve the Mongols ("Poem of Farewell to Liu Man," dated 1240, is Yelü Chucai's sole extant work). Does this writing, described by Zhu Renfu as possessing "the mighty airs of north of the [Yellow] River," represent a deliberate roughening of Huang Tingjian's style, in order to better suit Mongol taste?<sup>71</sup> Perusing Tao

71. By 1240, when Yelü Chucai wrote this calligraphy, his influence had waned tremendously at the court of Ögödei. Efforts must have been made at various levels and in various ways to make his strong support of Chinese culture palatable to the Mongols. See Thomas Allsen's discussion in "The Rise of the Mongolian Empire and Mongolian Rule in North China," *The Cambridge History of China*. Vol. 6, *Alien Regimes and Border States, 907–1368*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 375–381.

Zongyi's *Shushi huiyao*, one notes that Mongols, Central Asians, and other northerners commonly specialized in "large-character writing."<sup>72</sup> If Yelü Chucai's calligraphy is representative, the contrast with Southern Song writing must have been striking. For northerners serving in the south and seeking reconciliation with the conquered subjects, the starkness of the contrast could have been a liability.

This could help explain Gao Kegong's adoption of the style of Mi Youren (1074–1151) in his landscape painting, a choice that happens to be the same made by Gong Kai for his landscapes. While it is not impossible that Mi Youren's paintings were known in the north, it is highly unlikely. In any case, there is strong evidence that Gao Kegong did not begin painting until as late as

72. See, in particular, the entries on Anige, Daotong, Qingtong, Tuotuo and his brother Yexian tiebuer, Bie'er quebuhua, Dashi tiebuer, Puhua tiebuer, Nahai, and Dulietu. Tao Zongyi (see note 65), *juan 7*, 18a–20a.

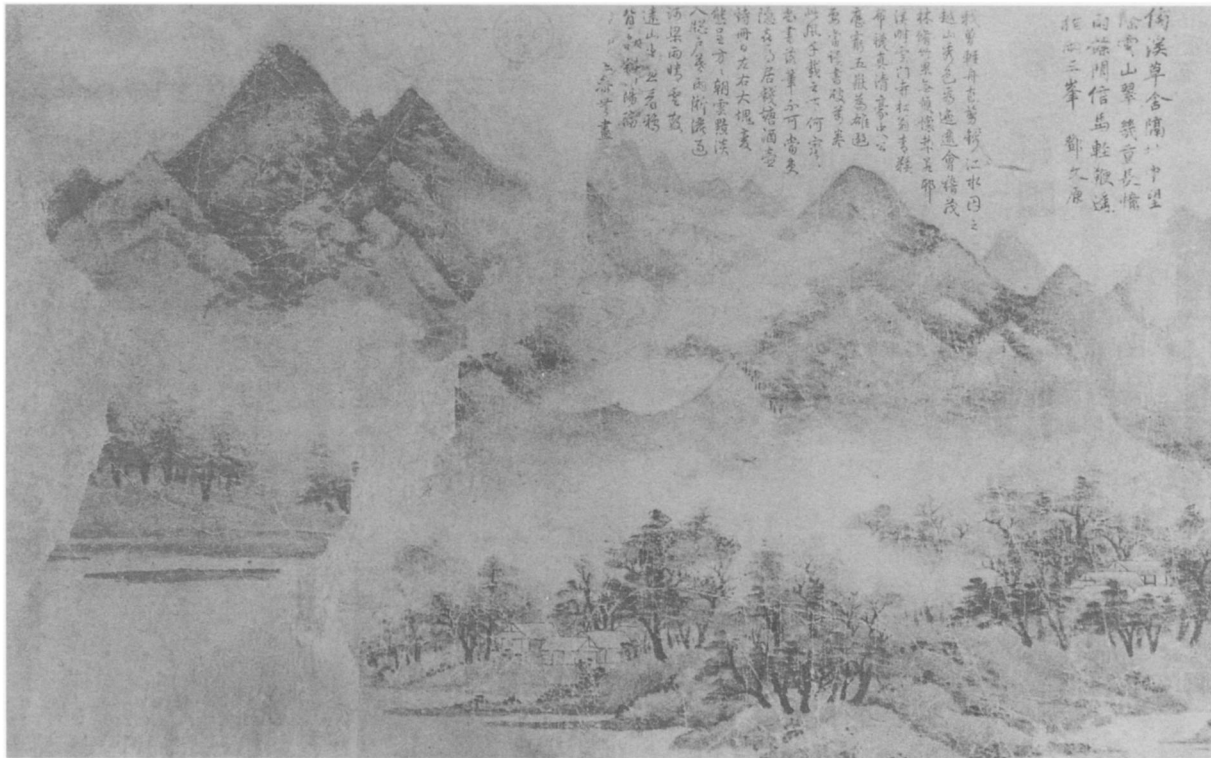


Figure 11. Gao Kegong (1248–1310), *Evening Haze in Autumn Mountains*. Handscroll (right to left), ink and color on paper, dimensions unknown. The Palace Museum, Beijing. From Xu Bangda, *Gu shuhua wei'e kaobian*, vol. 4.

the 1280s, and it was even after this that he became attracted to the landscape style of the two Mis.<sup>73</sup> This supports the thesis that Gao's choice of the distinctly southern style of landscape painting associated with Mi Fu and Mi Youren was inspired by unification and Gao's residence in the south (as opposed to a continuation of the Northern Song literati styles, including that of Mi Fu, in the north). The painting that best represents Gao's appeasement of southern taste is the now partial and

73. Zhao Mengfu inscribed a Gao Kegong handscroll of ink bamboo in 1321 with the following: "In the Zhiyuan reign (1264–1293) I served as director of a bureau in the Ministry of War. When I completed my term Yanjing (Gao Kegong) succeeded me and we became close friends. At that time, he had barely begun to paint. Later, he came to admire Mi's landscapes, which he imitated with great care. Eventually establishing his own style, he won lasting fame." Translation by Brizendine (see note 1), p. 25, who adapts a translation by H. C. Chang in his article "Inscriptions, Stylistic Analysis, and Traditional Judgment in Yüan, Ming and Ch'ing Paintings," *Asia Major* 7 (1959):207–227. The original inscription is recorded in Bian Yongyu (see note 41), *juan* 17, 188–189.

tattered *Evening Haze in Autumn Mountains* in the Palace Museum (fig. 11).<sup>74</sup> Zhao Mengfu's poetic inscription to this painting, as recorded prior to the scroll's mutilation, confirms that the stylistic source is Mi Youren.<sup>75</sup>

Gao Kegong's *Evening Haze in Autumn Mountains*, painted by a non-Chinese from the Western Regions serving in high office under the Mongols, is important for its statement of recognition of southern values and their place in the new polity. But it is even more important for what it may confirm, through contrast, about Gao's later landscape painting. In an inscription that Gao Kegong's fellow southern sojourner Li Kan added to Gao's *Clouds Encircling Elegant Peaks* (fig. 12),

74. As described by Xu Bangda in his *Gu shuhua wei'e kaobian* (Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1984), vol. 2, p. 43, n. 1, *Evening Mists in Autumn Mountains* was smuggled out of the palace collection by Pu Yi early in the Republican era. For some reason, the painting was cut into five pieces, two of which have since come together.

75. Zhang Chou, *Qinghe shuhua fang* (reprint, Taipei: Xuehai chubanshe, 1975), *wuji*, 1b.



Figure 13. Anonymous, *Dusk Over Sparse Woods* (detail), datable to 1265. Mural painting from the tomb of Feng Daozhen (d. 1265), near Datong, Shanxi Province. From *Wenwu* 10 (1962).

we find Li obliquely criticizing Gao Kegong's earlier landscapes, which he describes as possessing an abundance of elegance and luxuriance, but lacking in brush strength. Li had wanted to tell this directly to Gao, but travels and time had intervened. This painting is different, "its trees hoary and rocks weatherworn . . . what the ancients called possessing brush and ink."<sup>76</sup> There are various ways to interpret the apparent transformation in Gao Kegong's landscape painting, from the warmly atmospheric *Evening Haze in Autumn Mountains* to the bold and substantial *Clouds Encircling Elegant Peaks*. Traditionally, the transformation would be explained as a reorientation of stylistic influence, from Mi Youren to some loftier member of painting's early pantheon—indeed, Deng Wenyuan (1259–1328) singles out one such possibility in his own inscription to *Clouds Encircling Elegant Peaks*: the tenth-century painter Dong Yuan. But perhaps the shift is as much geographical as it

76. The inscriptions on Gao's painting are conveniently recorded in *Gugong shuhua tulu* (Taipei: Guoli gugong bowuyuan, 1990), vol. 4, p. 14.

is chronological. A mid-thirteenth-century landscape mural from the tomb of a Taoist priest discovered in Shanxi Province suggests that Gao Kegong looked north (fig. 13): the central mountain motif of the mural's composition bears a striking resemblance to the slightly later *Clouds Encircling Elegant Peaks*.

Early assessments of the development of Gao Kegong's painting report that he moved from the Two Mis to Dong Yuan and Li Cheng (917–969),<sup>77</sup> or in ideological terms, from accommodation with the south to a cultural synthesis joining north (Li) with south (Dong and the Two Mis). The latter, of course, provided the more suitable statement of unity befitting a high official of the new dynasty. In contrast to Zhao Mengfu's *Autumn Colors on the Qiao and Hua Mountains*, a painting that presents the problem of integration and unity, Gao Kegong's *Clouds Encircling Elegant Peaks* presents their solution. Like Gong Kai, Gao Kegong assumes a virile air. Bold tonal contrasts and assertive brushwork, not to mention

77. Xia Wenyuan, *Tuhui baojian* (see note 39), *juan* 5, 138.

the vigorously phallic posturing of his mountain, reveal Gao's recognition of the need to assume a masculine voice. And like Gong Kai, Gao Kegong tempers that voice with suggestions of culture and civility, now expressed through allusions to antiquity in brushwork.

An often-cited inscription by Liu Guan to a letter written by Xianyu Shu comments on the intercultural milieu of the Zhiyuan reign (1264–1293):

It has been noted before that during the Zhiyuan era, the prominent persons from the Central Plain were extremely numerous. It was a period of time that was not too distant from the fall of Jin, and old loyalists from the Song were still living. Roads and communications had just undergone massive unification, and the weapons and banners [of the Mongol Army] were spread out in the four directions covering the Yangzi and Huai Rivers. There were no longer any restrictions on travel between north and south. Literary activities flowed freely, and northerners and southerners admired and respected each other. Both were anxious to see each others' works, which had previously been inaccessible to them.<sup>78</sup>

Liu Guan's retrospective outlook sounds suspiciously rosy, but the interactions to which he alludes were no doubt real. Qian Xuan's, Gong Kai's, and Gao Kegong's paintings could hardly appear more unrelated—delicate blossoms, comic ghosts, and lofty landscapes. And yet, when viewed as representatives of cultural positions defined in part by the historico-geographical reality of a unified China, one recognizes these as voices engaged in mutual, and perhaps contentious, discussion.

78. Cited from Marilyn Wong Fu, "The Impact of the Reunification" (see note 1), p. 376. The full inscription, which is extremely lengthy, is provided in this article, pp. 376–378.

#### GLOSSARY

An Lushan	安祿山	Deng Wenyuan	鄧文原
Bayi	八姨	Dong Yuan	董源
Bo Juyi	白居易	Gao Kegong	高克恭
<i>caoshu</i>	草書	Gong Kai	龔開
<i>Changhen ge</i>	長恨歌	Gongjin	公謹
Chen Fang	陳方	Han	漢
<i>ci</i>	詞	Han Tuo Zhou	韓侂胄
		Han Wudi	漢武帝
		Hangzhou	杭州
		Hua	華
		Huafuzhu	華不注
		Huai	淮
		Huaiyin	淮陰
		Huang Jin	黃潛
		Huang Tingjian	黃庭堅
		Huizong	徽宗
		Jin	金
		<i>jinshi</i>	進士
		<i>kaishu</i>	楷書
		Kaiyuan	開元
		Ke Jiushi	柯九思
		Kunlun	崑崙
		Li Cheng	李成
		Li Di	李迪
		Li Kan	李衍
		Lin Chun	林椿
		Lin'an	臨安
		Liu Gongquan	柳公權
		Liu Guan	柳貫
		Liu Man	劉滿

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Mi Fu	米芾	Wen Zhengming	文徵明
Mi Youren	米友仁	Xia Wenyan	夏文彥
Ningzong	寧宗	Xianchun	咸淳
Ouyang Xiu	歐陽修	Xianyu Shu	鮮于樞
Qi	齊	Xu Hao	徐浩
Qian Xuan	錢選	Xuanzong	玄宗
Qianlong	乾隆	Yan Zhenqing	顏真卿
Qiao	鵲	Yang Guifei	楊貴妃
<i>qingniao</i>	青鳥	Yangzi	揚子
Qinguo furen	秦國夫人	Yaochi	瑤池
Qizhou	齊州	Yelü Chucai	耶律楚材
<i>Ran Gong</i>	髯龔	<i>yimin</i>	遺民
<i>Ran jun</i>	髯君	Yuan	元
Shandong	山東	<i>Yuefu buti</i>	樂府補題
<i>shi</i>	詩	Zhang Xu	張旭
Song	宋	Zhang Xuan	張萱
Song Huizong	宋徽宗	Zhao Mengfu	趙孟頫
Song Zhezong	宋哲宗	Zhao Qianli	趙千里
Su Shi	蘇軾	Zhao Yuqin	趙與勳
Suonan weng	所南翁	Zheng Sixiao	鄭思肖
Suzhou	蘇州	<i>zhenshu</i>	真書
Tang	唐	Zhezong	哲宗
Tang Xuanzong	唐玄宗	Zhiyuan	至元
Tao Zongyi	陶宗儀	Zhong Kui	鍾馗
Tianjin	天津	Zhou Mi	周密
<i>tongshou</i>	通守	Zhou Muwang	周穆王
Wang Wei	王維	Zhu Tan	朱檀
Wei [Northern]	[北] 魏	<i>Zuo zhuan</i>	左傳
Wen Tong	文同		