

Chinese Art

3. The Yuan Dynasty

*Pinyin spelling mostly approximates to English pronunciation apart from, notably,
Q = "ch" in cheap. X = "sh" in sham. Zh = "j" in jasmine. Z = "ds" hands. C = "ts" as in tsar.*

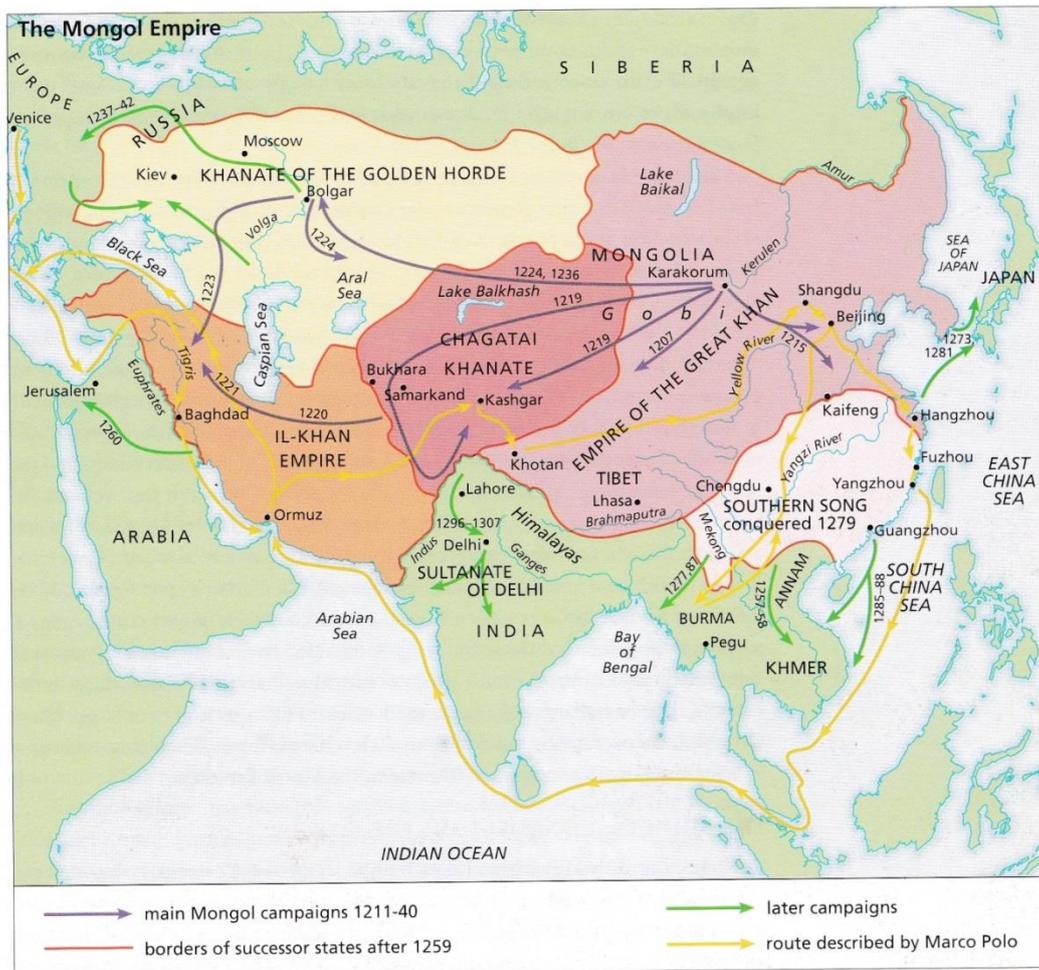
Names are given with surnames first

Contents

The Mongols Cometh	3
Leftover Subjects: “Yimin”	4
<i>Zheng Sixiao (also spelled Cheng Ssu-hsiao 1241-1318)</i>	4
<i>Gong Kai (also spelled Kung K'ai 1222-1307)</i>	5
<i>Qian Xuan (also spelled Ch'ien Hsuan, c 1235 – 1307)</i>	6
The Foundation of Yuan Landscapes	11
<i>Zhao Mengfu (1254-1322)</i>	11
Classical Bamboo Painting	17
<i>Guan Daosheng (1262-1319)</i>	17
<i>Li Kan (1245-1320)</i>	19
Other Landscape Styles	22
Later Yuan	26
The Four Great Masters of the Yuan	28
<i>Huang Gongwang (also spelled Huang Kung-wang, 1269-1354)</i>	28
<i>Wu Zhen (also spelled Wu Chen, 1280-1354)</i>	31
<i>Wang Meng (c 1308-1385)</i>	36
<i>Ni Zan (1301-1374)</i>	39
Bamboo Painting of Ni Zan and Wu Zhen	44
References	50

The Mongols Cometh

Genghis Khan, born around 1167, became ruler of the steppe people in 1206 and carried out extensive reforms, most notably of the military. He claimed to be Heaven's chosen instrument and his army created the largest land empire the world has ever seen, from Korea to the Black Sea. From 1210 China was over-run in stages. The north and central parts fell 40 years before the Southern Song succumbed in the southeast, which became a haven for resistance. Mongols or Central Asians held military power and Chinese officials under them ran the civil government. Kublai Khan, grandson of Genghis, never talked directly to the Chinese. Few Chinese were offered senior positions by the Mongols and the top echelon of government, usually the preserve of the scholar-official, was barred to them. The social hierarchy established at the start of the Yuan Dynasty placed Mongols at the top, followed by other non-Chinese people who had helped the conquest.

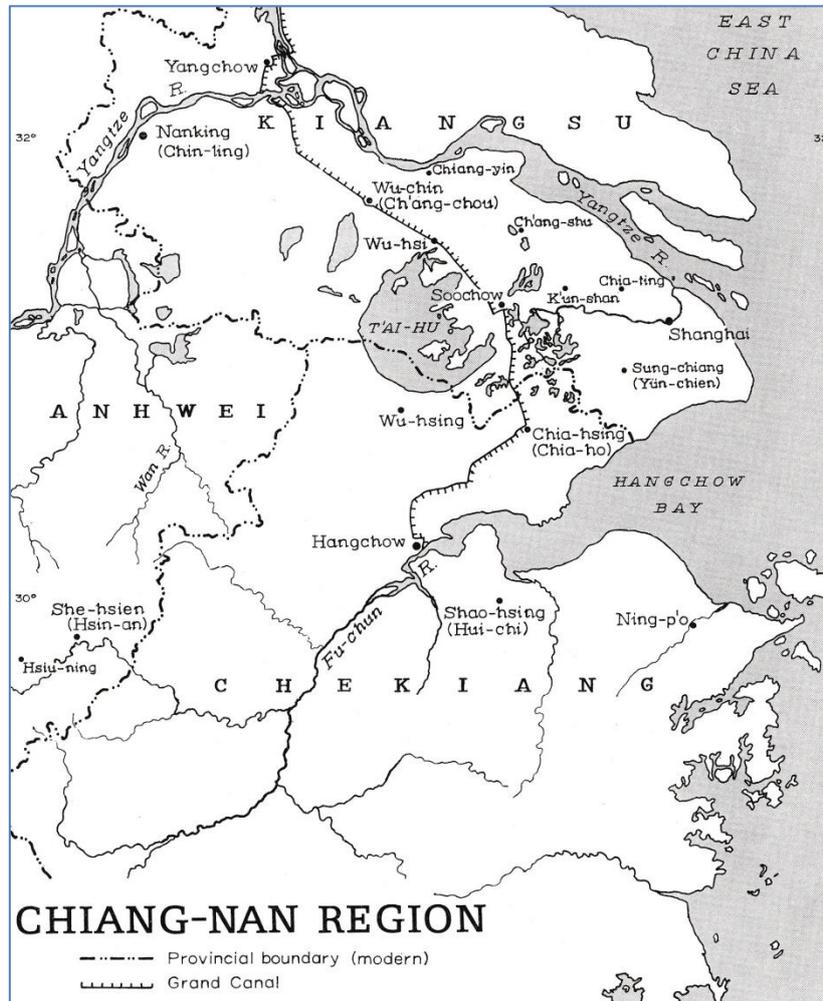


Kublai finally prevailed over the Southern Song in 1279. The Chinese who lived near the Southern Song capital were suspected (rightly in most cases) of tenacious loyalty to the old regime. The literati of the south were severely discriminated against. People were reckoned in ten classes; "... *eighth, entertainers [actors and prostitutes]; ninth, Confucian scholars; tenth, paupers*", ran one contemporary report. Examinations were banned and not re-introduced until 1315. Even then Chinese from the southeast found their test papers much tougher than those given to others and a quota was imposed on those who passed.

From the Tang and especially under the Song the scholar-official had been the pre-eminent subject. Passing the examination degree was compared in the Tang to the "Ascendancy to the Land of the Immortals" and the Song referred to the appointments of ministers as "The Selected Ones for the Pure and Splendid". The scholar-official had his living expenses paid (as well as receiving a salary), was exempt from tax and received gifts from the Emperor. The exclusion of the literati from their customary vocation and their reaction to barbarian rule would have an enormous influence on the course of Chinese painting. Despite the hardships endured, the Yuan Dynasty would prove to be one of the greatest ages in Chinese art.

Leftover Subjects: “Yimin”

Men who had held office at the end of the Southern Song and had even fought to defend it could not break their loyalty by working for a new regime. They became known as *yimin* or “leftover subjects”. They retired from public life all together and remained in the Jiangnan region (“Chiang-nan” on the map below) in the southeast usually around Hangzhou (“Hangchow”) and Suzhou (“Soochow”). The area was to remain for the rest of the Yuan the geographical focus of the literati. The *yimin* lived mostly in poverty and met to compose poetry with hidden references to the Song. They acted symbolically; for example, refusing to lie or sit facing north – the direction of the Mongol capital.



Zheng Sixiao (also spelled Cheng Ssu-hsiao 1241-1318)

Originally Zheng was called Mo, but when the Southern Song fell he took a first name which referred to the Song - Xiao being part of the imperial family name. He had passed exams for office under the Song, and was living in Suzhou when the city was treacherously, in his view, surrendered to the Mongols in 1275. Infuriated by the sight of Chinese collaborating with the invaders and bitter over the fall of the Song (Hangzhou fell early in the following year) he refrained from suicide only because his mother needed care. He settled in Suzhou with other dissidents and couched his hatred for Mongols in poetry and painting.

The art of the *yimin* is thus one of dissent and is disguised so that only fellow literati would understand the allusions. This is a feature of literati art: private and intended for only a limited circle of scholarly friends. Another feature was that the inscribed poem and the painting were inseparable and, as Su Shi had maintained [see Part 2], were equally important. More notable than either of these, and a vein running through all literati art under the Mongols, was that these works were intimate statements of the artist's personal feeling and circumstance were understood as such by their contemporaries. It was unthinkable to judge paintings purely as artistic form divorced from the artist and his situation. Painter and painting became inseparable.

Zheng Sixiao's favourite subject was the Chinese orchid, a more modest plant than its larger and lush tropical relatives. His surviving work hardly looks political. Two clumps of orchid have a single flower serving as a dark accent. The poem on the left was written by another *yimin* and the one on the right by Zheng:

*I have been asking Hsi-huang [an ancient hermit] with my head bowed;
Who were you – and why did you come to this land?
I opened my nostrils before making the painting,
And there, floating everywhere in the sky, is the antique fragrance undying.*



Zheng Sixiao, *Orchid*, 1306

The orchid, fragile and unassertive, blooming modestly and spreading its delicate fragrance in hidden places was a particularly suitable image for a sensitive man withdrawn from the world. The poem may also refer to the undying nature of his loyalty to the Song. Asked why he had shown the flower without earth around its roots, Zheng Sixiao replied the earth had been stolen by the barbarians; an image of the artist himself - rootless and vulnerable but with a quiet integrity.

Gong Kai (also spelled Kung K'ai 1222-1307)

Gong Kai was a talented and learned man, serving briefly in the Board of Salt Revenues under the Song and also working with the general who defended Jiangnan against the Mongols. He was a close friend of the minister Lu Hsui-fu who, when the last boats of the Song fleet were being destroyed by the Mongols near Canton, took into his arms the boy who was the last claimant to the Song throne and leapt into the sea with him to drown. Gong lived in extreme poverty in his final years, trading his literary compositions and paintings for goods in kind.

Horses were a specialty. Gong Kai would paint these at night in his dirt-floored house spreading the paper, as he had no desk, on the back of one of his sons who leaned against a couch. His horses were described as "flying like the wind, with misty manes and warlike bones, muscles as supple as orchid leaves – truly endowed with all the noble attributes." The high-strung animal constrained by a halter, a symbol of the repression of freedom, could stand for indomitable spirit. Gong Kai's *Emaciated Horse*, however, is a different beast. Gaunt and bony, half-starved, pitiful but not devoid of dignity the animal represents Gong; barely surviving after the fall of the Song.



Gong Kai, *Emaciated Horse*, late 13th century

This work introduces another theme of the *yimin*, a harking back to the Tang Dynasty when China's power was at its peak. Gong Kai's Horse recalls the style of the Tang painter Han Gan [Part 1]. The horse is reversed compared to Han Gan's and without restraint, obviously one is not needed. Gong's poem reads;

*Ever since the clouds and mist fell upon the Heavenly Pass,
Empty have been the twelve imperial stables of the former dynasty.
Today who will have pity for the shrunken form of his splendid body?
In the last light of the setting sun, on the sandy bank, he casts his towering shadow – like a mountain!*

Gong Kai might now be merely the shadow of a mountain, but retains the features; unconquerable and proudly standing in desolation.

Qian Xuan (also spelled Ch'ien Hsuan, c 1235 – 1307)

Qian Xuan was the most famous and important of the *yimin*. In the 1260s he received a high degree in the exams. After the fall of the Song, Qian Xuan renounced his scholarly life, burnt his books in disgust that Confucian learning had failed to save his country from conquest and determined not to cooperate with the Mongols. He refused to register as head of a Confucian household which would have exempted him from some taxes and forced labour duty. He moved to Wuxing ("Wu-hsing" on the map above just south of Lake Tai) and to support himself sold his paintings.

Qian Xuan also looked back to the Tang. *Yang Guifei Mounting a Horse* shows the Tang Emperor Xuanzong looking back from his horse as his famous mistress, murdered after the An Lushan Rebellion, struggles, even with much assistance, to rise to the saddle. Qian's painting follows the Tang artist Zhou Fang in dispersing figures along a scroll with no ground or background. Whereas Zhou was interested in his figures, Qian wants to recall the past, seeing the Tang Emperor as a symbol of an ideal China; unencumbered by uncultured invaders.



Qian Xuan, *Yang Guifei Mounting a Horse*, 1300

These references to the Tang by the *yimin* were also a rejection of the artistic styles of the Southern Song. This was partly condemnation for being so weak as to allow barbarians to take over the empire. Qian painted from childhood and was accomplished with a varied repertoire. His technical skill was often confused with professionals. One contemporary complained; “*Common artisans have been usurping his name and competing with one another in turning out forgeries to deceive people. But the difference is as plain as that between jade and worthless stones – how could anyone confuse them?*”

Pear Blossoms (below) expresses Qian Xuan’s sorrow at the destruction of the Song dynasty, emphasised in the quatrain at the left:

*The lonely tear-stained face, teardrops washing the branches.
 Though now without makeup, her charms remain.
 Behind the closed gate, on a rainy night, how she is filled with sadness,
 How differently she looked bathed in golden waves of moonlight, before the darkness fell.*

The last two lines refer to Bo Juyi’s poem *Song of Unending Sorrow* [the end is cited in Part 1] lamenting the death of Yang Guifei which included the lines:

*The lonely, jade-like, face, stained with tears,
 Like a rain in spring on the blossom of the pear.*

In Bo Juyi's poem Tang Emperor Xuanzong dreams of his murdered mistress whose tear-stained face is compared to a rain-bathed pear blossom. In his quatrain Qian Xuan mirrors those feelings in recalling how *his* love (the Song dynasty) looked before the darkness fell. His painting includes no woman and the poem does not mention pear, but his literati friends would understand the message.

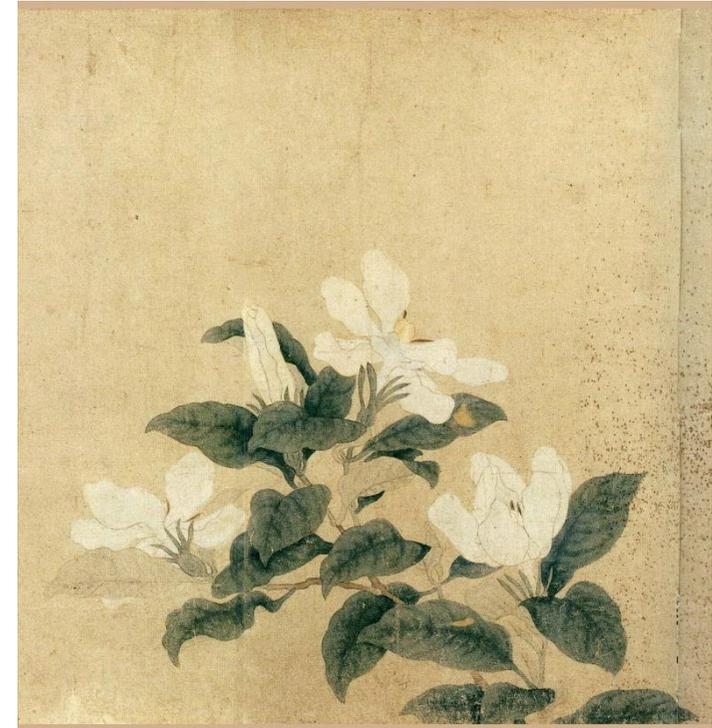


Qian Xuan, *Pear Blossoms*, c 1280

Qian won a great reputation as a bird and flower painter. Most of his pictures show a single spray or blossoming branch. They are painted meticulously and coloured subtly. Every knot and nodule on the branches, every leaf and each vein are drawn exactly. *“Yet these pictures are in no wise mere botanical studies [as might have been produced in the Southern Song Academy] but breathe, rather with the freshness of life (Sickman).”*

Zhao Mengfu (see below) wrote on one of Qian Xuan's works: "These pictures of gardenia and crab apple are well endowed with a sense of life. The excellence of Shun-chu's [Qian Xuan's] painting can be recognised in this quality. The other trivial pictures one sees [under his name] are all done by his students."

Qian produced a scroll *Eight Flowers*, now in the National Palace Museum in Beijing.



Qian Xuan, *Orchid and Crab Apple (detail) from Eight Flowers*, late 13th century

The use of white pigment on the flowers against the near-white of the paper, and the gossamer-fine veins on the leaves may elude reproduction. Animation and life is produced partly by the delicate quality of leaves and flowers which are frequently painted in colour alone, without an outline. The contrast between the top and underside of leaves make them appear to be turning in the air. Apart from the political messages in their works, Yuan literati had a quest to capture life in their art.

Having commemorated the Tang, Qian invokes a similar resonance to history with *Returning Home*, projecting his own sense of loss and alienation onto Tao Chien (365-427). He was an official during the Period of Division who, at the age of 40, left the last of several frustrating government jobs to become a farmer. Tao Chien wrote a poem in 405 called *Returning Home* which wrestled with the dilemma of choosing between the duty to serve felt by any Confucian scholar and withdrawing from administration out of loyalty to a previous regime. As well as the historical reference of the subject, Qian recalls the Tang “blue-and-green” style of landscape.



Qian Xuan, *Returning Home*, c 1285

Qian inscribed his own poem, which reflects his own situation and points out the poignancy of Tao Chien's work:

*In front of his gate he plants five willows;
 By the eastern fence, he picks chrysanthemums.
 In his long chant is a lingering purity,
 But there is never enough wine to sustain him.
 To live in this world one must drink,
 For to take office brings only shame.
 In a moment of inspiration he composes "Returning Home" –
 The poem of a thousand years.*

The Foundation of Yuan Landscapes

At the beginning of the Song Dynasty officials who had switched allegiance during the Five Dynasties period were condemned as shameless. A righteous minister, by strict Neo-Confucian standards, should not serve two masters; he must show absolute loyalty to the fallen dynasty by withdrawing from worldly affairs.

Zhao Mengfu (1254-1322)

Qian Xuan was one of the elder members of a group of scholars known as the *Eight Talents of Wuxing*. The group broke up in 1286 when a younger member, Zhao Mengfu, was invited to Peking to serve Kublai and accepted. Most of the other *Eight Talents* went with him, but Qian Xuan stayed behind. Qian's uprightness was contrasted with Zhao's ambiguous ethics – a descendant of the Song imperial house was judged to have accepted the Mongol invitation rather too speedily.

Zhao Mengfu was the most gifted of the scholars who consented to join the Mongol court, and was the principal architect of the Yuan renaissance in painting and calligraphy. Zhao was strongly criticised for working for the Mongols. However, much of the condemnation came later from Ming snobs; Zhao's contemporaries treated him with sympathy. He travelled widely in the North as Secretary of the Board of War until the mid-1290s and went on to serve the Mongols in various posts until retiring in 1319. Zhao's move north was crucial in preserving the vitality of Chinese artistic culture. The scholars of southeast China had been cut off from the north for more than 50 years, and knew little about the art in the early Song period: they had never seen a Northern Song landscape [Part 2]. Zhao Mengfu's travels enabled him to collect Northern Song paintings and he returned to Wuxing with these in 1295. He was a renowned horse painter and the Mongols, who as nomads naturally loved the subject, may have been drawn to him by this skill. There is no evidence, however, that he painted for Kublai or his Mongol dignitaries.



Zhao Mengfu, *Horse and Groom in the Wind*, 1280

Like the *yimin* Zhao rejected Song styles. *Horse and Groom in the Wind* is painted in the same manner as Li Gonglin the Tang master – outline and wash against a blank ground. The line drawing recaptures the classical cleanliness of Tang figure painting, about which Zhao wrote: “*Figure paintings by Song artists are inferior to those of the Tang masters. It is the Tang masters I have resolved to follow; I want to expunge completely all traces of the Song artists’ brush-and-ink from my works.*”

Also like the *yimin* Zhao Mengfu sought to capture the life of subjects. His *Sheep and Goat* is a wonderful example. The sheep is done in the wet manner - the brush heavily loaded with slightly dilute ink so the strokes are not distinct but run together in mottled areas. The goat is painted with dry brushstrokes – the brush lightly loaded with thick ink which has been allowed to dry partially on the ink stone before being picked up by the brush. Sweeping the brush over the paper means the ink does not soak in, but stays on the surface and crumbles like charcoal. The two styles are contrasted brilliantly here and help to show tremendous life in the two animals.

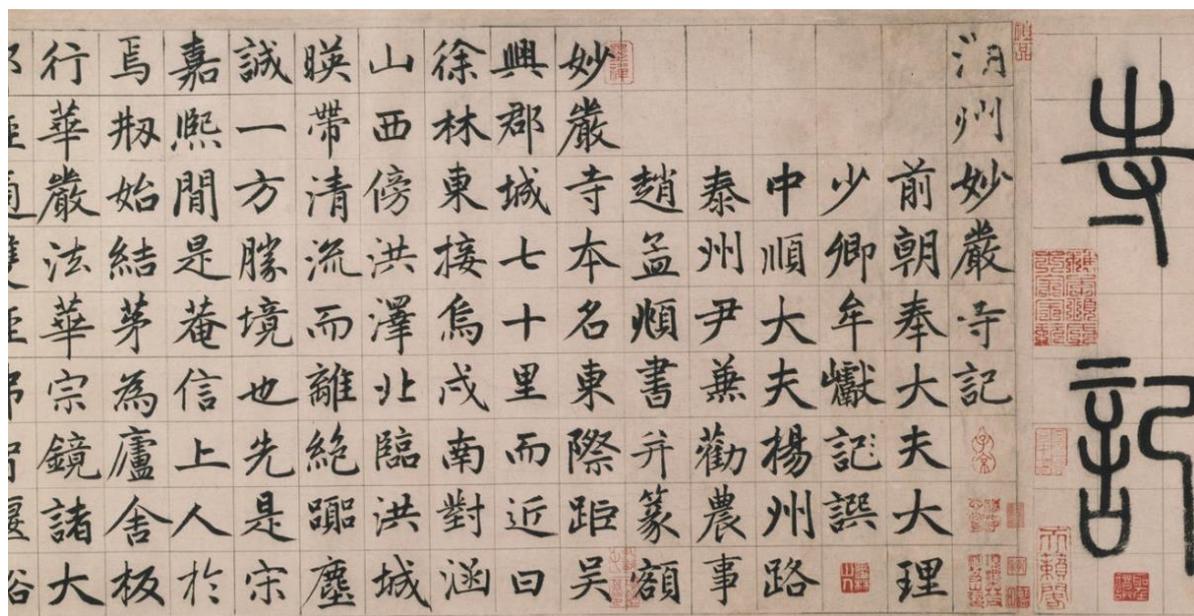
The goat's stubbornness and argumentative nature is clear from his stance and expression, and the feeling is enhanced by the (almost tangible) rough and thick spiky coat. The sheep seems placid and pliable, unable to cause any friction whatsoever.



Zhao Mengfu, *Sheep and Goat*, late 13th century

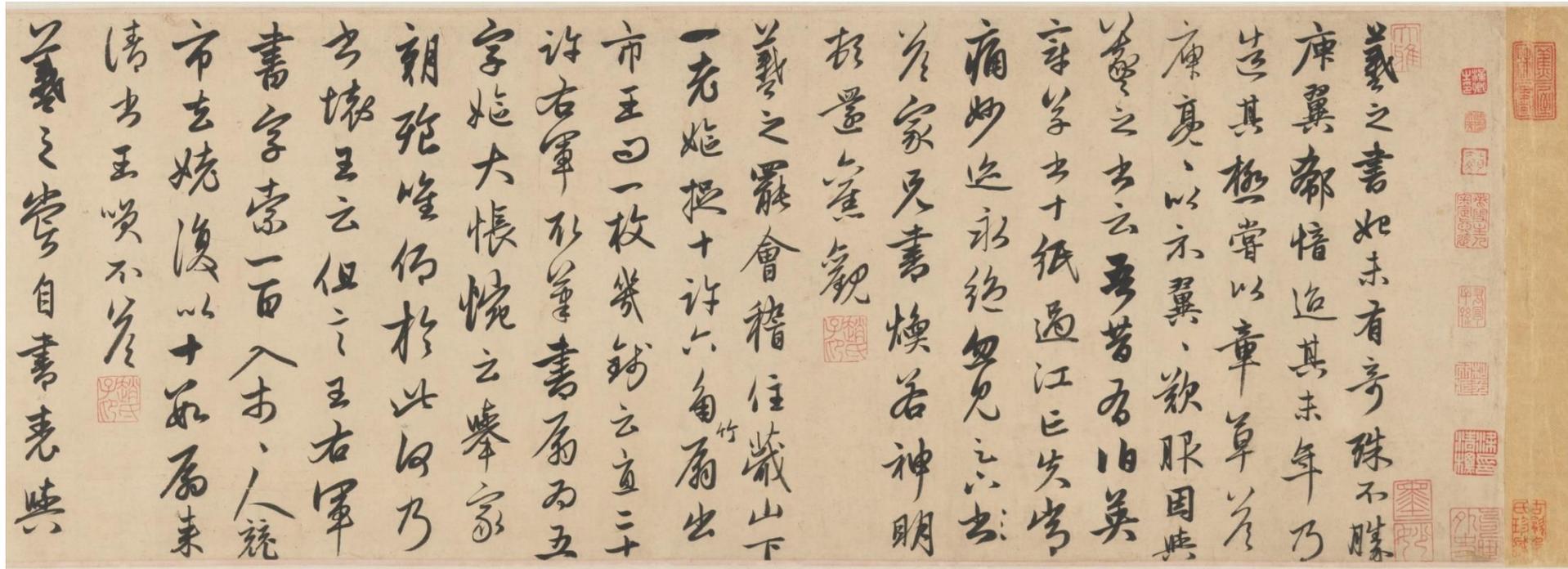
Zhao Mengfu's inscription, in his wonderful calligraphy on the left which balances the dark of the goat, reads, "I have often painted horses but have never before tried painting sheep or goats so, when Chung-hsin asked for such a painting I did it for amusement. Although it doesn't succeed in approaching the old masters, it does capture something of the ch'i-yin [spirit resonance]". The beauty and strength of Zhao's calligraphy (on the left) contrasts with the hand of the inscription (top) of the Qing emperor Qianlong (reigned 1736-96).

Zhao believed calligraphy, as well as painting, should be guided by ancient models. He thought Southern Song calligraphy lacked a firm structure. After studying the calligraphy of Wang Xishi, in particular the *Preface to the Orchid Pavilion* [Part 1], Zhao Mengfu produced his new regular script shown in the *Record of the Miaoyan Monastery*. The characters in Wang's script are reproduced but with stronger brushstrokes. Zhao's new clerical script came to dominate the Yuan period but the Ming, condemning him for working with the Mongols, later judged his script "weak and effeminate".



Zhao Mengfu, *Record of the Miaoyan Monastery (clerical script)*, 1309-1310

Zhao Mengfu also developed running script. *Four Anecdotes from the Life of Wang Xishi* relates four well-known stories which appear in the 5th century *Memorial on Calligraphy*. The first notes that in his late years Wang was especially admired for his archaic running-clerical script. The second tells how Wang helped a poor old woman selling fans by writing calligraphy on them and thus making them much more valuable. The third how Wang could not discern a forgery of his work and the fourth of Wang's special love for geese – he wrote chapters of his calligraphy for a Daoist priest in exchange for ten fine geese.



Zhao Mengfu, *Four Anecdotes from the Life of Wang Xishi* (detail), c 1310

Despite these wonders, Zhao's major achievements are landscapes, which draw on Tang and early Song traditions but show the innovations which would change the course of Chinese landscape painting; "the roots of much of the rest of Yuan landscapes are planted firmly in these few works of Zhao."

Autumn Colours is dedicated to his friend Chou Mi (1232-98), a famous collector and writer, who was then living in Hangzhou but whose ancestral home was in the northeast of China in Shantung Province. Zhao had visited this area during his travels north and painted the work from memory, including the two mountains (Xiao and Hua) for his friend who had never been there. The work is an artistic not a topographical study – the mountains are far apart in reality.



Zhao Mengfu, *Autumn Colours on the Qiao and Hua Mountains*, 1296

Zhao uses some of Dong Yuan's methods, in particular the piled-up horizontal ground lines. The brushwork is rich. Specific strokes are used repeatedly for different types of foliage and in building up the mountains. However, the depth is reduced and size is arbitrary, recalling primitive landscapes before recession had been developed. Zhao Mengfu wrote on a painting in 1301:

"The most precious quality in painting is the antique spirit. If this isn't present, the work isn't worth much, even though it may be skilfully done. Nowadays, people who paint in a detailed and delicate manner with bright colours consider themselves proficient artists. They are unaware of the fact that works lacking antique spirit aren't worth looking at. My own paintings may seem to be quite simply and carelessly done, but the true connoisseur will recognise that they adhere to old models and are thus deserving of approval."

Village by Water was painted for a friend, Ch'ien Te-chun. A note on the work written by Zhao explains:

"A month later [after he had finished the painting], Te-chun has brought this painting to show me, already mounted in scroll form. I am very much embarrassed that something that was only a free play of my brush should now be so much cherished and valued by my friend."

The composition runs in a continuous diagonal recession from the right (the traditional starting place for Chinese pictures). The horizontal ground lines are more natural than in *Autumn Colours* but dots are again used extensively. Once more it is not a real scene. What matters is the personal style: *"behind the determined preference for plainness in both scenery and style is a mood of cool withdrawal"*.



Zhao Mengfu, *Village by Water*, 1302

The plainness is more marked in *Twin Pines, Level Distance*. The brushstrokes are more limited and the composition sparser. Both enhance the feeling of detachment, and this served as an expression of personal feeling. Away from the administration of the far-reaching Mongol empire, Zhao enjoyed the scholarly life in the southeast. He was, however, proud of his service (which continued part-time and survived dreadful upheavals at the start of the 14th century) but sought re-assurance it had not tainted his reputation. These sentiments are expressed in *Twin Pines*: an ancient pine, significant as a symbol of a virtuous gentleman and also of survival, occupies a quiet island yet watches over a distant landscape. The style and expressive nature of these paintings pave the way for later Yuan literati art.



Zhao Mengfu, *Twin Pines, Level Distance*, 1310

Zhao's brushwork in his landscapes brought a calligraphic quality to art. He wrote about how different styles of calligraphy should be adopted for rendering three favourite subjects of the literati:

Bamboo (supple but always resilient): a variety of clerical script in which strokes are tapered and bent precisely and elegantly;

Old trees (their hold on life tenacious even if they appear desiccated, even almost dead): large seal script with thick strokes forming angular relatively static patterns;

Rocks (hard and slow to erode): flying white technique in which the brush hairs separate by pressure or swift movement and so leave streaks of white within the stroke.

His *Bamboo, Rocks and Lonely Orchids* show how one deft stroke is used to render a segment of bamboo stalk, or an orchid leaf or the upper face of a rock.



Zhao Mengfu, *Bamboo, Rocks and Lonely Orchids*, early 14th century

Classical Bamboo Painting

Guan Daosheng (1262-1319)

The second pine in Zhao Mengfu's *Twin Pines, Level Distance* may have represented his wife, Guan Daosheng, with whom he had a very happy marriage. Guan Daosheng is regarded as one of China's most famous female artists. Western art historians have pretty much neglected women painters (whatever their nationality). Apart from Herbert Giles in *An Introduction to the History of Chinese Pictorial Art* (Kelly & Walsh, 1905), Chinese women painters have generally been overlooked in Western art history books. Oswald Siren mentioned a few in his *Chinese Painting: Leading Masters and Principles* (The Ronald Press, 1958) but slighted them. He regarded Guan Daosheng's paintings as "minor".

Nevertheless, female artists were routinely recorded by Chinese art historians and sincerely praised by Chinese critics. In the 19th century Tang Souyu, the wife of a distinguished scholar, compiled *The Jade Terrace History of Painting*, to partner *The Jade Terrace History of Calligraphy*, a survey of female calligraphers written by the Hangzhou scholar Li E in the 18th century. Guan Daosheng appears in both books. Emperor Renzong ordered her to write the *Thousand Character Classic* – a poem used as a primer since the 6th century to teach Chinese characters to children. On seeing the result, which he intended the imperial family to use, he remarked

"Later generations can know that my reign not only had an expert female calligrapher, but a whole family capable in calligraphy [referring to Zhao Mengfu's revitalisation of scripts], which is an extraordinary circumstance."

Imperial and aristocratic families had long histories of ladies learning the "Three Perfections"; poetry, calligraphy and painting. *The Jade Terrace History of Painting* includes details of imperial lady painters in the Tang and Five Dynasties periods. More are recorded in the Song, as painting became a popular accomplishment for the gentry and the wives and relatives of the literati. Tang Souyu reported that the Northern Song palace had pieces by two imperial ladies. Cao Zhongwan, who was praised for capturing the beauty of rivers and mountains and not merely painting easy attractive things, had five works on display; *Peach Blossom Stream, Willow Bank, The Smartweed Embankment, Geese in the Snow* and *Herding Sheep*. Miss Wang, the wife of Prince Zhao Jun (late 11th century) had ink bamboo works hanging in the palace.

As well as being renowned as a poet and calligrapher, Guan Daosheng was a prominent bamboo painter. She developed her own composition of bamboo – in clumps by a river. Single branches of bamboo symbolised masculine virtue, but bamboo along waterways had a feminine association because of the faithful wives of the mythical Sage-Emperor Shun. While touring his realm, Shun died suddenly near the Xiang River. His two wives (now known as the Xiang River goddesses *Ehuang – Fairy Radiance* - and *Nuying – Maiden Bloom*) rushed from the palace to his body and wept for days. Their tears dropped into the bamboo plants by the river, staining them with dark spots forever. In their grief, the wives drowned themselves in the Xiang. Bamboo groves by water thus came to stand for marital fidelity.

*Once a thousand jade-green bamboos lined the stream;
Circling clouds were reflected in the waters of the Xiao and the Xiang.
The tears of the two ladies, now forgotten, are shadows;
Their orchid rooms, no more than cold dreams.*

Dong Qichang (who we shall meet in the Ming dynasty) wrote a colophon in praise of Guan Daosheng's bamboo painting:

"In this handscroll of bamboo branches, the free, sweeping ink is marvellous, as if scattered by wind and rain. The rhythm of the composition is similar to the great Lady Gongsun's sword dance [a famous dancer, and legendary beauty, of the Tang dynasty], and not the calibre of the basic character of the women's quarters. Extraordinary; extraordinary."



Guan Daosheng, *Ten Thousand Bamboo Poles in Cloudy Mist* (hand-scroll) 1308

This scene of calm was much admired and the esteem in which she was held showed that gender was of no account to the literati. Guan Daosheng signed and dated the painting and made a brief note on the circumstances of its composition. It was painted on board a boat on Lake Bilang and dedicated to the Lady of the Kingdom of Chu, another upper-class woman like herself.

Li Kan (1245-1320)

Li Kan was one of the few early Confucian scholars to attain a high court position under the Mongols. Having specialised in astrology and calendar studies Li was appointed as an officer in the Court of Imperial Sacrifices at the age of 23. In 1276 art treasures of the Southern Song were collated with those of the North at the Yuan imperial library. As a result, Li saw many masterpieces and was inspired to become a bamboo painter

In 1294 Li was sent by the emperor on a mission to Annam (Indochina) to examine and classify wild bamboo species. After returning he compiled the *Treatise on Bamboo* (1299) which became the definitive source and included some rules for artists;

The stricture of Su Shi and Wen Tong [Part 2] is repeated; *“To paint bamboo, one must hold the complete bamboo plant in one’s mind”.*

Leaves are to be grouped in certain patterns and these patterns repeated to make up the larger masses. On ink gradations: *“If you paint only one or two stalks, you can use whatever values of ink you want to; but if there are three or more stalks, those in front must be painted in darker ink and those behind in lighter.”*

A section of the horizontal scroll *Ink Bamboo* at the Nelson-Atkins Museum shows how Li Kan followed his own advice, but his art is by no means dry and academic. The vertical extent of the scroll is preserved in this extract. Li Kan’s composition seems natural with a sense of air and depth, despite the plant being cut-off top and bottom. The renowned 20th century Chinese art historian, Wang Shixiang described the scroll:

“The stalks and, stems and leaves are brushed in with the utmost ease and spontaneity, almost carelessly – indeed the artist was a master of his craft. Few artists before or after Li Kan knew their subject so intimately, and few possessed the technique that would permit such effortless and direct expression ... Li Kan, like Wen Tong had a clarity of vision and so his bamboo is functional and free from empty brushwork.”



Li Kan, *Ink Bamboo* (section of scroll), 1308

Li Kan was encouraged to paint bamboo in natural colours rather than ink. His *Bamboo and Rocks* is in washed green with malachite highlights. The painting is almost a botanical study in which bamboo is shown in various stages of growth but the life of the plant is convincingly conveyed. Produced on two screens, the work is considered one of the most beautiful of bamboo pictures.



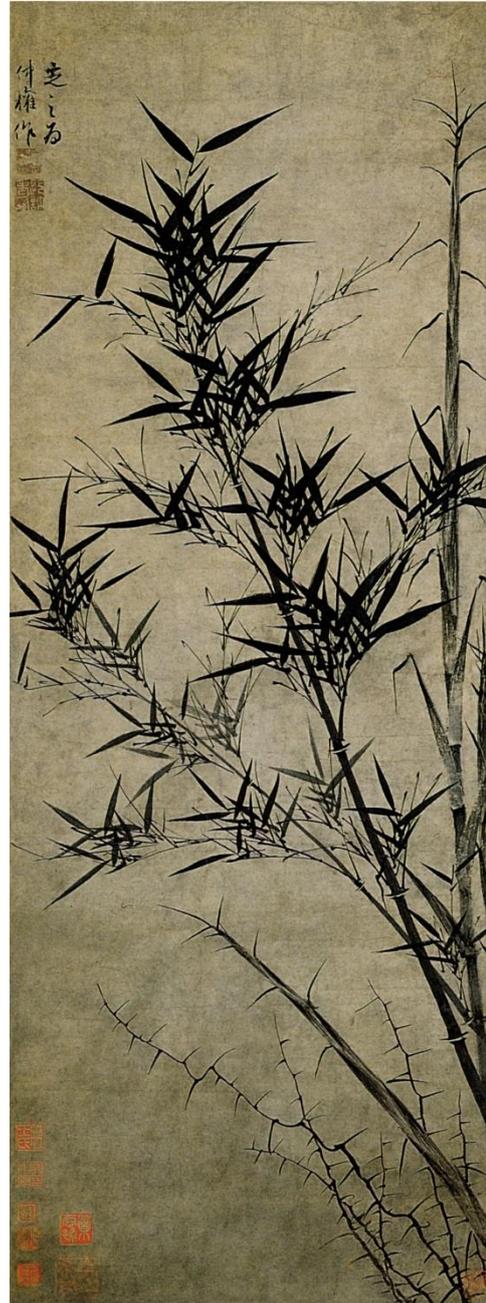
Li Kan, *Bamboo and Rocks*, 1308

Stems and leaves in *Bamboo and Rocks* are outlined and this heightens the feel of the work being an intricate study. Foliage and stalks in *Ink Bamboo*, however, are without outlines and rendered with single strokes; yet the plant seems much more lively and natural: a distinction of value to all artists and one which crystallises the difference of the professional (painstaking technique) and literati (effortless expression) approaches to painting.

Li Kan adopted both these styles. With *Bamboo* Li Kan reverts to the un-outlined, calligraphic method. This work is regarded as his best but is rarely displayed at the National Palace Museum in Taipei, so only a poor reproduction is available. Even so, the easy brush-strokes and the different tones suggested by his *Treatise* are evident. A later bamboo painter, **Gu An (c 1295 – 1370)**, who served as district judge near Suzhou also adopted this approach.



Li Kan, *Bamboo*, 14th century



Gu An, *New Bamboo*, c 1340s

These works treat bamboo in a classical manner, capturing the life of the plant and rendering it objectively – showing as it were the actual beauty of bamboo. Later in this part, more expressive and impressionistic works will be covered.

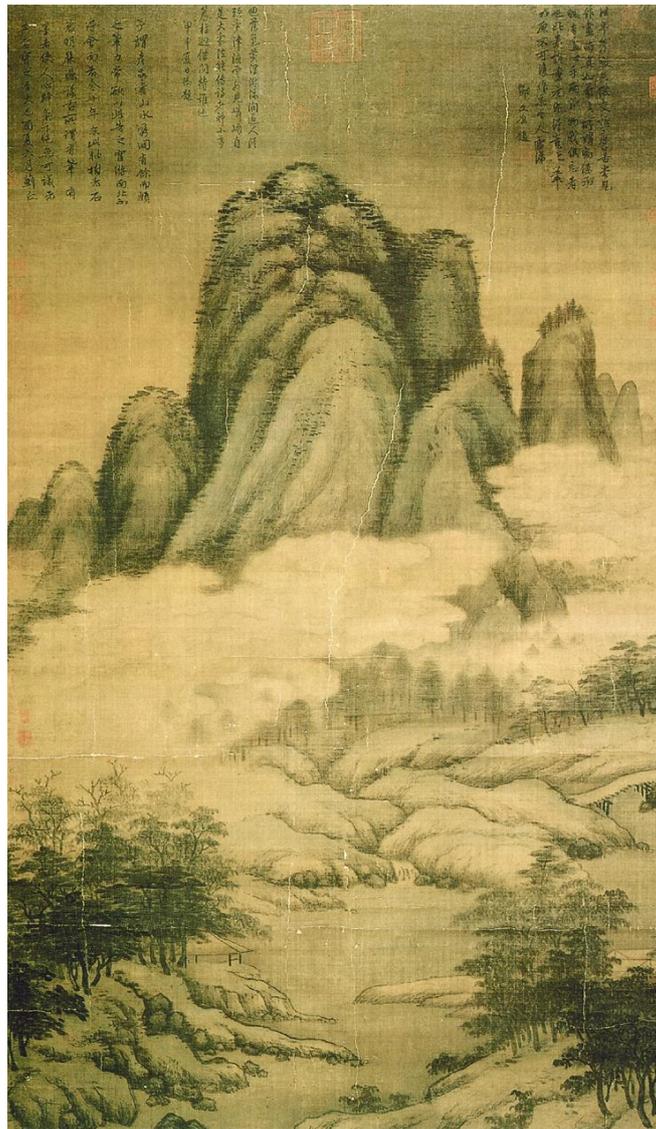
Other Landscape Styles

Returning to Zhao Mengfu; his landscapes drew on the styles of Southern Song landscape painters Dong Yuan and Juran and the Northern Song landscapist Li Cheng, particularly in the depiction of trees in *Village by Water* and *Twin Pines*. Huang Gongwang (who we shall meet shortly) made the point in his *Secrets of Landscape Painting* written around 1350:

“Most painters of recent times have followed the styles of the two schools of Dong Yuan and Li Cheng. The trees and rocks of these two are different in appearance, and students should give exhaustive attention to the distinction.”

Nevertheless, Zhao’s practice was not always adopted by later Yuan literati painters, even though they were bosom pals. **Gao Kegong (also spelled Kao K’o-kung, 1248-1310)** was an amateur whom later Yuan literati artists respected most after Zhao Mengfu. His family came to China as part of the influx of Muslims from Central Asia alongside the Mongols. He was born west of Peking in 1248, educated in the traditional Chinese way and served as governor of two provinces until in 1305 he became president of the Board of Justice. From 1290 he was a close friend of Zhao in Peking and it was only from that time that Gao began to paint. Zhao wrote: *“His high character and unclouded mind may be seen in his brush-and-ink, which thus differs completely from the work of the common crowd”*.

Contemporaries talk of Gao Kegong’s work resembling that of Dong Yuan, but his best-known work was considered by Zhao to be closer to that of Song literati Mi Fu [Part 2]: round hills encircled by mists with heavy dots or short horizontal choppy strokes for the appearance of vegetation and to soften the contours.



Gao Kegong, *Clouds Encircling Luxuriant Peaks*, 1309

Li Kan wrote an inscription on this painting:

"I have sometimes said that Gao's landscapes have an abundance of rich luxuriance but are deficient in strong brushwork. I wanted to tell him this myself, but I have been moving around from one official post to another, from south to north and haven't had a chance to meet him for ten years. This picture, with its old trees and weathered rocks, has a bright beauty and air of profusion about it: this is what the ancients called "having brush and having ink". It makes one, gazing at it, yield to it in his mind and relax any critical intention; there is nothing one can say against it. It is a work to treasure."

While Gao Kegong may have departed from Zhao Mengfu's themes, they both rejected Southern Song Academy methods. There were, however, schools of artists in the Jiangnan region who continued the Southern Song traditions.



Sheng Mou (active c 1310-1360s) began his painting studies under his father who was a professional painter, and thus learned the popular styles. He cultivated lively and entertaining effects which the amateurs avoided scrupulously and used colour in ways they found vulgar. His *Pleasant Summer in a Mountain Retreat* is an example. The basic plan – strong vertical movement up one side balanced by several horizontal elements towards or from the other side - would be adopted by the Zhe School in the Ming Dynasty [Part 4].

Sheng Mou, *Pleasant Summer in a Mountain Retreat*, 14th century

The style of the Ma-Xia School of the Southern Song was also continued by some landscape painters in the Hangzhou region. They were given scant attention by literati writers, but they produced accomplished and handsome pictures. Yet even these smacked of professional practices rather than the original calm and serene style of Ma Yuan. One example is by Sun Junze.



Sun Junze, *Villa by a River*, early 14th century

The composition follows Ma's formula in concentrating the darkest and heaviest elements in one lower corner, but where Ma would have left the opposite segment empty to allow the picture to open back into limitless depth Sun Junze closes off the composition with a substantial landmass.

What is interesting about this work, and there is also a hint of it in Shen Mao's painting, is the precision with which the buildings are rendered. Although the Mongols made no attempt to sponsor a Painting Academy they could be generous to their favourite artists. Princess Sengge Ragi, sister of Emperor Renzong built up extensive collections, as well as patronising arts in the capital. She behaved exactly like a native Chinese lady of imperial stock. Wang Zhenpeng painted many works for her. He studied her imperial collections, and was particularly drawn to the Northern Song court painting style that stressed meticulous and detailed line-drawing in ink.



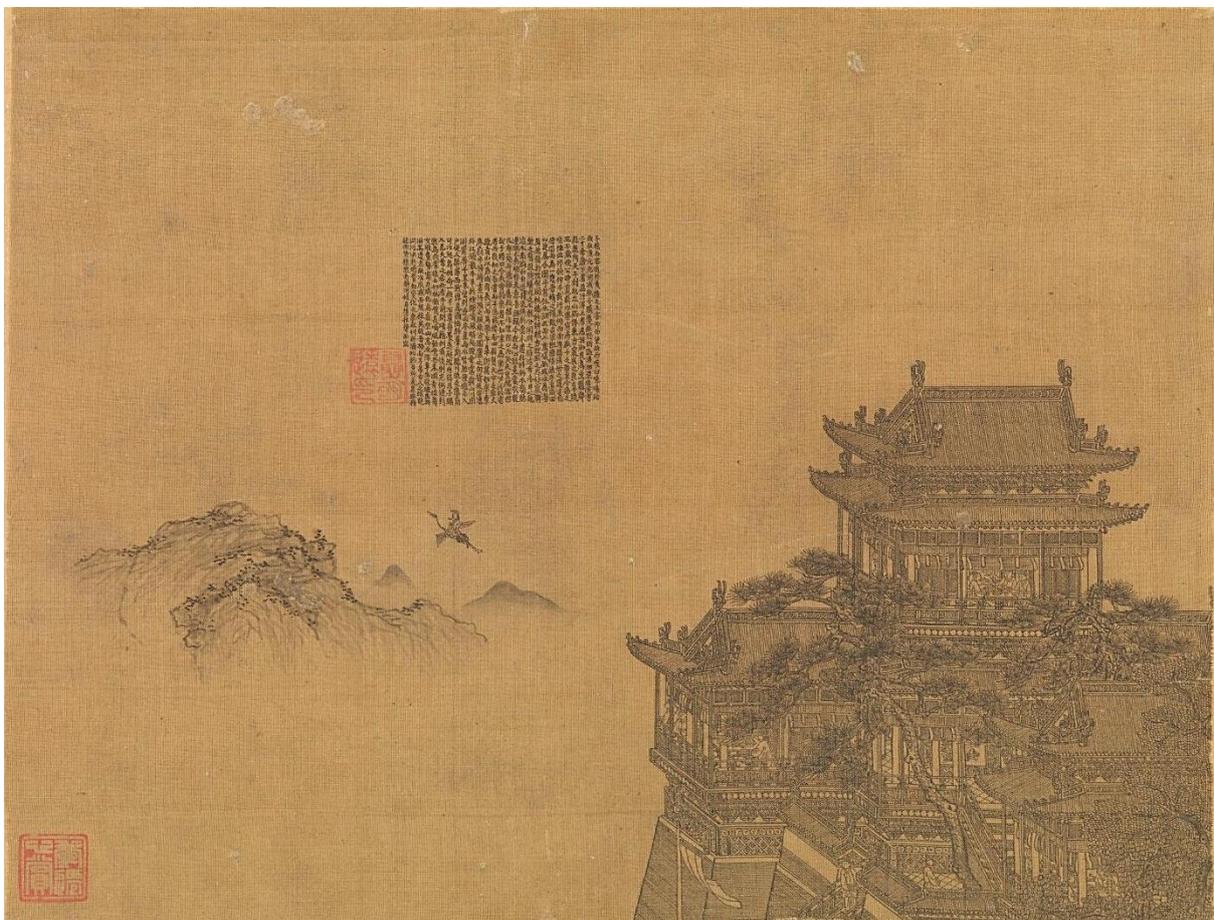
Wang Zhenpeng, *Dragon Boat Regatta on Chin-ming Lake (detail)*, 1323

His *Dragon Boat Regatta* was painted after a composition he produced for the future emperor Jen-tsung in 1310. At least six other copies of this exist. Held on the 5th day of the 5th lunar month, dragon boat races commemorated the death of the Warring States minister and poet Qu Yuan. When he learned of the capture of his capital city by the Qin armies in 278 BC Qu Yuan wrote a long poem of lamentation and then waded into the Miluo River (in Hunan Province) holding a rock in order to commit ritual suicide. Wang Zhenpeng's method, which used a pointed brush and ruler, became known as "boundary painting" – using even, fine-lines to depict figures, especially architecture and still life, in microscopic and meticulous detail. The method would become very popular in Ming and Qing decorative arts, especially for lacquer pieces and embroidery.

Later Yuan

After the Mongol invasion of Northern China, large areas of arable land were given to Mongol princes who switched it over (as nomads would) to pasture and treated the Chinese farmers as slaves. Kublai Khan managed to restrain some of the worst practices but when he died in 1296 Mongol rule deteriorated. Seven emperors reigned from 1307 to 1333 and none lived beyond their mid-thirties. Corruption was rife. Heavy taxation on peasants provoked a wave of migration to the south. The situation was made worse by the Mongols' ignorance of river defences. Their failure to maintain them allowed the Yellow River to change its course, causing great loss of land and life. In 1332 alone great rains and floods killed 7 million. In 1344 the Yellow River flooded, inundating the region between the Yellow and Yangtze Rivers and effectively ending agricultural production in the north. That disaster, through neglect, was followed by drought, famine and locust plagues. The unconcern shown by the Mongols prompted widespread peasant rebellions.

These events prompted artists, even professionals, to produce works predicting (even hoping for) the downfall of the barbarian regime. Xia Yong, who followed Wang Zhenpeng in "boundary paintings", portrayed the coming downfall of the Mongol dynasty in *The Yellow Pavilion*.



Xia Yong, *The Yellow Pavilion*, ca 1350

In minute regular script Xia inscribed the famous essay, *A Rhapsody on the Yellow Pavilion*, by the famous Northern Song scholar Su Ch'e (1039-1112) – a brother of Su Shi. In 1077 Su Shi was a prefect when his region was flooded following a break in the dykes of the Yellow River. Su worked hard during the disaster and when the flood subsided and the city walls were repaired the Yellow Pavilion (named for the colour of the river mud) was dedicated in his honour. The scenery in the painting refers to the legend of the Yellow Crane Pavilion which tells of an immortal riding into the sunset on the back of a yellow crane, but by referring to a flood centuries earlier, in script so small most would not read it, Xia was expressing his view that the momentous social changes caused by the flood of 1344 would lead to the downfall of the Yuan.

Other “downfall” paintings were produced around this time. **Wang Mian (1287-1359)** was the most famous of Yuan plum painters. The plum tree does not bear fruit but is one of the first to bloom in early spring, often before the snows have melted, even though it looks almost dead. The tree was thus associated with fortitude and rejuvenation. Under the Mongols the ability to flourish in a harsh environment was a source of pride for the literati and explains the popularity of paintings of flowering plum in late winter. Wang Mian was the son of a poor farmer. He studied for official exams but failed and turned to study ancient military arts, but was not very successful at that either. He refused intermittent offers of civil service posts made by officials impressed with his talents. He taught briefly in a school but mostly lived as a painter, exchanging pictures for food. He attempted to find a job in the Mongol capital but having seen the chaos there in 1347 he returned home to his mother and became a recluse.



Wang Mian, *Fragrant Snow at Broken Bridge*, ca 1348

Wang Mian was described by a Chinese contemporary:

“He used to wear a high broad-brimmed hat, a green grass coat and high wooden clogs. One of his pastimes was to practice with a wooden sword ... he was seen riding a yellow ox with the History of the Han Dynasty in his hands. Some people thought he was quite crazy.”

Crazy or not, Wang Mian was a wonderful painter of plum. The new growth is shown with sweeping vigorous strokes, but the flowers are sketched lightly which produces an effect of freshness.

His *Fragrant Snow* was painted after his visit to the Mongol capital, and uses the plum as the harbinger of spring. The poem he wrote on the painting says;

*A plum tree in winter, with branches of white jade,
Stirred by a warm breeze, its scattering petals flutter
like snowflakes.
In his heart, the Recluse of the Lonely Hill [Lin Pu 967-
1028] remains true to himself,
But someone has just passed the Broken Bridge,
carrying with him the song of reed pipes.*

Wang, now forced to reclusion, can hear in his imagination the worldly song and is stirred by the warm breeze of the growing rebellion against the Mongols which was underway by the late 1340s.

The Four Great Masters of the Yuan

After the flood of 1344 the Mongols were heavily dependent on the rich southeast Jiangnan region, especially Suzhou and neighbouring prefectures. The Mongols imposed exorbitant tax rates there, which made up 90% of the tax revenue of the entire country. Insurrections broke out led by rebels known as Red Turbans, their headgear symbolising fire and light. In the final decades of the Yuan Dynasty, the Red Turban revolt effectively cut China in two, separating the prosperous southeast from the north where the Mongols maintained some ascendancy. The split rang the death knell of the Yuan Dynasty. The Mongols found themselves cut off from the productive part of China and squabbled, while the future of the empire was decided in two tumultuous decades in the Jiangnan area.

In 1352 the Red Turbans, under the leadership of salt smuggler Zhang Shicheng, sacked Hangzhou. Over the next two years he seized three prefectures and pronounced the establishment of the Kingdom of Dazhou. In 1356 Zhang captured Suzhou which he proclaimed as his capital and invited scholars of the region to join his government. For almost a decade life settled down, but further trouble was brewing.

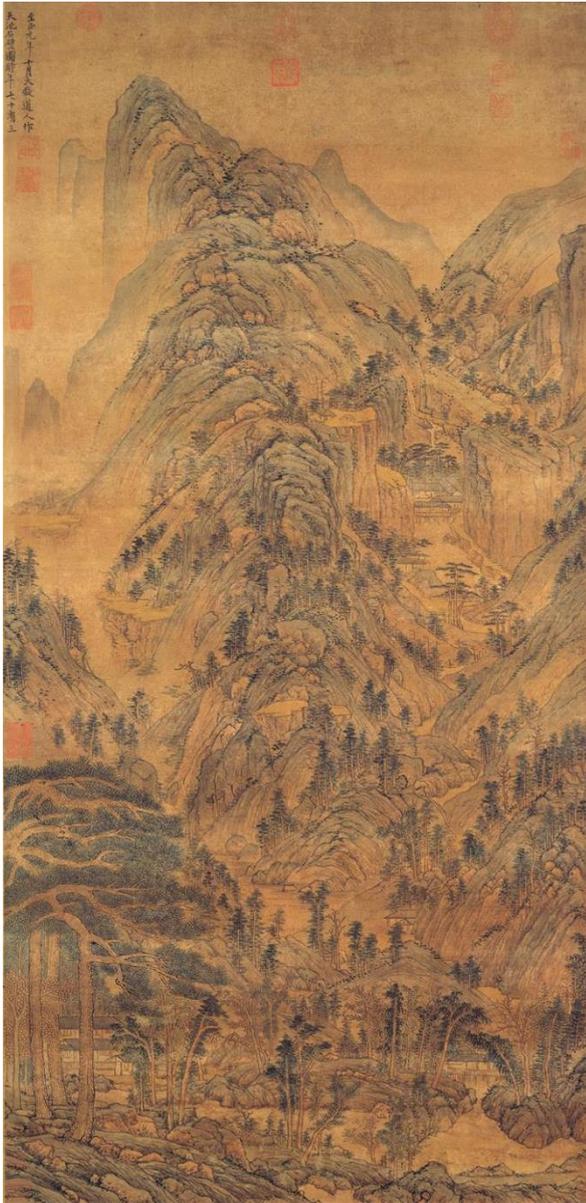
Zhu Yuanzhong had known poverty first hand. His destitute parents had to move often to find work or escape rent-collectors, and had to give away some of their children as they could not afford to raise them. When Zhu was sixteen the 1344 Yellow River flood killed his parents. He received shelter from a monastery for a while but joined a rebel group associated with the Red Turbans in 1352. He quickly rose through the ranks, taking over command and in 1355 captured Nanjing. Using that as a base, he became strong in the southeast. In 1365 Zhu began a campaign against Zhang Shicheng, placing Suzhou under siege which eventually fell in 1367.

It was against this background that the Four Great Masters of the Yuan lived and developed their art. They were centred round Suzhou. Each produced their finest work late in life. Their younger contemporaries never grew to be mature artists: many of them were killed in the early Ming years on the orders of Zhu Yuanzhong who became the first Emperor, Hongwu.

Huang Gongwang (also spelled Huang Kung-wang, 1269-1354)

Huang Gongwang was born to a poor family and from the age of seven raised by foster parents. As a child he was said to have studied under Zhao Mengfu. Huang served for many years as a government clerk but in 1315 was implicated in the slander of a Chief Minister by his boss and was sent to prison for a brief stay. On release he retired to Hangzhou. He made his living as a professional fortune-teller. Scholars, except for those in the gentry with independent means and those in government office, made their living from teaching, writing, painting, medicine, divination and religion. In his last years Huang retired to the Fuchun Mountains, west of Hangzhou and died there. As Huang grew old his face remained smooth and unlined like a boy's, his eyes stayed a bright jade green and his cheeks were rosy. He wrote an essay *Secrets of Landscape Painting* published in 1366. He was the next master after Zhao Mengfu to be really innovative in landscapes.

Mount Heavenly Pond is a real place in the western suburbs of Suzhou, but the painting *Stone Cliff at the Pond of Heaven* is an intricate construction of simple forms. There is great order in this example of Huang Gongwang's art. Round swelling forms alternate with dark bands of trees, and square outcroppings break the progression upwards at carefully spaced intervals. Near the top the interruptions become fewer and the momentum subsides because the contours are more gently curved. Huang Gongwang is much more abstract than anything before in Chinese painting, and *Autumn Colours* goes further than *Stone Cliff*.



Huang Gongwang, *Stone Cliff at the Pond of Heaven*, 1341



Huang Gongwang, *Autumn Clouds in Layered Mountains*, 1340s

Huang Gongwang pointed out that brush methods for trees and rocks are not alike. His pine trees follow Li Cheng – complex crab-claw branches and scaly bark - but the mountain slopes adapt the hemp-fibre texture pattern of Dong Yuan. Huang suggests landscapes should be freely “written”:

“In painting each tree, each rock, one should give rein to the ink and let it break free; in this way, the manner of the scholar will be achieved. If there is too much detailed description, the painting will fall into the class of artisan painting ... For the most part, as in writing characters, diligent practice leads to mastery.”

Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains is one of the most famous of all Chinese paintings, and passed through the hands of many important collectors. One tried to burn it in 1650 as he was dying, damaging an opening section which has since been much restored and preserved with the title *Cut-Off Mountain Picture*. The Qing Emperor Qianlong was obsessed and when he acquired it wrote laudatory inscriptions in every available space - 55 in all, defacing it completely. Fortunately, that turned out to be a copy. When the real scroll entered his collection in 1746 he paid it no attention; the emperor could hardly admit that he had been duped. The real scroll thus escaped disaster and (with the defaced copy) is in the National Palace Museum in Taipei.

The work was painted by Huang for a friend named Zheng Wuyong and studies suggest it alludes to a hermit of the Han dynasty and that the true theme is not landscape but the recluses who inhabit it (perhaps depicted as fishermen).



Huang Gongwang, *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains*, 1347-1350

The sketchiness and unfinished parts suggest the painting is a result of creative impulses rather than a pre-conceived scheme; hence, its sense of freshness. The closer one looks the less there is of nature and more of wonderfully varied texture and ink. "The relation of the Fuchun Mountain scroll to its predecessors is precisely that so neatly described by Andre Malraux with respect to Chardin and Braque: 'In Chardin the bloom is on the peach; in Braque the bloom is in the picture.'"

The composition shifts the focus from foreground to middle ground and back. The eye is pulled by hills and dark trees. In the central section, a mountain ridge falls back diagonally in a calm succession of plain slopes; a pleasing serenity that is a feature of Yuan literati painting. Contrasting this lulling movement into the far distance, is a busy foreground. Two fishermen in boats can be seen to the right of and through a pine tree grove from which in a pavilion a man watches geese. Huang Gongwang wrote an inscription at the end of the scroll (top left above);

I returned to my Fuchun Mountain residence in the company of Master Wuyong. On a leisure day in the South Tower I took up my brush and drew this whole scroll. Such was my exhilaration that I was not conscious of the passage of time but untiringly laid out the entire composition. Moreover when I needed to eradicate anything, I would fill in what I had cut out [pieces of paper removed and new ones inserted - the sections can be discerned in the copy above]. I've gone over it now for three or four years but still haven't quite finished it. This is because I always left it behind in the mountains during my trips into the outer world. Now I have taken it again from my luggage so that whenever I have a spare moment, morning or night, I can add some more brushwork. Wuyong is over-anxious that someone else will get it away from me by craft or force and has made me inscribe it in advance in order to let everyone know the difficulties I had in completing it."

Huang Gongwang used to wander in the mountains watching the play of light and shade in the morning and evening. The way Huang translates nature into brushstrokes and tones makes *Fuchun Mountains* a painter's painting.

Wu Zhen (also spelled Wu Chen, 1280-1354)

Wu Zhen was born 25 miles south of Suzhou and lived there most of his life. He enjoyed painting pines, sharing the Daoist belief that the pine tree embodies the supernatural powers of the dragon. Wu wrote: "You may hang my pine tree high on the white wall in your hall; At midnight, it will fly away amidst the wind and clouds". The branches of these pines express the dragon's defiance and fortitude.



Wu Zhen, *Twin Pines*, 1328

Wu Zhen received a good education but never aspired to official service. He admired the heroism of ancient wandering knights and was a fine swordsman in his youth. He mastered the art of divination and, like Huang, earned a living as a fortune teller, working in Hangzhou and outside the city gate of the Spring Wavelets in Qiaxing to the northwest. A contemporary commentator, Tai Piao-yuan (1244-1310) wrote of fortune-tellers in Hangzhou: “usually they received their clients behind curtains”, and recalled hearing, “from behind the bamboo screens, the dull cracks of the tortoise shells used for telling the future” - an echo of oracle bones resounding through the centuries.

Wu Zhen called his paintings “ink plays” and made them simply to satisfy his need for self-expression. He was impoverished through most of his life. He was also crotchety and unsociable. Unlike most recluses of the time who were gregarious, spending their time visiting each other and holding drinking parties, Wu was a true recluse. His *Central Mountain* uses a round blunt thick brushstroke – expressive of the artist’s direct, assertive personality, which became the hallmark of his style. The Chinese call this “round” brushwork. An even pressure is kept on the vertically held brush so the tip creates no sharply pointed or hooked ends. By using broad strokes and keeping the ink fairly pale (except in the accented trees and bushes) Wu softens his work. The whole effect is relaxing. The parallel hemp-fibre strokes and the near hypnotic repetition of forms lulls the viewer’s mind pleasantly, and reveals the state of mind of the artist fostered by the unhurried life of an individual recluse.



Wu Zhen, *Central Mountain*, 1336

Wu Zhen’s parallel hemp-fibre strokes and round moss dots were immensely popular during the Ming dynasty. He also painted with thick lines in a pared-down style, best illustrated by *The Fisherman by a Wooded Bank*. The fisherman is done briskly in a few strokes and dots, yet one can sense his effort with the oar, a marvel of abbreviation.



Wu Zhen, *Fisherman by a Wooded Bank*, 1345

The poem Wu Zhen inscribed follows the rhyming pattern of the *Fisherman Songs* verses written by the 8th century recluse Chang Tzu-ho:

*Red leaves west of the village reflect the evening rays,
 Yellow reeds on a sandy bank cast early moon shadows.
 Lightly stirring his oar, thinking of returning home,
 He puts aside his fishing pole, and will catch no more.*

As a symbol of reclusion, the leisurely fisherman was contrasted with the harassed official struggling with the complexities of court life. Wu Zhen enjoyed this analogy and painted a long scroll of fishermen. Again, the men are jotted down in a shorthand style. The bare paper between them and Wu Zhen's running script calligraphy add immeasurably to the charm.



Wu Zhen, *Fishermen (detail)*, 1352

During his life Wu Zhen had little renown as a painter. A famous anecdote about this (possibly apocryphal) compared him with his professionally-trained contemporary Sheng Mou (see above). The pair were near-neighbours. Crowds of people would bring gold and silk to ask for Sheng's paintings, but they rarely sought out Wu. Wu's wife and children teased him, and his wife suggested he paint pictures with bright colours that are fashionable and appealing, lest Sheng would remain in high demand and Wu would be forgotten. To this Wu replied, *"In twenty years it will be otherwise"*. And so it proved, and remained so for the succeeding centuries.

To demonstrate the wisdom of Wu's response and the power of literati painting, works from the two, ostensibly on the same subject can be compared: *Autumn Boat Trip* of Sheng Mou and another *Fisherman* from Wu Zhen. Both depict the same idea – a contemplating scholar in a landscape of near trees and distant mountains. But Sheng adopts professional practice; focussing on the scholar (who is emphasised further by a pointing branch from the twisting trees) and including details portraying him as a cultivated gentleman. This focus draws all power from the work, which nonetheless remains pleasantly decorative.



Sheng Mou, *Autumn Boat Trip on a River* (detail), 1361



Wu Zhen, *Fisherman*, 1342

Wu's reticence means the boat and figures are drawn small. There is no drama in the bending foliage of trees. The effect is a mood of calm and quiet. Indeed, just exactly the mood experienced by the scholar in the boat with which we thus empathise. As well it is a night scene: the surface of the water reflecting the moonlight is paler than the sky to which a thin wash is applied.

Wu's individuality can be seen in the brushwork – blunt dots and repetition of certain favoured shapes, particularly the conical hills in the background. Wu's poem reads:

*The west wind blows, with soughing sound,
across the leaves of trees;*

*Blue hills press on the river shore, ten
thousand-fold in depth.*

*Against the sorrow of old age, the pleasure of
rod and line-*

*How often, in plaited-grass coat and hat, have
I waited through the wind and rain!*

*The fisher lad claps his oar, heedless of west
or east;*

*His song goes forth to ripple of waves, wind in
the tassels of reeds.*

*The night is deep; behind the boat, fish break
the surface, splash.*

*Clouds disperse, the sky is clear, the misty
waters stretch on.*

A wonderful example of how painting and poem can evoke a mood – a feeling for what is in the mind of the artist – compared to the professional artisan.

The three-part scheme in Wu Zhen's *Fisherman* is the developed Yuan literati style: a foreground bank or shore usually with trees; an expanse of water; a farther shore with hills or mountain beyond. This arrangement can be seen in Dong Yuan's work [Part 2] and diagonally in Zhao Mengfu's *Twin Pines* (above). In the mature style the landmasses are seen from an elevated viewpoint and do not overlap, being separately silhouetted against water and sky, and drawn apart. There are many reasons why this scheme developed: the amateur painter does not have worry about inter-locking parts; patterns of tree branches could be elaborated freely against empty ground; the scenery was familiar in Jiangnan, terrain interrupted by lakes and rivers. Most importantly, however, the format developed because of its expressive potential. The wide spacing of parts could evoke feelings of remoteness, loneliness and disengagement.

Wang Meng (c 1308-1385)

Wang Meng was the youngest of the Four Great Masters and a grandson of Zhao Mengfu. He was educated as a poet and painter and served for a time as a provincial prosecutor. In the 1340s with the growing unrest in the region, he retired to Yellow Crane Mountain, northeast of Hangzhou. After 1346 he spent much time travelling around the Suzhou region making friends with famous poets and artists.



Wang Meng, *Sparse Trees and Pavilion*, late 1350s

The silk fan painting *Sparse Trees and Pavilion* is dedicated to the Suzhou recluse scholar Chen Ju-Chih and in the accompanying poem on the right Wang Meng describes his own life as a recluse:

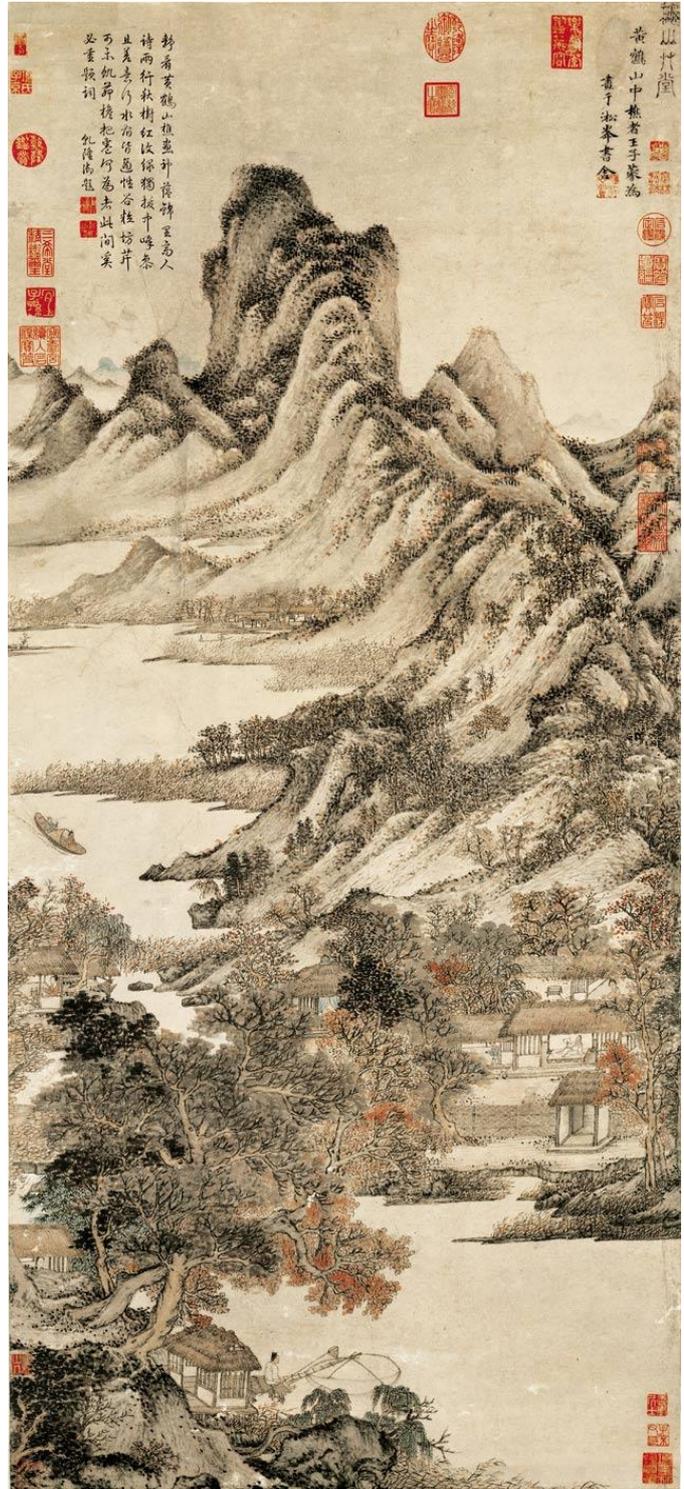
*In the quiet of the empty forest, the leaves dance.
The thatched pavilion stands alone under the noonday sun.
In the south wind, green waves ripple all day.
Wearing a gauze cap and coarse hemp, I feel no summer heat.
My wilderness home is near Yellow Crane peak.
By evening I go to the empty grotto, to listen to the mountain rain.*

Because of the limits of size the silk fan gives a misleading view of Wang Meng's style. His restlessness and density of brushwork, his massive and crowded compositions with their flourishing and vigorous air were all diametrically opposed to the quiet of the silk fan and the sparse, calm minimalism of the three-part scheme just seen in Wu Zhen's work. Wang Meng packs his masses densely, building up hills and mountains in repeated parallel folds – larger forms echoing smaller ones, mountains succeeding mountains back to a far horizon.

Dwelling in the Qingbian Mountains has a stable foreground and then builds upward in a winding movement. A man walks on a path, bottom right, and two men sit in a cluster of open-fronted houses, far back in the valley mid left, but these are the only fixed points in a landscape which is otherwise in a state of violent agitation. The brushstrokes enhance the effect of animation by their twisting, thrusting shapes, producing much energy and tremendous and mysterious upheaval in nature. Max Loehr wrote: "*The picture seems not so much to describe a passage of mountain scenery as to express a terrible occurrence, an eruptive vision. Now we have before us nothing less than an illustration of life on earth.*"



Wang Meng, *Dwelling in the Qingbian Mountains*, 1366



Wang Meng, *Thatched Cottage in Autumn Mountains*, 1343

Despite these tortuous writhing lines Wang Meng's paintings can induce a sense of restfulness. *Thatched Cottage* is an example of a wonderfully balanced composition with repetitive forms which calm the effect of Wang's brush. "He is one of the few Chinese painters – Shi Qi [a 20th century artist] is perhaps another – who, though using a brush technique of restless intensity, can achieve a final effect of repose."

Wang Meng often included people in his paintings, reading, fishing or gazing at the landscape. They are undisturbed by their convulsing environment. Perhaps this reflects the literati maintaining their studies and composure amid the chaos and turmoil of the last two decades of Yuan Dynasty in Jiangnan region.



Wang Meng, *Ge Zichuan Moving to the Mountains*, 1360



Wang Meng, *Forest Grotto at Juqu*, 1370s

Ge Zichuan Moving was praised by the prominent Ming artist, Dong Qichang [Part 4] as the one of the best paintings in the world. Ge Hong (284-363), who took the forename Zichuan, was a Daoist scholar and is China's most famous alchemist. Cinnabar, a red mineral and natural source of mercury, was much desired by alchemists as ingesting it was thought to increase longevity. Its colour, red, is symbolic too in Chinese culture. When Ge Zichuan heard that cinnabar had been discovered in Jaiozho (North Vietnam) he managed to secure a government appointment close by in Guangzhou. So, as depicted by Wang Meng, he moved south settling down on Mount Luofu and remaining there until his death.

In 2015 the 85-year-old Chinese pharmacologist Tu Youyou was one of three scientists to be awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine; the first person from China to become a Laureate in the Natural Sciences. She discovered artemisinin as a treatment for malaria and so saved millions of Asian lives. Tu Youyou credited Ge Hong's ancient medicine classic written in 340, *Manual of Clinical Practice and Emergency Remedies*. Ge Hong discovered that the herb sweet wormwood, or *qinghao* as it is pronounced in Chinese, was an effective treatment for dysentery. The instruction in the manual: "a handful of *qinghao* immersed with two litres of water, wring out the juice and drink it all" was adapted by Tu Youyou to isolate artemisinin (or *qinghaosu*) from sweet wormwood.

Back to Wang Meng; *Forest Grotto* is a late work. Trees and rocks fill the frame. The brushwork produces constantly curling surfaces so that nothing seems to rest. *Forest Grotto* was painted several years into the Ming Dynasty. Like many scholars in the southeast, Wang Meng was encouraged by the return of Chinese rule, and re-entered official life in the belief that normality had returned. But Zhu Yuanzhong (now Emperor Hongwu), distrusted educated men, particularly those of the Suzhou literary and artistic circle who had served his great rival. Wang Meng had associated closely with them and, therefore, suspect. The scenery in *Forest Grotto* might resemble the anguish and fear prevalent among scholars. In 1379 Wang Meng visited the home of Prime Minister Hu Weiyong to look at paintings. A year later Hu was accused of treason and sentenced to death. Wang, tainted because of this visit, was incarcerated and died in prison in 1385.

Ni Zan (1301-1374)

More than anyone else of his time, Ni Zan successfully melded poetry, calligraphy and painting into an expressive whole. He was born to a wealthy land-owning family on the northeast shore of Lake Tai, and enjoyed a life of luxury and ease at the family estate through the 1330s and to the mid-1340s.



Ni Zan painted *Enjoying the Wilderness* during his life of luxury. The accoutrements of his studio are mentioned in the poem which he inscribed on the work in the top left corner:

*How delightful is autumn, my inkstone and mat feel cool.
With bamboo shades rolled up, a light dew softens my robe.
Forest gates and cave windows send forth new pleasures,
Green rain and yellow mist envelop distant bedrock.
Scattered bamboos wave in the bright sun,
The shadows of fir parasols lie beneath the moonlight.
I burn my incense in a gilded duck censer,
And collect fallen petals in a pouch by my pillow.*

Contemporary biographers described Ni Zan as a rich eccentric, overly fastidious and obsessed with cleanliness. In addition to his private library and studio (which he named Pure and Secluded Pavilion) his garden villa included the Cloudy Forest Hall, the Pavilion of Leisurely Immortals, the Vermillion Sun Guest House, the Cave of Snowy Cranes and the Pavilion of Mi Fu's Calligraphy and Painting.

Ni Zan, *Enjoying the Wilderness in an Autumn Grove*, 1338

According to one writer:

"The Pure and Secluded Pavilion was covered with blue carpets and was equipped with a hundred pairs of rope slippers, so that guests could change into them before entering ... The Cave of Snowy Cranes was covered with white carpets ... In front of these buildings were planted flowers of many colours, and the flower beds were lined with white glazed tiles. When the flowers were watered, the fallen petals were picked up with a long bamboo pole so that the beds were not disturbed by footprints."

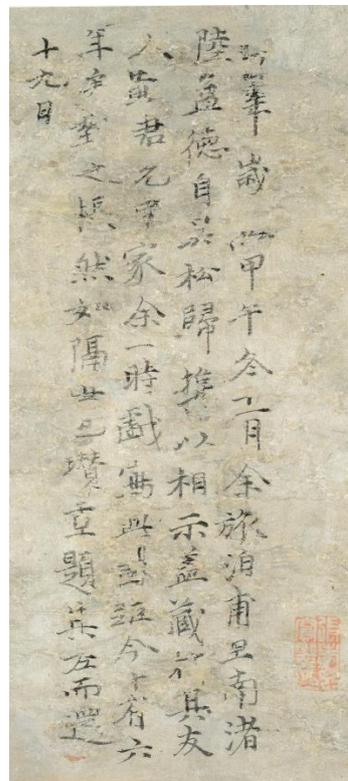
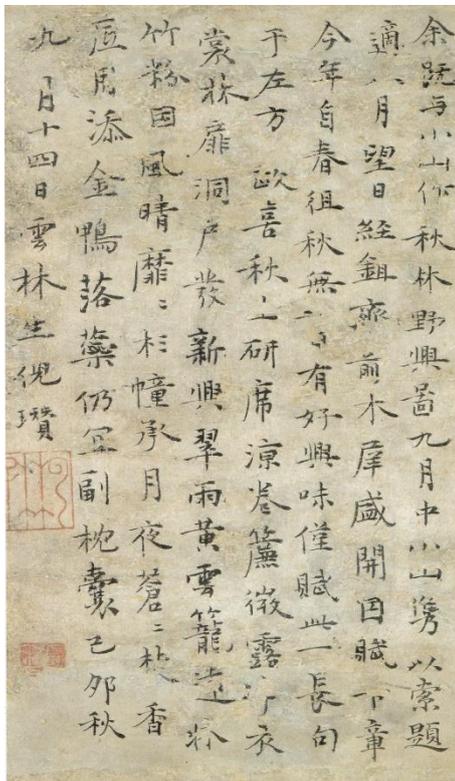
Ni Zan insisted trees in his garden were cleaned daily by servants. Anecdotes abound. Ni Zan spent a night with a famous courtesan, Zhao Mai-erh, but he passed the time making her bathe over and over, never quite satisfied, until the sun rose without (in the Chinese literary euphemism) any "dreams of Mount Wu" having occurred.

Enjoying the Wilderness shows what distinguishes Ni Zan's paintings: the determined plainness of the scene with no vegetation apart from the trees, no attempt at variety in rocks and hills, nothing that breaks the sense of seclusion achieved by placing the figure in the middle ground, dwarfing him against the trees and turning him away from the viewer. Later works of Ni's either had no pavilion or an empty one. After the flood of 1344, the Yuan government imposed heavy taxes on wealthy families in the south. To evade tax collectors, Ni Zan sold off or gave away his family's properties. In early 1352, Ni Zan and his wife started a new simpler life, living on a small houseboat and sailing up and down the rivers and through the lakes around Suzhou.

Soon afterwards a friend showed Ni Zan *Enjoying the Wilderness*. Ni added an inscription to the right of his original one:

[In 1354] in the eleventh month, I stopped on my travels at the south bank of Fu-li. Lu Meng-te, arriving from Wu-sung, brought this to show me; it has been kept by the family of his friend Mr Huang Yunchung. I had once casually made this picture, and sixteen years have since passed! Looking at it I feel lost, as if seeing myself in another life.

The calligraphy of this second inscription is much less solid than the original; an expression of Ni Zan's sense of loss and vulnerability.



Ni Zan's inscriptions on *Enjoying the Wilderness*: original in 1338 (left) and later in 1354

Ni Zan lived on his houseboat until 1366, stopping at homes of friends around the lakes. Most of Ni's works are occasional creations done for the host with whom he stayed. Drinking parties with friends was the traditional setting for scholars to compose poetry. Poems were intimate reflections of personality and situation, revealing the character of the composer. When painting became part of the scholarly culture, it was natural that the art followed the same tradition: a medium for expression between friends. Literati painting followed poetry in another sense. Su Shi of the Song rejected the floridness of Tang poems; "everyday words, the language of the street – all can be used in poetry." The new simplicity Su Shi wanted, calm and easy (*pingtan* – bland), was subsequently picked up in literati painting, most notably Ni Zan's.



Ni Zan, *Six Gentleman*, 1345

Ni painted *Six Gentlemen* as he was preparing for a nomadic life on water. He was sailing near Suzhou when he arrived one night at the home of his friend Lu Heng. Several other distinguished guests were present and they prevailed on Ni to paint. Although tired, Ni Zan painted a favourite image in lamplight from memory: clustered trees silhouetted against a deserted river with a far bank symbolising kindred spirits isolated by the disintegration of Yuan society in the southeast.

The composition is simple and characteristic of Ni's later works. There are no towering peaks, crashing waterfalls, great gnarled trees or misty hills. The base of the foreground bank and the horizon are horizontal. The knoll on which the trees grow slants gently upward, paralleled by the graded heights of the trees and mirrored in the distant peaks, which helps the eye bridge the gap between them. The effect is to be absorbed in scenery which holds little to be absorbing, as might happen when in an abstracted mood. Ni Zan conveys his feeling – viewer and artist regard the minimalist landscape in a detached, contemplative frame of mind. A poem written on another of Ni Zan's paintings by a contemporary catches this mood perfectly:

*Autumn clouds make no shadows, trees make no sound.
Deep, deep the long river, its mirror-surface flat.
Distant hills are sunk in mist; the moon rises bright.
Sitting in a shelter on the bank, watching the moon rise.*

Ni Zan's poetry and prose were prized by his friends, and collections were published in subsequent centuries. One poem, composed to a friend on parting, reveals Ni's feeling of rootlessness later in his life:

*When these troubled times have passed and I return,
It will not be to the world of affairs I knew-
My sons have reached their prime, have travelled;
Their minds have grown hardened and disobedient...
You, my lord, still possess your own land:
You can go home to it and cultivate it.
But what of me? From where shall I return,
And to what place?*

From time to time, homesickness prompted Ni Zan to visit his mother at the old family estate. “*A Man in White*” tells of the trauma he experienced in 1355 when he made a surreptitious visit and was arrested and jailed:

*My white clothes stained,
A prisoner in public courtrooms.
Covered with wounds and confined,
My heart filled with fear.*

*Cruel officials behave like tigers:
They have no pity.
They treat people like swine,
Killing them, heaping abuse on them.*

*Though I conduct myself with propriety,
I know I have myself to blame.
Even considering the family property,
And my mother in homeless exile,
To linger and not stay away,
Is the cause of my sorrow.*



Ni Zan, *Wind Among the Trees on the Riverbank*,
1363

Ni Zan was to suffer greater sorrow when his wife died in early 1363. In her memory he painted *Wind Among the Trees* – a desolate vision of neglected trees by the river’s shore. His inscription reads:

*On the riverbank the evening tide has fallen.
The windy trees have but sparse, frozen leaves.
Leaning on my staff I see the brushwood gate closed
and silent.
I think of her, while the mountain colours lightly flicker.*

Ni Zan’s inscription is an essential part of the composition, helping to link the elements and contrasting with them. The inscription is much stronger and more assertive than the landscape images. Perhaps this was to emphasise the commemoration of his wife by the poem but perhaps also a sign that his mental strength persisted even though age (and circumstance) might bend him.

For Ni Zan landscape painting was pure brushwork:

“Calligraphy and painting work the same way ... it is said that a stroke of painting is just like a stroke of calligraphy. Each brushstroke must look backward and forward in a spirited manner, the stroke continuous, without breaking off.”

The foliage on *Wind Among the Trees* is made up of similar strokes to those in calligraphy.

Rarely in these works is there a density of ink. Ni Zan was described by a contemporary as “*treasuring ink like gold.*”

Zhang Shicheng was keen to get scholars to help him, partly to legitimise his new rule. Zhang invited Ni Zan to join his government; Zhang’s younger brother sent Ni money and bolts of silk, but Ni tore up the silk and returned the money. Although the Mongols were hated and alien, they were recognised as legitimate rulers; serving a rebel cause would be an unthinkable. In anger Zhang had Ni arrested and beaten severely.

Afterwards Ni Zan stayed in Suzhou and hoped to remain there. However, by late 1366 the city was under siege and Ni was forced again to abandon his home. He wrote a poem on a painting which describes the lonely boat journey back to Lake Tai:

*The sound of rain continues from the first into the second month.
Boats and paddles crowd the Wu River.
Spring melancholia grips me in a drunken torpor,
As the waves, caught by wild winds, beat on my cabin windows.*



Ni Zan, *Rongxi Studio*, 1372

Rongxi Studio (named after a friend's riverside retreat where the painting was done) was produced four years into the Ming Dynasty, when scholars, once hopeful of peace, had begun to realise the hatred the emperor held for them.

Like *Wind Among the Trees* the forms are now thin, transparent and weightless – a quality Ni Zan worked towards, cutting away the mundane and material, the dross that he found so repellent in the world around him. Yet with this lightness comes substantiality; the hills swell convincingly.

Ni is plain and bland or pure and chaste – paintings purged of all that is stimulating.

“The forms are self-contained, placid; nothing intrudes forcibly on the consciousness of the viewer; whom Ni Zan offers an aesthetic experience akin to the actual experiences he himself desired. The painting above all is an expression of a state of consciousness, bespeaking the same fastidiousness, the same attitude of withdrawal from human involvement, the same longing for peace that we knew were the motivating forces in Ni Zan's character and behaviour. It is a moving statement of alienation from a corrupt and contaminated world. (Cahill)”

A brief aside on the pavilion in *Rongxi Studio*: the buildings (and figures) painted by the literati were deliberately awkward and amateurish since these were special skills of professional artisan-painters. To judge a literati painting by the lack of skill displayed in figures or buildings was to fall into a trap the scholar had prepared for illiterate clods who reject the work for lack of form-likeness, thus failing to reach the heart of the matter.



Ni Zan, *Woods and Valleys of Mount Yu*, 1374

Bamboo Painting of Ni Zan and Wu Zhen

Even though they caught the life of the plant, Li Kan and Gu An painted bamboo in a descriptive way. There were other ways of treating the subject. One Yuan painter said he always painted bamboo when he was angry and orchids when he was exhilarated because the bamboo “with its leaves sticking out like spears” is suited to the expression of anger with a fast dashing brushstroke, while the orchid with its smoothly curving leaves was rendered through relaxed soothing movements of the brush. However, bamboo was used by Ni Zan as a means of expressing his inner serenity. To an extent this was true of whatever he painted – trees, rocks, hills or bamboo – all were reflections of his inner state. So, some of his bamboo work resembles his landscapes; plain and set in a cool and grey day.

Very late in life Ni Zan found consolation in the company of his friends. *Woods and Valleys*, possibly his last work, conveys this. In the upper right Ni’s poem celebrates the hours he enjoyed with his four pals:

*Ch'en Fan once prepared a bed
When Hsu Ju came to visit.
How sweet is the water from Yen yu's well.
Yet Yu-chung's shrine is neglected and desolate.
We watch the clouds and daub with our brushes;
We drink wine and write poems.
The joyful feelings of this day
Will linger long after we have parted.*

His poetic expression, symbolic of the serenity and peace he found late in life, live in this work. The five trees with varied foliage stand together and seem more solid and supported by a lush background than in *Six Gentlemen*. The start of the Ming dynasty allowed Ni Zan to return to Wuxi where he died in peace at the home of a relative.

During the Ming and Qing Dynasties many great painters saw in Ni Zan’s simple style an independence of spirit and freedom. The leading 17th century master Shitao (1642-1707) [Part 6] in his *Landscape in the Style of Ni Zan* (1697) wrote the colophon:

The paintings of the noble recluse Ni Zan are like sands in the ocean surf and pebbles in the rapids. They roll and tumble spontaneously, naturally following the water as if born of nature. There is an emptiness and purity which penetrate the beholder, just like a cool breeze”



Ni Zan, *Bamboo, Rock and Tall Tree*, 1348

Ni Zan was about to give up his family estate when he painted *Bamboo, Rock and Tall Tree* for a friend who offered him moral support as well more mundane presents, explained by the poem inscribed on the upper right by Ni:

*Windy and rainy days – what a chilly wheat-harvesting season,
With brush in hand, I fight depression by copying.
Fortunately, I can depend upon you, my friend, to send me consolation -
'Pine-lard' wine, and meat with bamboo shoots that never fail to awaken appetite.*

Ni Zan's melancholy is conveyed by the drooping moss and the dry scrub of the tree trunks. The sprightly and sharp bamboo leaves allude to the relief the artist gained from his friend.

Serenity and inner purity were more clearly expressed by Ni Zan with a few bamboo stalks. They share the plainness and simplicity of his landscapes but are more direct.



Ni Zan, *Bamboo Branches*, 1374

Bamboo Branches was painted in the last year of Ni Zan's life for the abbot of the monastery where he stayed. The poem written by a friend is a comment on the bamboo:

*It is like scattered drops of rain wrestling outside the window;
Or like blue clouds emerging from the rocks.
Who else but Master Ni Zan can produce such purity?*

Ni Zan explained why he painted bamboo, and the irrelevance of verisimilitude to expressionism:

I am painting bamboo to release my inner serenity. How can I care for likeness and unlikeness; for abundant or scattered leaves; for slanting or straight branches? Perhaps after having worked for a long time people may even take them for hemp or reeds. Why should I try to convince them that they are bamboo?



Wu Zhen, *Stalks of Bamboo by a Rock*, 1347

Like Ni Zan, Wu Zhen painted a clump of bamboo and rock as an expressionist work. He was just as famous late in life as a bamboo painter as a landscapist.

Stalks of Bamboo by a Rock expresses Wu Zhen's persistence in unfavourable times. Of course there have been set-backs - the bare twigs speak of leaves lost through hardship and the passage of time – and Wu might be more fragile now (he was 67) - the drooping mien of the remaining leaves and the plainness of the rock suggest his impoverished feeling – but there is still life, even growth.

His beautiful inscription balances the composition and begins; *“I have been studying bamboo painting half my life.”*

Wu Zhen painted an *Album of Bamboo in Four Seasons*. *Autumn* was an impression of bamboo in a sudden squall, but the inscription contrasts Wu's age with the sprightly plant:

*In sorrow I contemplate my five thousand fathoms of long white hair,
In playfulness I brush up five hundred stalks of bamboo in pure breeze.
Fortunately slaves of the brush will understand my feelings:
I shall now create some bright rigid bamboo on this piece of paper.*



Wu Zhen, *Autumn* (leaf from *Album of Bamboo in Four Seasons*), 1350

In the same year he painted the Bamboo Album, Wu Zhen produced an impressionistic work. On Bamboo Drunk Day (the 13th day of the 5th lunar month when a special “bamboo-leaf wine” was drunk), Wu painted *Windblown Branch*. In the inscription (again beautifully balancing the work) Wu Zhen tells how Su Shi painted a picture of a bamboo branch on which this is loosely based. Caught in a rainstorm while walking in the mountains Su Shi took refuge in a friend’s house. Still wet from the rain and with the sound of the storm in his ears, he painted the picture by candlelight, capturing in the wind-tossed branch his own feeling of excitement.

Su Shi’s composition was originally an album leaf, but a copy was engraved on a stone which Wu Zhen found on a trip to Wuxing. The stone was in two pieces. All stone engravings of Su’s works of calligraphy and painting were ordered to be broken when Su fell into political disfavour after criticising reforms and was banished.

Wu was delighted by the composition and for some time could scarcely take up his brush without thinking about it. Wu Zhen’s version uses a taller format;

“Wu has been able to impart more tension to the basic line of the branch, which is broken into taut segments, each yielding with its own degree of resilience to the pressure of the wind. The consummation of an upward progression is reached in the last leaf on the topmost twig, blown near horizontal, seen almost edgewise as a sliver of black, dragging the twig back as it quivers in the stream of air (Cahill).”

The evocation of life, strength, movement and wind is so strong the flatness of the work is missed. It is really a ‘shadow bamboo’ image of the kind that the plant might cast by moonlight against a paper window. The painting has much immediacy and Wu clearly painted it with fluency. In the same way Su Shi expressed his excitement in his work, Wu Zhen embodies his exhilaration in his, and captures the ‘essential nature’ of windblown bamboo.



Wu Zhen, *Windblown Bamboo*, 1350

This was one of Wu Zhen's last works. Another painted that year carried this inscription:

I would like to have wandered around the Yangtze and Xiang Rivers, but unfortunately hadn't the proper bearing to go about in a coat and hat of green leaves. I might have studied agriculture, but hadn't the strength needed for ploughing; I might have taken up vegetable gardening, but the taxes are oppressive and the foreigners [the Mongols] would only have confiscated my land. Advancing into official public life, I could not have fulfilled any useful function; retiring, I could not have concealed myself happily in idleness. So I have lived by the Changes, practicing frugality and done what I have pleased. Through a harmonious life I have drifted into old age. What more could I have wanted?"

Wu Zhen died before the eruptions in the southeast eventually led to the inauguration of the Ming Dynasty. Artists who may have followed the Four Greats, sadly, were not able to drift into old age. Zhao Yuan, a friend of Ni Zan and Wang Meng and an excellent painter, was called to court to paint portraits even though he had no talent for them. Perhaps his summons was a cruel joke. The Ming emperor Hongwu was (predictably) displeased with Zhao's work and had him executed. Ch'en Ju-yen, another friend of Ni Zan and Wang Meng, whose style he followed in his landscapes, met the same end. Hsu Pen, whose landscapes portray his unease of the times, and who was another of the Suzhou circle, starved himself to death in prison while waiting to be executed.

Many of the scholars and artists of the southeast suffered the death penalty and thousands of the Suzhou gentry were banished to the bleak northern Huai River area by Emperor Hongwu at the start of his reign in 1368. Having suffered the same himself, he claimed he was giving them a taste of the abject poverty in which most of the rest of China lived (a move later echoed by Mao "re-educating" intellectuals by sending them to labour in distant villages).

Emperor Hongwu would always treat the literati with deep suspicion. He required his officials to kneel when talking to him and did not hesitate in having them beaten. When Hu Weiyong was put on trial for plotting to assassinate the emperor and overthrow the regime, the charges were almost certainly fabricated. As mentioned earlier Hu Weiyong was executed and, after a long investigation, over 30,000 others were put to death (among them Wang Meng). Two other purges took another 70,000 lives. Hongwu ushered in "Ming Absolutism", resorting to direct rule. The elite were not alone in being purged; Hongwu was an enthusiast for the job:

In the morning I punish a few; by the evening others commit the same crime. I punish these in the evening and by the next morning again there are violations. Although the corpses of the first have not been removed, already others follow in their path; the harsher the punishment, the more the violations. Day and night I cannot rest. This is a situation which cannot be helped. If I enact lenient punishments, these persons will engage in still more evil practices. Then how could the people outside the government lead peaceful lives? What a difficult situation this is! If I punish these persons, I am regarded as a tyrant. If I am lenient towards them, the law becomes ineffective, order deteriorates and people deem me an incapable ruler.

The Yuan Dynasty, administered by folk whom the Chinese regarded as barbarians, was thus succeeded by the barbaric rule of a native.

The Mongols had ruled China Entire for much less than a century. Their dynasty was riven with social turmoil and imposed terrible hardships. Famine, flood, starvation and disease were endured by the Chinese people on whom the Mongol emperors largely looked with utter indifference. These were hardly propitious circumstances for the flourishing of culture. Yet the art of the literati ensured that the Yuan Dynasty was no mere afterglow of Song artistic spirit or a barren interregnum before the Ming. Instead, it is one of the greatest creative periods of Far Eastern painting.

References

- Bush, Susan, *The Chinese Literati on Painting; Su Shih (1037-1101) to Tung Ch'i-ch'ang (1555-1636)*, Harvard University Press, 1971.
- Bush, Susan and Murck, Christian (editors), *Theories of the Arts in China*, Princeton University Press, 1983.
- Cahill, James, *Hills Beyond a River: Chinese Painting of the Yuan Dynasty, 1279-1368*, Weatherhill 1976.
- Chang Chung-yuan, *Creativity and Taoism: A Study of Chinese Philosophy, Art, and Poetry*, Harper Colophon Books 1963.
- Clunas, Craig, *Art in China, Oxford History of Art*, Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Ebrey, Patricia Buckley, *Cambridge Illustrated History of China*, Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Fong, Wen C, *Beyond Representation: Chinese Painting and Calligraphy 8th to 14th Century*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992.
- Lee, Sherman E and Wai-Kam Ho, *Chinese Art Under the Mongols: The Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368)*, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1968.
- Loehr, Max, *The Great Painters of China*, Oxford University Press, 1980.
- Roberts, JAG, *The Complete History of China*, Sutton Publishing, 2003.
- Rowley, George, *Principles of Chinese Painting*, Princeton University Press, 1970.
- Sickman, Laurence and Soper, Alexander, *The Art and Architecture of China, Pelican History of Art, Penguin Books*, 1971.
- Siren Osvald, *Chinese Painting: Great Masters and Principles, Volume IV*, Ronald Press New York, 1956.
- Sullivan, Michael, *The Arts of China (Fourth Edition)*, University of California Press, 1999.
- Tregear, Mary, *Chinese Art*, Thames and Hudson, 1980.
- Waley, Arthur, *An Introduction to the Study of Chinese Painting*, Grove Press, 1958.
- Weidner, Marsha (Editor), *Views from the Jade Terrace: Chinese Women Artists 1300-1912*, Indianapolis Museum of Art, 1988.