A social history of painting inscriptions in Ming China (1368-1644)

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Chapter 2 The Production of Painting Inscriptions in Social Networks and Reciprocities

Chinese painters did not live in a vacuum. Even if Ming painting inscriptions were spontaneous creations of emotional and aesthetic expressions, we can accept that an overwhelming majority of Ming literati paintings were rooted in society. This chapter will explore the production of Ming painting inscriptions within various contexts: a clan, a private circle, and a local elite community. The analysis will focus on the crucial functions of inscriptions to construct and manifest individual identity within all these categories of group.

This chapter first scrutinizes the physicality of inscriptions in relation to three main painting formats. It will show that the creation and reception of an inscription are conditioned by characteristics peculiar to each painting format, and that social factors often underpinned the choice of style format. Based on these discussions of the material aspects, the second part of the chapter examines the specific social spaces that circumscribed the production of inscriptions. These spaces are: spaces of dwelling, spaces of convening, and spaces of reciprocity. I will explore how Ming inscribers employed inscriptions to negotiate the demands and obligations generated from these spaces, and how inscriptions enacted a role in people's social lives. I will conduct two case studies. The first case study comprehensively illuminates inscriptions in spaces of dwelling and convening, while the second one primarily deals with reciprocal inscriptions.

Inscription and Painting Formats

This section investigates the relation between painting inscriptions and three major painting formats in the Ming period: handscroll, hanging scroll, and fan. Certainly there are other

formats such as album and screen, however, these particular media have been chosen in order to provide a foundation for subsequent discussions in this chapter, which mainly focus on these three formats.

The materiality of the image and text communicates to viewers/readers. Chinese paintings vary considerably in terms of format and measurements. Each format has its own way of incorporating inscriptions. Not surprisingly, the choice of painting format made by the painter would shape a reader's experience of an inscription, and might further affect the function of the painting. As mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation, detachability is characteristic of Chinese painting formats. If the record of Zhou Mi 周密 (1232-1298), a late Southern Song literatus, is taken as fact, then additional paper attached to paintings had already appeared in the early twelfth century. Zhou Mi's record mentions that Emperor Huizong had attached inscription on separate sheets of paper to the paintings that he acquired, whereas Emperor Gaozong, the founder of the Southern Song, decreed that they should be removed.[1] The questions to be explored include: to what extent did the practical utilization of paintings affect or even determine the form of an inscription? To what extent did an inscription actively adapt itself to the painting format for the fulfillment of given social functions?

Handscroll

From the seventh to the tenth century, China underwent a magnificent shift in terms of writing media and form. The scroll format gradually evolved to the codex form, from which at least two sub-forms arose: whirlwind binding (*xuanfeng zhuang* 旋風裝) and concertina binding (*jingzhe zhuang* 經摺裝) (fig. 2-1). After the tenth century, and the advent of woodblock printing,

1 Zhou Mi, *Qidong yeyu* 齊東野語 , in *Shuhua zhuangbiao jiyi jishi* 書畫裝裱技藝輯釋, ed. Du Bingzhuang and Du Zixiong (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 1993), 209-14.

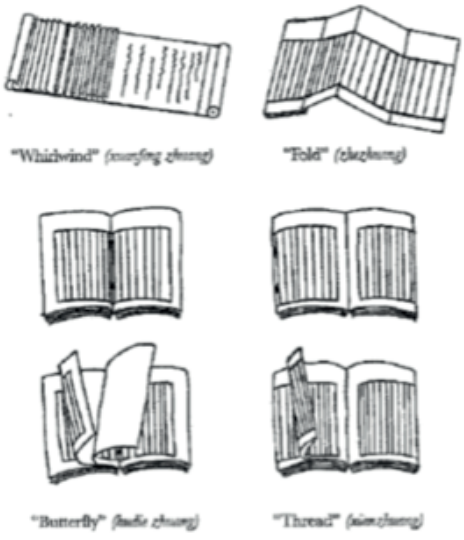


Fig. 2-1. Diagrams of book bindings. Source: Anne Burkus-Chasson, "Visual Hermeneutics and the Act of Turning the Leaf," 372.

butterfly binding (*hudie zhuang* 胡蝶裝) books appeared.[2] Subsequently, scrolls began to die out as a form of writing media, but the "horizontal scroll" (*hengjuan* 橫卷), or "handscroll" (*shoujuan* 手卷) survived as one of the main painting media. The handscroll format features a large ratio of width to length, which gives the viewer a sense of intimacy. A handscroll should be read or viewed by unrolling a new part while simultaneously rolling up the old.[3] The length unfolded and displayed in front of eyes is about 10 to 15 cm. The viewer must resort to memory to relate the newly unfolded part with the already examined folded section. Thus, this highly dynamic format requires a painter to constantly take into account the view until the end of the scroll.

The early juxtaposition of pictures and texts, as shown in chapter 1, appeared on handscrolls in an episodic mode, one alternating with the other. Indeed, it is not always easy to tell from the total presentation of a work whether pictures or texts are primary. Yet, as inscriptions became longer and as their numbers increased, the space required to accommodate all this information was necessarily limited. This became most evident during the

2 For a discussion of the evolution of book formats, see Zhang Hongxing, "Re-reading Inscriptions in Chinese Scroll Painting," 608-609; Ōki Yasushi, *Meimatsu kōnan no shuppan bunka* 明末江南の出版文化 (Tokyo: Kenbun shuppan, 2004), 15-16; Anne Burkus-Chasson, "Visual Hermeneutics and the Act of Turning the Leaf," 371-77.

3 Jerome Silbergeld, *Chinese Painting Style: Media, Methods, and Principle of Form* (Washington: University of Washington Press, 1982), 12.

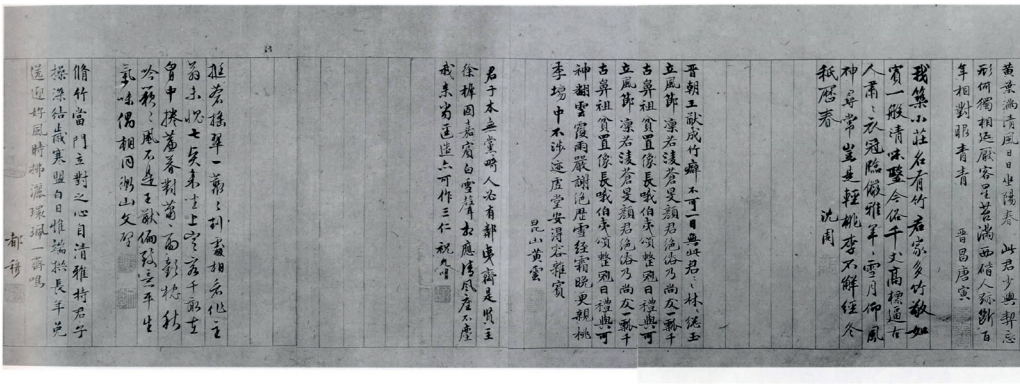


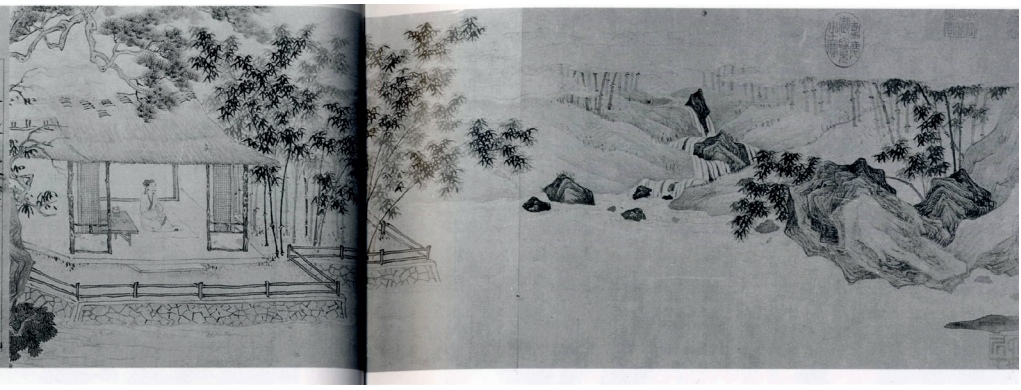
Fig. 2-2 Tang Yin, *Facing to the Bamboo*, ink and colour on silk, handscroll, image section 28.6 × 119.8 cm, inscription section 28.6 x 104.2 cm, The Palace Museum, Taipei. Source: *Shuhua*, Vol.18, 339.

Yuan period. These limits of space resulted in solutions that have historically reshaped the physicality of Chinese painting. Of particular significance is the eminent Yuan painter Zhao Mengfu, who began to move inscriptions away from the pictorial centre, and added additional colophon sheets exclusively for inscription texts.[4]

On the basis of the profound innovations by their Yuan predecessors, the Ming artists further developed the handscroll into a format of multiple components, matching the scrolls to architectural and epigraphical dimensions. The *yinshou* 引首, or "frontispiece", emerged no later than the Yongle 永樂 Reign (1403–1424). Initially, this part of the scroll, which preceded the pictorial section, was designed for protection. Subsequently, it evolved into a writing space to accommodate large-sized calligraphy that captioned the entire work.[5] The introduction of frontispiece and the conventionalization of colophon in the Ming period saw the handscroll format evolve into the scheme that we still use today. The scheme starts with a frontispiece, and is followed by one or several painting sections and an optional

4 Shen C. Y. Fu et al., *Traces of the Brush* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 184-85.

5 Xu Bangda, "Shuhua zuopin de biaoti he yinshou" 書畫作品的標題和引首, *Zhongguo shuhua* 中國書畫, No. 7 (2011): 52.



preface section. It is concluded by one or several colophons comprising a body of verses or prose, or a mixture of the two. This compound scheme is highly flexible and can be extended or shortened as necessary. This flexibility contributed to a rich variety of physical expressions. It offers the viewer continuous shifts from one art to another, thus repeatedly renewing his or her visual and intellectual experiences.

A notable trend among Ming literati painters in the Jiangnan area in the mid-fifteenth century saw the format lengthened further as a result of inscriptions growing longer. The number of inscribers on a single work was rising as well, which also led to limited space for inscription. This problem led to additional inscription sheets becoming common, a solution facilitated by the remarkable extendibility of the handscroll format. A considerable portion of the extant Ming handscrolls feature such additional sheets for inscriptions. Sometimes, the length of inscription section even far exceeds the length of the image section, which once again challenges our understanding of Chinese painting as a balanced word-image entity.

Theoretically, a handscroll allows for limitless sheets for inscriptions to be appended. The format thus opens up the possibility for future viewers to mount their own creations to an existing work without significantly changing the original appearance. This openness to transformation, as some researchers have pointed out, allows for interaction between a painter and

an inscriber(s) and, indeed, any subsequent inscriber and viewer.[6] Another consequence of this format is the time and spatial separation of painting and inscribing activities. An inscriber does not even have to see the painting to fulfill his task. *Facing to the Bamboo* (*Duizhu tu* 對竹圖 , fig. 2-2) furnishes us with a good example. This handscroll painting was presented by the painter Tang Yin 唐 寅 (1470-1524) to a friend in acknowledgement of accommodation. Tang Yin would have sent paper separately to several other friends for inscriptions. These sheets of paper were later collected and mounted as colophons at the end of the scroll. This speculation is logical given the strange layout of the colophon section. Between the second and the third inscriptions there is a rather incongruous gap, and between the fourth and the fifth there is another even bigger one. Gaps between the first and the second, the third and the fourth, and the fifth and the sixth, however, are much less conspicuous and do not disrupt one's reading.[7] These clues suggest that the entire colophon section contains three sheets of paper, and the two conspicuous gaps mark the physical boundaries of the paper. This scroll should have been prepared rather hastily, using the tactic of sending paper to people simultaneously. It evidences that the creative sequence – i.e. whether the image or the inscription should come first – was of little concern in the creation of Ming handscrolls. This disregard for the creative sequence essentially subverts a common assumption that an inscription is a textual response to the visuality. Meanwhile, the archaic scheme of inscriptions on handscrolls, which alternated texts and images, still existed in the Ming time. Exemplified by Xu Wei's series of creations of flowers

6 Yao Ning, "Commemorating the Deceased: Chinese Literati Memorial Painting - A Case Study of Wu Li's 'Remembering the Past at Xingfu Chapel' (1672)," (PhD. diss., Heidelberg University, 2013), 18.

7 Chiang Chao-shen proposes that the colophon comprises two sheet of paper. Unfortunately, I have not had the chance to examine the scroll, nor do I have access to a full-colour reproduction. Viewing the black-and-white image published by the Palace Museum, it seems that the first, second and third inscriptions are written on one sheet, the fourth one by Zhu Yunming on another sheet, and the fifth and sixth on the final sheet. See Chiang Chao-shen, "Cong Tang Yin de jiyu lai kan ta de shishuhua" 從唐寅的際遇來看他的詩書畫 , *Gugong xueshu jikan*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Autumn 1985): 8-9.

and plants, this scheme nonetheless did not jeopardise the predominance of the constitutive scheme and did not reject any further section being appended. Having discussed the physical arrangement of handscrolls, the rest of this chapter relies heavily on the evidence that they provide.

Hanging Scroll

Any appended inscription paper on a hanging scroll can be a serious distraction for the beholder's pictorial perception. Mounting small slips of paper around the picture's surface is not very popular. While the practice of mounting a large piece of appended paper directly above the image, termed *shitang* 詩 塘 (poetry pool, fig. 2-3), occasionally occurred, it was strongly discouraged by some connoisseurs and mounting artisans.[8] The hanging scroll format instead assumes a different solution to mediating its physicality and function with the demand for inscribing space.

Fig. 2-4 Du Jin, one of the four pictures of *Eighteen Scholars* (*Shiba xueshi* 十八學士), ink and colour on silk, hanging scroll, 134.2 × 78.6 cm, Shanghai Museum, Shanghai.

8 Both Zhou Jiazhou's book on painting mounting and Wen Zhenheng's *Treatise on the Superfluous Things* on painting connoisseurship have referred to this issue. See *Shuhua zhuangbiao jiyi jishi*, 49, 312.

Hanging scrolls, unlike handscrolls, allow for the display of the entire composition at one time.[9] A popular way of examining hanging scrolls was to have assistants (mostly servants) lifting the scroll upwards using a rod at the back (fig. 2-4, fig. 2-17). In the Ming period, it was also extremely common to have vertical scrolls decorating public spaces such as inns, restaurants and religious sites, as well as dwelling spaces, such as a residence's lobby, parlour, study or bedroom (fig. 2-5, fig. 2-6). Li Rihua, for example, once found a work by Wen Zhengming hanging on the wall of a restaurant in a small town.[10] The custom for scrolls hanging on walls to be changed according to the season must also have had stimulated the total output of hanging scrolls.[11] The penchant for hanging scrolls permeated all levels of the Ming social strata. A Ming encyclopedia, part of which instructs on epistolary manners, provides a sample letter about how to borrow a hanging scroll for temporarily display while hosting a banquet.[12] The readers

Fig. 2-5 Detail of a painted figure contemplating a hanging scroll on a wall. Du Jin, *Guxian shiyi tu* 古賢詩意圖 , the 15th century, ink on paper, hanging scroll, 28 × 108.2 cm. Source: *Huihua*, Vol. Mingdai 明代 2, 190.

9 Jerome Silbergeld, *Chinese Painting Style*, 13.

10 Li Rihua, *Li baiyue ji* 禮白岳記, SKQSCMCS, *Shi bu*, Vol. 128, facsimile reprint of Ming printed edition, 114.

11 Craig Clunas, *Art in China*, 179.

12 Xu Huiying 徐 會 瀛 (fl. 17th cent.) comp., *Xinqie yantai jiaozheng tianxia tongxing wenlin jubao wanjuan* xingluo 新鍥燕臺校正天下通行文林聚寶萬卷星羅 , *juan* 7, facsimile reprint of 1601 printed edition. *Beijing tushuguan guji zhenben congkan* 北京圖書館古籍珍本叢刊 , *Zi bu*, Vol. 76 (Beijing: Shumu wenxian

Fig. 2-6 Detail of two scroll hanged on a wall, Ma Shi, *Guiqu laici – Zhizi houmen tu* 歸去來辭 —— 稚子候門圖 , the 15th century, ink on paper, handscroll, 27.7 × 74 cm, Liaoning Provincial Museum, Shenyang. Source: *Huihua*, Vol. Mingdai 明代 1 , 114.

of the encyclopedia were supposed to be commoners, which suggests that the demand for hanging scrolls existed even among those who could not afford one. Paintings in this format were an indispensable part of a decent art collection. It is said that the notorious Grand Secretary Yan Song 嚴 嵩 (1480-1565?) accumulated a multitude of hanging scrolls.[13] For the cultural elite, a painting of a 'proper' subject hanging in a 'proper' way also served as a symbol of cultivation and identity. Wen Zhenheng 文震亨 (1585-1645), in his famous fashion guide *Treatise of Superfluous Things* (*Zhangwu zhi* 長 物 志), taught his readers "how to hang a painting," and his earnest instructions reflect the popularity of the format in everyday use.[14] The Hangzhou writer Gao Lian 高 濂 (1573-1620) claimed that a painting hanging on wall, especially of landscape subject matter, was a must-have for an ideal study for educated men.[15] Li Rihua voiced a similar

chubanshe, 2000), 176.

13 See Gu Qiyuan 顧起元 , *Gengsi bian/Kezuo zhuiyu* 庚巳編 / 客座贅語 , puct. Tan Dihua and Chen Jiahe. Lidai shiliao biji congkan 歷代史料筆記叢刊 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), 252.

14 Wen Zhenheng, *Changwu zhi jiaozhu* 長物志校註 , annot. Chen Zhi, colla. Yang Chaobo (Nanjing: Jiangsu keji chubanshe, 1984), 351.

15 Gao Lian, *Zunsheng bajian* 遵生八牋 , annot. Wang Dachun (Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 1992), 307.

idea.[16]

The physical characteristics of hanging scrolls negotiated with the practical and aesthetic demands of painting beholders. On the one hand, the exhibition environment of hanging scrolls had changed drastically since the fifteenth century. The rapid expansion of architectural size lengthened the viewing distance. An anecdotal book *Superfluous Remarks in the Parlor* (*Kezuo zhuiyu* 客座贅語 , 1617) recounts that before the Zhengde 正德 Reign (1506–1521), buildings in Nanjing were all low, small and austere looking. Since the late years of the Jiajing 嘉 靖 Reign (1522–1566), the book author observed, houses had become resplendent. "The roofs have multiple eaves and their ridges are decorated with animal ornaments, which make the building as magnificent as government offices. The courtyards and gardens affect the appearance of those of dukes and marquises."[17] The observations of architectural expansion can also be found in other contemporary and subsequent writings.[18]

The environmental change might have been a challenge in terms of appreciating Ming hand scrolls from a distance. An easy tactic was to enlarge the painting surface. Wen Zhengming mentioned that his teacher, Shen Zhou, in his youth, usually drew small landscape paintings. But "after forty-years-old, he began to develop larger paintings, roughly done with sparse strokes."[19] Shen Zhou's style change, interestingly, synchronized with the enlargement of architectural scale, and it is tempting to understood this as a casual result of the latter. Another tactic was to add inscriptions. There was no better way to delay the

16 Li Rihua, *Zitaoxuan zazhui* 紫桃軒雜綴 , *juan* 1, Guoxue zhenben wenku 國學珍本文庫 , 1st compilation (Shanghai: Zhongyang shudian 1935), 21.

17 Gu Qiyuan, *Kezuo Zhuiyu*, 170.

18 For example, in *Hidden Treasures in the Celebrated Mountains* (*Mingshan cang* 名山藏 , 1640). He Qiaoyuan 何喬遠 (1558-1631), *Mingshan cang* 名山藏 , *juan* 102, facsimile reprint of 1640 edition (Taipei: Chengwen chubanshe, 1971), 11b.

19 See Wen Zhengming, "Ti Shen Shitian lin Wang Shuming xiaojing" 題 沈石田臨王叔明小景 (Inscription on *Small Landscaped After Wang Meng* By Shen Zhou), in Cao Rong 曹溶 (1613-1685) comp., *Wen Daizhao Tiba* 文待詔題跋 , *juan* I, Xuehai leibian 學海類編 edition Vol. 98, 1920 Hanfen lou 涵芬樓 facsimile reprint of 1831 printed edition, 9a-9b.

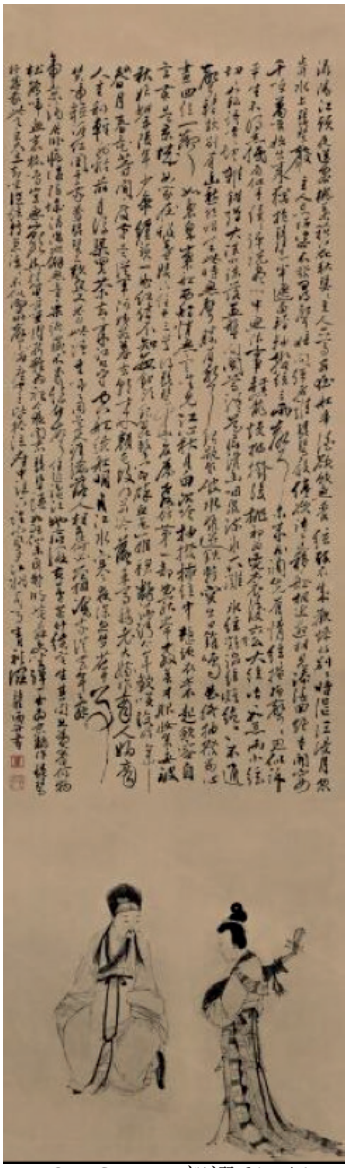


Fig. 2-7 Guo Xu 郭詡 (1456-1532), *Song of the Lute*, ink on paper, hanging scroll, 154 × 46.6 cm, The Palace Museum, Beijing. Source: Meishu, Huihua bian 繪畫編 , Vol.6, Mingdai huihua 明代繪畫上 , 153.

beholder's visual perception than to use calligraphic inscriptions. Indeed, the content of inscriptions could sometimes be an intellectual quiz that promised spiritual delights.

Inscriptions required space from painting works. Pre-Ming inscriptions on hanging scrolls were relatively small and executed neatly and carefully. Yet, some Yuan literati initiated a performative direction for inscribing style. *Gazing at Waterfall* 觀瀑圖 attributed to Xie Bochengi 謝伯城 (fl. 14th cent.) is an example where the inscription intrudes directly into the pictorial space.[20] Ming paintings have more evidence of compositional planning in advance, especially those bearing lengthy texts. *Night Sitting* provides a quintessential example, on which the painter Shen Zhou composed and personally inscribed a long prose of nearly 500 characters. Literary writings by ancient masters were also popular for inscriptions. Here for instance is Guo Xu 郭 詡 (1456-1532) who transcribed Bai Juyi's *Song of the Lute* (*Pipa xing* 琵琶行) onto a hanging scroll painted after this well-known poem (fig. 2-7). On this painting, the lengthy poem inscription competes with the image for space and attention. When painting such a work, the artist

20 For a brief introduction to this painting, see Shen C. Y. Fu et al., *Traces of the Brush*, 186-87.

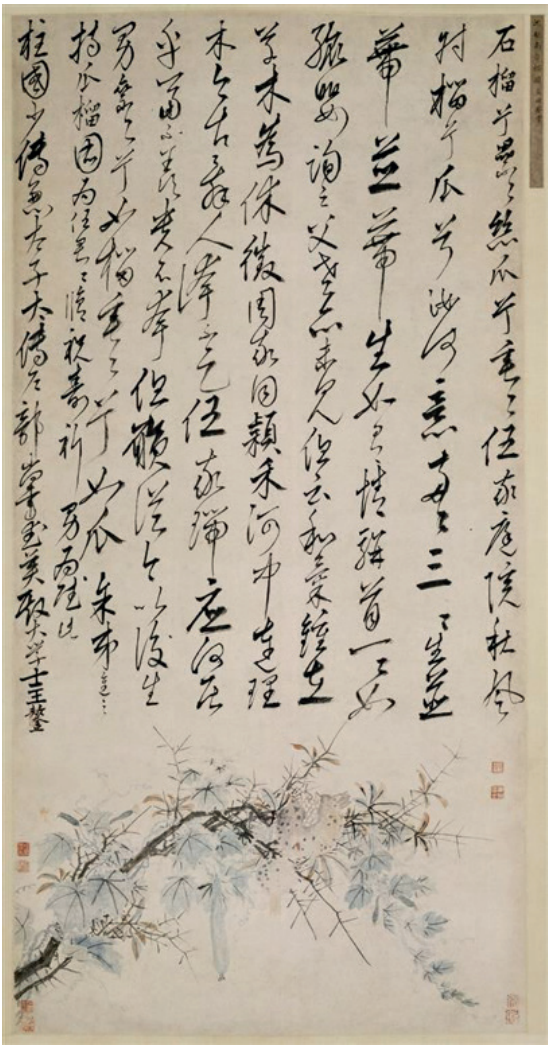


Fig. 2-8 Shen Zhou, *Ode to the Pomegranate and Melon Vine*, ca. 1506/1509, ink and colour on paper, hanging scroll, overall 280.7 × 104.1 cm, Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit.

likely envisioned the entire composition beforehand and left room for the inscription. It was especially necessary to conceive of the spatial relationship between the inscription and image in advance for collaborative works. The painter needed to be well-informed about the inscriber's idea, and vice versa, but this also requires both sides to clearly shape their own creative ideas. For a work like Shen Zhou's *Ode to the Pomegranate and Melon Vine* (fig. 2-8), two-thirds of the upper surface of which is occupied by Wang Ao's 王鏊 (1450-1524) inscription, the painter no doubt was familiar with his friend's blueprint before setting his brush to the paper.

Ming artists are also known for their experimental spirit and for using the blank space for inscriptions creatively. The upper right corner of *Loft Mount Lu* (*Lu Shangao* 廬山高 , fig. 2-9) is crammed with the painter's own inscription, expressing good

Fig. 2-9 Detail of *Loft Mount Lu* by Shen Zhou, 1467, ink on paper, hanging scroll, 193.8 x 98.1 cm, The Palace Museum, Taipei.

wishes to the painting's recipient. The saw-tooth bottom edge of the inscription is exquisitely close to the outline of the mountain peak. Such spatial experimentation was taken its extreme on *Dwelling in Snow* (*Xueju tu* 雪居圖, fig. 2-10) by a late Ming painter named Song Xu 宋旭 (1525-1606), who hailed from Jiaxing, but lived in Songjiang. Song Xu might have painted this hanging scroll for a wealthy friend, Sun Kehong 孫克弘 (1533-1611), who owned a garden named *Xueju*, or "Dwelling in Snow." What is striking about this painting is that the inscriptions by Song Xu and his friends have "invaded" almost every single blank space *within* the image. They ramble all over the garden stones, the tree trunks, the snowfield and even the house walls. Apparently, the integrity of the image was no longer a matter of concern; instead, there was a new zest for "interweaving" texts into images for unparalleled visual delight. We can imagine the visual shock and the sense of novelty this scroll would have invoked in the person stood in front of it. According to a Qing connoisseur and art critic named Wu Xiu 吳脩 (1764-1827), another copy of *Dwelling in Snow* was produced. The inscriptions on this now lost copy reportedly amount to forty, almost double the number of inscriptions on the extant one.[21]

Song Xu's scheme was nonetheless rare and quite experimental for the Ming period. None of his surviving paintings adopt the same inscribing strategy. It was some decades afterwards that this type of intrusive scheme truly developed, among the Qing painters of Yangzhou 揚州, represented by

21 Wu Xiu, *Qingxia guan lun hua jueju*, 219.

Fig. 2-10 Song Xu, *Snow Dwelling*, 1579, ink and colour on paper, hanging scroll, 135 x 76.4 cm, Jilin Provincial Museum, Changchun. Source: *Meishu*, Huihua bian 繪畫編 vol. 8 Mingdai huihua xia 明代繪畫下, 3.

Zheng Xie 鄭 燮 (1693-1766) and Jin Nong 金 農 (1687-1764). A painting of Jin Nong (fig. 2-11) presents an eye-catching inscription in the centre of the picture, written boldly in square script, creating an illusion as if it was an archaic inscription on a stone or a rubbing from a stone inscription.[22] It is unlikely that these Qing artists purposely imitated Song Xu. It is probable that this bizarre way of integrating inscriptions and the image was more to do with the limited choices available for someone wanting to innovatively combine text and image on a hanging scroll.

22 Michael Sullivan, *The Three Perfections*, 11.

Fan

The fan format is the only format with an ostensibly ephemeral logic to its existence. A type of Chinese fan – the round fan (*tuanshan* 團扇) – had its prime in the Tang and Song periods. Some extant Southern Song round fans have a conventional pattern with a picture on one face and a calligraphic inscription on the other.[23] Thus, the two arts cannot be simultaneously seen. In other words, anyone who holds an inscribed round fan is not able to appreciate the picture and read the inscription in one glance. He or she must rely on memory to associate the two arts. This physicality also brings dynamics to the sensual experience of the fan beholder.[24] Another salient feature of round fans is portability, which gives the format greater fluidity in terms of being presented and exchanged, but at the same time a higher chance of being worn out or abandoned. By the mid-fourteenth century, inscribing on round fans had become a common practice among the elite. For instance, Zhang Yu 張雨 (1323-1385), a literatus painter living in the Yuan-Ming transition, once asked a friend for a poem on "a lovely new and clean round fan." He asked that the poem preferably be jointly composed by local gentleman.[25]

Fig.2-11 Jin Nong, *Plum Blossom and Calligraphy*, 1761, ink on net-patterned paper, hanging scroll, without mounting: 116.2 × 41.5 cm, Yale University Art Gallery, Newhaven.

23 James Cahill, *The Lyric Journey: Poetic Painting in China and Japan* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), 23.

24 Jerome Silbergeld, *Chinese Painting Style*, 14.

25 Zhang Luquan and Fu Hongzhan eds., *Gugong cang Ming Qing mingren*

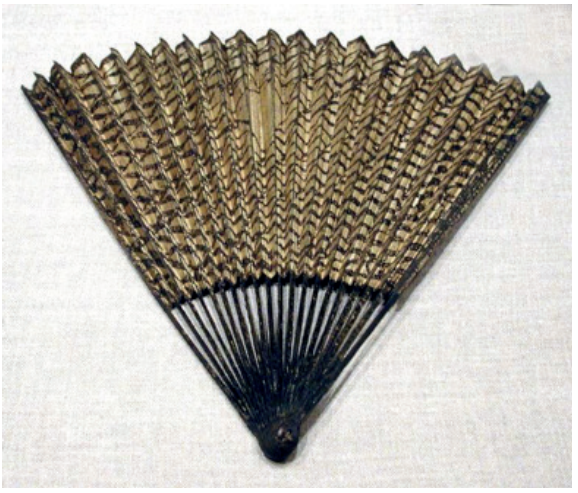


Fig. 2-12 Folding Fan with Fishing Net Decoration, similar to one excavated from the tomb of Zhu Chunchen (d. 1601) and his wife (d. 1624) in Songjiang District, late-16th-early 17th century, ink on gold-flecked paper and gold-flecked lacquered bamboo fanbones and endpieces, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

The folding fan (*zheshan* 摺扇, *jugushan* 聚骨扇) was another type of Chinese fan format, not indigenous to China but imported from Korea, no later than the Song dynasty. There are a number of reports of Northern Song literati seeking this kind of precious and exotic object.[26] The obtainability of folding fans was limited at that time, constrained by unstable imports via the tributary system. The Ming ruling house, which awarded tributary fans to court officials, proceeded to cultivate the folding fan fashion. Like scroll paintings, fans also found their way into private collections. The difference was that fans were only treasured for their material. In *Record of Heaven's Waters [Melting] the Iceburg* (*Tianshui bingshan lu* 天水冰山錄), an inventory allegedly confiscated from the Grand Secretary Yan Song after his downfall in 1562, records a huge fan collection, numbering 27,308. Around 90 percent of these are folding fans, of which 110 were imported from Japan, and approximately 23,000 were made in Sichuan.[27] All these fans were

shuzha moji xuan 故宮藏明清名人書札墨迹選, Vol. Mingdai 明代 (Beijing: Rongbaizhai, 1993), 418.

26 For the importing history of folding fan and the reactions of Chinese literati, see Shih Shou-ch'ien, "Shanshui suishen: Shi shiji Riben zheshan de chuanru Zhongguo yu shanshui huashan zai shiwu zhi shiqi shiji de liuxing" 山水隨身：十世紀日本摺扇的傳入中國與山水畫扇在十五至十七世紀的流行, *Guoli Taiwan daxue meishushi yanjiu jikan* 國立臺灣大學美術史研究集刊, Vol. 29 (September 2010): 1-5.

27 Anonymous, *Tianshui bingshan lu* 天水冰山錄, *juan* 3, Zhibuzu zhai congshu

made of expensive materials. The gold-flecking or gold-splashed surfaces were so treasured that Ming people even buried them with the dead (fig. 2-12). [28]

Yet, Ming people enjoyed a much more advantageous situation than Song and Yuan fan lovers. On the one hand, from the fourteenth century onwards, foreign imports, mainly from Japan, became more stable. In the meantime, local Chinese manufacturing of folding fans sprang up. Wang Fu 王绂 (1362-1416), an early Ming official and painter, was rather cynical about the phenomenon of Japanese envoys purchasing imitations of Japanese folding fans (*woshan* 倭扇) made in Hangzhou - good in quality and cheap in price but poor in sale – and resold them to the Chinese or bartered them for antiques.[29] Excerpt for Hangzhou, Sichuan 四川 was another important manufacturing centre. The folding fans made in Sichuan (*chuanshan* 川扇) were goods that the Provincial Administration Commission (*buzhengsi* 布政司) tribute regularly to the court in Beijing.[30] It is not odd that a wealthy commoner like the hero of *The Lotus in Golden Vase*, Ximen Qing, could afford a Sichuan folding fan with a splashed-gold surface, which indicates the diffusion of this fashion to urban affluent people.[31]

Wen Zhenheng's *Treatise on the Superfluous Things* acknowledged Sichuan, Hangzhou, Huizhou, and the court in Beijing as the main producing centres of folding fans. But he gave special attention to Suzhou, where singular fans carrying paintings and calligraphic inscriptions were produced. If "a

知不足齋叢書 edition, comp. Bao Tingbo 鮑廷博 (1728-1814), printed in 1786-1814, 58a-58b.

28 Li Junjie, "Zheshan ji qi shanmian yishu" 摺扇及其扇面藝術, in *Shanghai bowuguan jikan* 上海博物館集刊, Vol. 4 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1987), 102.

29 Wang Fu, *Youshi xiansheng shiji* 友石先生詩集, in *Beijing tushuguan guji zhenben congkan* 北京圖書館古籍珍本叢刊, ed. Beijing tushuguan guji chuban bianji zu, Vol. 100, fascrimile reprint of of 1488 edition (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe, 1999), 255b.

30 Shen Defu, *Wanli yehuo bian* 萬曆野獲編, *juan* 26 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997), 662.

31 Lanling xiaoxiao sheng, *Jin ping mei cihua* 金瓶梅詞話, ed. Mei Jie (Hong Kong: Mengmei guan, 1993), 36.

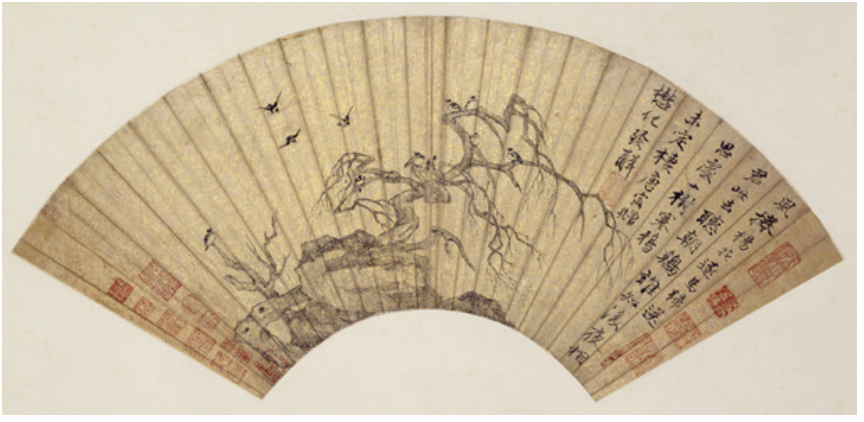


Fig. 2-13 Tang Yin, *Kumu hanya tu* 枯木寒鴉圖 , ink on gold-flecked paper, 17.0 × 49.0 cm, The Palace Museum, Beijing.

famous artist (*mingbi* 名筆)" had painted a fan [surface], then, the author Wen Zhenheng reported, "when it is of good quality, the price is extremely high."[32] In other words, the frequent interactions among Suzhou's cultural elite and wealthy urban people raised the demand for painted and inscribed folding fans as elegant and portable objects to be displayed, used, and presented. The demand, in turn, fuelled the practice of inscribing on fans. Since the sixteenth century, the prevailing trend has been for fans carrying paintings and inscriptions on the same side (fig. 2-13).

Folding fans have higher portability than round fans as they can be easily and discretely be placed inside sleeves, a feature that bestows the format a sense of intimacy. The fact that a fan is a functional object further intensified its sense of "thingness." As John Hay has observed, hanging subdues the physical persona of a hanging scroll and examining subdues the physical presence of a handscroll. When stretched over its frame, he notes, "A fan painting becomes even more clearly an object than does a scroll when mounted." Holding a fan and noticing it as an ornament trivializes and aestheticizes its being a painting.[33]

For social elites, folding fans were more than simply objects

32 Wen Zhenheng, *Zhangwu zhi jiaozhu*, 291.

33 John Hay, "Poetic Space," 180.

for cooling down or showing off wealth. Fans played a part in social lives in various ways. One might ask someone holding a fan to exhibit its full surface in order to appreciate the painting and inscription(s) together. The names of the painter inscribed on the fan subtly indicated a social connection with the owner. A fan thus proclaimed its owner's artistic taste and social network every time it was used in public, but in a discrete manner that avoided flaunting. The correspondence of a number of Ming literati unravels a picture that folding fans were often sent along with letters or received as an elegant gift.[34] Sun Kuang 孫鑛 (1543-1613), a prominent late Ming official and writer, received such a gift bearing a poetic inscription. Sun appreciated the inscription so much that he decided to transcribe the poem and send it to acquaintances to share its lyric beauty .[35] In this way, inscriptions on fans spread through the literati's network, rippling out via a series of multiplications and literary productions.

To meet the demand for painted and inscribed folding fans, commissions for visual and verbal creations on fans became prevalent in the fifteenth century. Thanks to its relatively small scale, painting a fan was less time consuming than painting, say, a scroll. But commissions for fans could be much more. Ming correspondence often mentions commissions for multiple fans. The son of the painter Chen Daofu 陳道復 (1483-1544), for instance, once informed a letter recipient about his completion of two folding fans for a third party and implicitly encouraged more commissions.[36] It was usual for dedications to the final recipient to be written on the fan. In one case, a late Ming literatus wrote to his client for the recipient's name, which he had forgotten. He sent the client two fans that he had been asked to inscribe along with the letter to which he added a postscript permitting

34 We have learned of this habit thanks to Ming literati's acknowledgement of the fan gifts. For examples, see entries 130, 144, 146, 148, 173 of *Gugong cang Ming Qing mingren shuzha moji xuan*.

35 The poem was sent from Li Yuanlong 李元龍 to Sun Kuang in a letter asking the grandson of his sister to fulfill the transcribing and circulating task. Ibid., 441.

36 Ibid., 453.

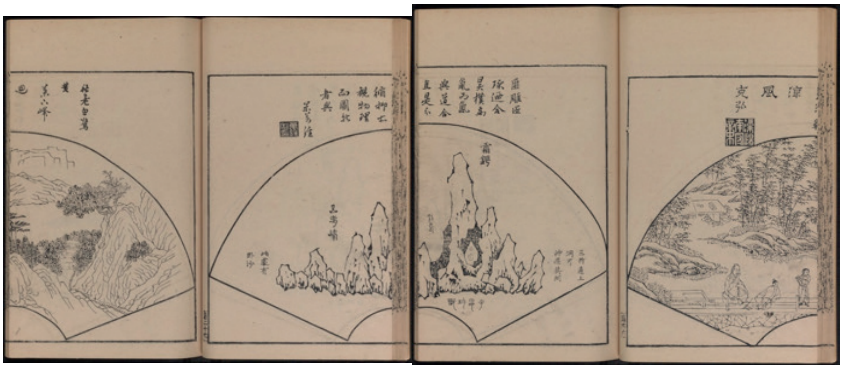


Fig. 2-14 A Fan surface design (the two folios in the middle) in *Fan Models by Notable Gentlemen*, Huang Fengchi 黃鳳池 (fl. 17th cent.) comp. and prt., Edo, Kyōto: Tōhon'ya Tahē : Tōhon'ya Seibē, Kanbun 12-nen (1672) print.

the client to "fill in" the name himself.[37] In this case, then, the dedication itself appears to have been a more important element than the handwriting of the dedication.

Like round fans, the high convertibility and fragile materiality of folding fans made them prone to wear out. Yet, they could be detached from the frame and transformed into other formats. Wen Zhenheng noticed that residents of Suzhou remounted fan surfaces into albums and scrolls when "the paper is too worn and the ink gets blurred."[38] The remounting did not extend the service of a fan as an object, but it prolonged its life as an integrated entity of painting and inscription. Fans also entered into the book market. Designs on fan surfaces, usually combining texts and images, spread widely due to printing. *Fan Models by Notable Gentlemen* (*Minggong shanpu* 名公扇譜) is an example of a publication that provided the reader with rich fan-shaped images matched with texts (fig. 2-14).[39] It is clear that this book was ahead of time when compared with other publications on the same topic. For instance, in the successful eighteenth-century painting model-book *Mustard Seed Garden Painting Manual* (fig. 2-15) the texts are not inside the fan frame, but atop it. Books like the aforementioned *Fan Models by Notable Gentlemen* strongly indicate

37 Ibid., 438.

38 Wen Zhenheng, *Zhangwu zhi jiaozhu*, 291.

39 Shih Shou-ch'ien, "Shanshui suishen," 37.

Fig. 2-15 A page in *Mustard Seed Garden Painting Manuel*, introducing a pattern copied from a painting by Li Cheng 李成 (916-967), ink and colour on paper, woodblock print, 24.4 × 30 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

that fans bearing images and inscriptions appealed to Ming book publishers, consumers, and readers.

Speculative Spaces for Inscriptions

For art critics in the late Ming period, the ability to inscribe was a crucial criterion for ranking painters. For instance, a well-known Jiaxing collector Wang Keyu 汪珂玉 (b. 1587-after 1643), in an assessment of Zhou Chen's 周臣 (1460-1535) art, admitted that while the painter could paint landscapes beautifully, as if he was "a truly disciple of the Song masters," the fact that his paintings lacked inscriptions meant that his art was fundamentally inferior to that of Tang Yin.[40] Meanwhile, Ming painters began to consider inscriptions an imperative component for paintings. The painter Li Liufang once mentioned leaving an album in a box for a long time "without any inscription being written." His tone suggests that the album was incomplete as a result of this un-inscribed condition.[41] Furthermore, Li once found himself in an awkward situation where was just about to inscribe a newly finished album but it was whisked away by a friend. His reaction was to persuade the friend to bring back the album for inscribing – like

40 Wang Keyu, *Shanhu wang*, *Minghua tiba juan* 15, 22b-23a.

41 Li Liufang, *Tanyuan ji* 檀園集 , *juan* 12, SKQS edition, 17b-18a.

a ritual to complete the work – before reluctantly returning it to him.[42]

The idea that a painting intrinsically anticipated an inscription, was, to the best of my knowledge, first expressed by Shen Hao. This late Ming critic claimed "there should be a natural place (*houkuan chu* 候款處) within a picture awaiting an inscription." He went on to warn the neophyte to carefully locate that place and reserve it for forthcoming inscriptions, because "dismissing (*shi* 失) it makes the composition less successful."[43] His argument clearly acknowledges the significance of proper-positioned inscriptions to the overall quality of a painting work. But since Shen Hao was a long voice among his Ming peers in this regard, it is perhaps more meaningful to view his brief comments as a vague awareness of what had been practiced in his day, rather than a well-developed theory.

There is no evidence linking Shen Hao with those Qing art critics who later explored and developed this idea. Kong Yanshi 孔衍栻 , the nephew of the Qing dramatist Kong Shangren 孔尚任 (1648-1718), can be considered an early adopter in this regard. He asserted that "each inscription on a painting has its own fixed place (*dingwei* 定位), which should not be rashly dealt with. It is to fill the blank space within the picture." He admonished the reader: "If the left part of the picture features a high mountain, the right part should be kept blank for the inscription. And vice versa. Inscriptions should not encroach upon the pictorial place." Echoing Yuan artists, Kong Yanshi redeemed the nature of painting inscriptions as calligraphic texts possessing aestheticism. "Inscriptions should be written following certain principles," he asserted, "the scripts should not be perfunctory."[44] His reflection was in consonance with the epochal shift of calligraphic paradigm from *tiexue* 帖學 to *beixue* 碑學 , i.e. from "learning from model books" to "learning from tablet inscriptions." A group of painters at that time, represented by Jin Nong and Li

42 Ibid., 90-91.

43 Shen Hao, *Hua zhu*, 36.

44 Kong Yanshi, *Shichun huajue* 畫訣 , in *MSCS* 2.1.3, 58-59.

Fangying 李方膺 (1695-1755), introduced innovative calligraphic scripts into painting inscription. Their inscriptions indeed added a flamboyant visual effect to the artworks. Another critic, Qian Du, joined the discourse by proposing a method to determine the place for inscribing (*diwei* 地位). The method is similar to the "sudden enlightenment" in Zen Buddhism doctrine: "Hang up the painting on a wall and contemplate it carefully, the place for inscribing a colophon and poem will naturally stand out."[45]

However, there was a counter movement against painting inscriptions, but not in the sense that Norman Bryson witnessed in Western art whereby the image seeks autonomy against "the external control of discourse."[46] The Chinese counter view of inscriptions was ostensibly a concern for calligraphic and literary perfection. Qian Du, for instance, strongly advised those who were not good at calligraphy and literature to hide their signatures in the painted hills and rocks. But such discourses always indicate a social concern. In the late seventeenth century, Wang Gai had sarcastically advised the vulgar artisans (*libi jiangxi* 俚鄙匠習) – those he considered conformists to the literati painters – not to leave a word on paintings.[47] Qian Du also expressed a strong dislike for those inscribers who, though skillful at calligraphy, were so vulgar that their inscriptions were like a "grease stain from fried pastry" (*hanju you* 寒具油).[48] This attack against "vulgar" people directs our understanding of inscriptions to an identity issue in Ming and Qing societies. One group of artists and critics obviously sensed a pressure in pursuing their artistic styles and habits. They defined themselves as educated men and were associated with labels such as elegant, original and superior, and they looked down upon those they

45 Qian Du, *Songhu huayi*, 78.

46 Norman Bryson, *Words and Image: French Painting of the Ancien Régime* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1981), xvi.

47 Wang Gai, *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting* (*Chieh Tzu˘ Yüan Hua Chuan, 1679-1701): A Facsimile of the 1887-1888 Shanghai Edition with the Text Translated from the Chinese and Edited by Mai-Mai Sze* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 48.

48 Qian Du, *Songhu huayi*, 77-78.

believed did not belong to their community.

Therefore, since the mid-seventeenth century, the development of the idea that "a painting must have a place awaiting an inscription" was intrinsically linked with the identity problem that the people who proposed the idea had to cope with. Sometimes, these educated men even reflected on their own production. After Qian Du, Fang Xun, the critic who already appeared in the previous chapter, coined a word *tikuan chu* 題款處 for "the place for an inscription." He was patently worried about how to achieve proper inscriptions: "If an inscription appears there (in *tikuan chu*), it is appropriate; otherwise it is improper. Therefore, some paintings are wonderful because of inscriptions, yet some fail due to inscriptions."[49] Fang Xun did not explain what a bad inscription was exactly, but his anxiety about how to maintain the quality of an inscription is obvious. Some decades later, Zheng Ji 鄭績 (1813-1873) intensified this anxiety in a writing prefaced in 1864: "It is not uncommon for good paintings carrying inappropriate inscriptions, just like white jade with blemishes – it is by all means imperfect." Zheng Ji explicitly embedded a social dimension - the confrontation between literati and artisans – in his view of inscriptions. "It is worthless explaining [this principle] to a vulgar fellow in the market-place," he uttered acerbically, "But even intellectuals sometimes fail to inscribe appropriately. […] They are ignorant of the fact that a painting naturally has a right place for inscriptions, a place that can definitely not be removed."[50]

Shen Hao, Fang Xun, Qian Du and Zheng Ji elevated the status of inscription to an unprecedented level that could determine the success of an artwork. They may well have drawn their theoretical knowledge from a distant predecessor – Xie He's 謝赫 (fl. 5th cent.) "Six Laws." The entry for the fifth law reads *jingying weizhi* 經營位置, lit., "Placing and arrangement

49 Fang Xun, *Shanjingju hualun*, 14b.

50 Zheng Ji, *Menghuan ju huaxue jianming* 夢幻居畫學簡明, *juan* 1, prefaced in 1864, printed between 1864-1873, 50a.

[on a painting]."[51] But their aim was obviously to invent their own history in order to provide a framework for inscriptions, a thriving form of art. Yet, the various terms they used – *houkuan chu*, *dingwei*, *tikuan chu*, *diwei* and *yingkuan zhichu* – should be treated with caution because, at that time, the idea of a speculative place for an inscription was still in flux. In sum, this line of discourse, which can be traced back to the late Ming period, ultimately led to anxiety about whether the elite had lost control of a culture that they had once monopolized. I will return to this identity crisis in the next chapter.

Painting and Poetry as Social Productions

A prominent indicator at the format level that directs our attention to Ming inscriptions as social productions is the popularity of dedication inscriptions during this period. Dedication inscriptions, known as *shangxia kuan* 上下款 , provide information to any beholder of a painting about the name of the dedicatee, s*hangkuan* 上款 , and the name of the dedicator *xiakuan* 下 款 . Together, these two elements form a declaration of "I present what I have done to someone."[52] Meanwhile, dedication inscriptions were frequently combined with poems as a whole body of text to be written on the painting surface. Compared with dedications, the social attributes of poems in inscriptions are much less obvious and much less discussed. This section, although not thoroughly devoted to poetry, employs poetic inscriptions as an important source of materials and evidence. My argument not only deals with the contents of poetic inscriptions, but also the mechanism of poetic activities and their effect within the elite community.

51 The English translation cf. William K. B. Acker, trans. and annot., *Some T'ang and Pre-T'ang Texts on Chinese Painting* (Leiden: Brill, 1954), xxxvii-xxxviii, in which *weizhi* is explained by giving each character's translation: *Wei* means "place," "position," "seat," and *zhi* means "to place," "to put." But I tend to believe that both *wei* and *zhi* are nouns here.

52 Zhang Hongxing, "Re-reading Inscriptions in Chinese Scroll Painting," 619-20.

In this section, I contextualize inscriptions on Ming literati paintings in the social circumstances in which they were generated, appreciated, and circulated. I will begin with a brief introduction to the scholarly works on artworks and poetry as social productions. This scan will deepen our understanding of painting inscriptions since inscriptions are an overlap of the fields of art and literature. This section then proceeds to the social circumstances in which inscribing on paintings was expected or demanded; that is to say, the space of dwelling and the space of convening. For a specific example that synthesizes these circumstances, I will conduct a case study on a handscroll entitled *Chanting for the Pictures of Shangfang Hill and Stone Lake* (*Shangfang shitu tuyong* 上方石湖圖詠, hereafter *Chanting for the Pictures*), which was initially created as a souvenir of a two-day excursion.

In his landmark monograph *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy* (1972), Michael Baxandall begins with a dictum that "a fifteenth-century painting is the deposit of a social relationship."[53] Baxandall analyzes a batch of primary materials, including commission letters, order contracts, and guild regulations to show the social elements embodied in paintings of this period. The social history of art developed quickly in the 1980s, while in 1990s it was criticized in some quarters for predominantly focusing on European painting, especially French painting. Craig Clunas thus comments, "where the view is from might be radically different from earlier approaches, but what that view if of […] remains largely the same."[54]

Since the late 1980s, art history from a socio-economic perspective also began to touch on Chinese painting. In 1989, James Cahill co-chaired with Chu-tsing Li and Wai-kam Ho a workshop at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansan City. The proceedings published following this event, entitled *Artists*

53 Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 1.

54 Craig Clunas, "Social History of Art," in *Critical Terms for Art History*, ed. Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 471-72.

and Patrons: Some Social and Economic Aspects of Chinese Painting, is an early attempt to examine Chinese art as social productions. The essays discuss the trajectories of Chinese artworks along interpersonal networks, and their roles in the contemporaneous art market. This recent critical work has shifted from stylistic analysis, and its emphasis on the Ming and Qing periods also destabilized scholars' hitherto longstanding preoccupation with the Song and Yuan periods.

The 1990s saw the emergence of several important works. James Cahill's *The Painter's Practice: How Artists Lived and Worked in Traditional China* (1994) is a path-breaking attempt. This monograph investigates how Chinese "amateur painters" negotiated social occasions and painting requests with economic concerns, in order to outline their socio-economic lives and the patterns of their art productions. Slightly earlier, the scope of Craig Clunas' *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China* (1991) ambitiously expands into a much broader scale of material culture. In terms of Chinese painting, this work firmly declares, "hardly any [Chinese] paintings were made for the painter's own amusement or for his own continued possession. Every painting was for something."[55] Paintings are thus not studied as autonomous and static entities, but as functional objects in society. Clunas' *Elegant Debts: The Social Art of Wen Zhengming* (2004) is another book-length effort that illuminates Wen's artworks and "the relations between agents, relations in which the work is embedded," and claims that the object equally "enacts those social relations."[56]

Scholars have invented a number of terms denoting Chinese paintings rendered for social purposes. Kuo Li-ch'eng proposes *zengli hua* 贈禮畫, or "gift painting," referring to paintings that were "pure artistic works by literati painters" without commercial inclination. These paintings, Kuo believes, were

55 Craig Clunas, *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1991), 119.

56 Craig Clunas, *Elegant Debts: The Social Art of Wen Zhengming (1470-1559)* (London: Reaktion Books, 2004), 13.

primarily presented among government officials to express good wishes and congratulations, but, in fact, gained wider popularity among non-officials.[57] Alternatively, Shih Shou-ch'ien uses *yingchou hua* 應酬畫, or "painting for social intercourse," for paintings stimulated by social interactions. He remarks on the large number of social paintings in the oeuvre of Shen Zhou, some of which "bear similarities with those done by artisans."[58] The critical difference between the literati painter and the professional painter, he argues, lay in whether there was an established audience for the work and whether the painter was able to choose that audience.[59] In another study on rise of Ming Suzhou literati painters, Shih argues the reciprocal obligations among these well-connected artists influenced the production and circulation of recluse-landscape-paintings in mid-Ming Suzhou. These paintings, in turn, contributed to the formation of a commonly shared culture and a sense of "in-group" identity.[60]

Studies on Chinese calligraphy from a sociological perspective are also illuminating to this research. Shih Shou-ch'ien notices that Wen Zhengming had transformed the poems he composed during his government service in Beijing into calligraphic works, and presented these calligraphic writings as gifts. These calligraphies subtly conveyed emotions and thoughts to certain recipients; moreover, they shaped the value and culture shared by the literati there.[61] Xue Longchun sheds light on another calligrapher Wang Duo 王鐸 (1592-1652), who had an ambivalent attitude to producing calligraphy for social duties.

57 Kuo Li-ch'eng, "A Study on Gift Paintings," in *International Colloquium on Chinese Art History, 1991: Proceedings, Painting and Calligraphy Part 2* (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1992), 75.

58 Shih Shou-ch'ien, "Shen Zhou de yingchou hua ji qi guanzhong" 沈周的應酬畫及其觀衆, *Bijutsushi ronsō* 美術史論叢, Vol. 23 (2007): 58.

59 Ibid., 57.

60 Shih Shou-ch'ien, "Recluses Painting Landscapes: A Study of the Emergence of Literati Painting in Mid-Fifteenth-Century Suzhou," *Chinese Culture Quarterly*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (Winter 2007): 24-25.

61 See Shih Shou-ch'ien, "Calligraphy as Gift: Wen Cheng-Ming's (1470-1559) Calligraphy and the Formation of Soochow Literati Culture," in *Character & Context in Chinese Calligraphy*, ed. Cary Y. Liu et al. (Princeton, New Jersey: The Art Museum, Princeton University, 1999), 254-83.

Xue's research reveals Wang Duo's dilemma. One the one hand, the calligrapher financially supported his family and maintained his network by virtue of these commissions. On the other hand, the commissions resulted in a strenuous workload. Nonetheless, Wang Duo's calligraphy for social aims, Xue points out, was not necessarily poor in quality. Indeed, he could create calligraphy with extraordinary visual impact to satisfy audiences on certain social occasions.[62]

The fact that a considerable portion of painting inscriptions were literary writings inevitably draws us to the field of Ming literature. The Ming dynasty is widely recognized for remarkable achievements in vernacular literature. However, literary researchers and enthusiasts largely dismiss the non-vernacular literature of this period, despite the fact that non-vernacular literary activities thrived and the output was considerable at this time. Ming prose and poetry are generally unappreciated as "unattractive" and "mediocre."[63] These tags appeared even before the end of the Ming dynasty. A late Ming literatus Xu Shipu 徐世溥 (1608-1657) praised a series of cultural achievements in his era, but severely depreciated the poetry of his day. He asserted: "However, during the fifty years of the Wanli 萬曆 Reign (1573-1620), we have had no poetry."[64]

By the mid-Ming, as literacy increased, Ming poetry was no longer exclusive to the elite echelon. Poetic activities were undertaken in wider social strata. The discussion of Ming poetry is more pointed within a framework of social mobility and identity construction. Poetic activities - composing, reading, reciting, and appreciating poems, organizing poetry clubs, selecting and publishing anthologies – often played a part in

62 See Xue Longchun, "Yingchou yu biaoyan: Youguan Wang Duo chuangzuo qingjing de yixiang yanjiu" 應酬與表演：有關王鐸創作情境的一項研究, *Guoli Taiwan daxue meishushi yanjiu jikan* 國立臺灣大學美術史研究集刊, No. 29 (September 2010): 157-216+272.

63 See Qian Zhongshu, Preface to *Songshi xuanzhu* 宋詩選注 (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2002), 1-25.

64 Xu Shipu, "Yu youren" 與友人, in Zhou Lianggong comp., *Chidu xinchao* 尺牘新鈔, *juan* 2, 1847 printed edition, 15a.

constructing and representing social identity. The capacity to make poems distinguished the educated from the non-educated and poorly educated, in other words, the elite from non-elite. The Song and Yuan literati had successfully capitalized on introducing inscriptions into their paintings in order to differentiate themselves from "uncultivated" professional painters. However, activities related to poetry began to lose power among Ming people and became more a ladder for social climbers. For "men on the blurred edges of an expanding social elite," poetry was more appealing than abstruse Confucian classics.[65] Guan Zhidao 管志道 (1536-1608), an official-scholar, pithily commented that: "Those in the Suzhou and Zhejiang regions who do not 'content themselves with their livelihood' are to be found not in the discussions of learning, but rather in the literary circles." [66] Guan was very scornful of his contemporaries who organized poetry clubs purely for renown. His attitude, however, illustrates the practical function of poetry in the Ming intellectual community. Solidly self-identifying as a literatus, Guan adopted a defensive stance towards any ambitious intruder into his social class. It is true that poetry-related activities hide any heterogeneity behind the name of literary men (*wenshi* 文士), or literati (*wenren* 文人), but any educated Ming man could hardly deny his dependence on these kinds of activities to represent who he was.

A notable paradox in Ming poetry is its superiority in the artistic hierarchy but its literary dullness.[67] The low literariness, I would argue, has much to do with Ming poetry's deep engagement in poets' social lives. Didactically speaking, poetry should not manifest excessive pragmatic concern, but it seems that Ming people were accustomed to utilizing poems for everyday communication. That most of them stayed in tightly

65 Jaret Wayne Weisfogel, *A Late Ming Vision for Local Community: Ritual, Law, and Social Ferment in the Proposals of Guan Zhidao*, ed. Sarah Schneewind (Minneapolis: Society for Ming Studies, 2010), 155.

66 Ibid., 155.

67 Chen Zhenghong, "Shihua hebi yu Ming dai shishen shejiao fangshi" 詩畫合璧與明代士紳社交方式, in *Wenhua yichan yanjiu jikan* 文化遺產研究集刊, the 3rd compilation (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2003), 153.

connected communities – communities formed on the basis of locality, hobby, or official service – kept them busy responding to social interactions and obligations. The poetic subject matter of this period covered almost every aspect of everyday life. Thanks to the rise of print, which facilitated the survival of these poems, the quantity of Ming poems is enormous. So much so that an exhaustive compilation of Ming poems remains elusive.[68] A critic who lived in the Ming-Qing transition criticized: "Poetry deteriorated in the Ming dynasty. The deterioration is due to [its involvement in] social intercourses. 詩壞於明, 明詩又壞於應　酬 ."[69] Ming poetry introduced its combination of low-level literariness with high functionality in social life to its growing fusion with painting. From a critical perspective, Ming poetic inscriptions are not high-level creations, even within the scope of Ming poetry. That said, these poems on or about paintings greatly enriched the social lives of the educated Ming scholars and gentries.

Social Spaces of Dwelling

Ming painters frequently portrayed their dwelling spaces and family lives, and their inscriptions enriched their visuality with everyday details. Li Rihua's individual anthology preserves such an example. It is a poem dated 1590 about a lost painting by Li. The poem first describes the visuality by playfully sketching a harmonious residential courtyard. We learn from the poem that there is a vigorous lotus pool and an exuberant vegetable garden in the courtyard. The remaining lines go beyond the image. They dedicate the painting to the painter's daughter, and provide a witty portrait of a homely space. In this space, Li's young children eagerly pleaded with their father to add an inscription to his painting. It is also the space where Li jokes about giving

68 Zhu Yizun's *Comprehensive Ming Poems* (*Mingshi zong* 明詩綜) encompasses some 3,400 poets. In *A Record of Ming Poetry* (*Mingshi jishi* 明詩記事) published in the late Qing and Early Republican, the number has raised to 4,000.

69 Wu Qiao 吳喬 (ca.1611-1696), *Weilu shihua* 圍爐詩話 (prefaced 1686), *juan* 3, Shiyuan congshu 適園叢書 edition, 14b.

Fig. 2-16 Liu Jue, *Pure and White Veranda*, with the painter's self-inscription dated 1458, ink on paper, hanging scroll, 97.2 x 35.4 cm, The Palace Museum, Taipei.

his unsuccessful paintings to his wife to cover kitchen sauce jars. At the end of the poem, feeling quite satisfied with the painting on which the poem is written, Li urges his daughter to cherish the painting and to browse it from time to time.[70] This poem evidently illustrates a space where Li Rihua enjoyed a higher degree of spontaneity and freedom than he could in other spaces.

The Ming cultural elite, including Li Rihua, best defined their identities in dwelling space. They showed great zeal in designing their residences, especially gardens and studies,[71] and frequently recorded them in paintings. Thatched cottages, tearooms, summer retreats were very popular subject matters. Painters either drew these places emptied of human beings, quietly surrounded by mountains and stream, or they added themselves into the work, reading, meditating, or hosting intimate friends in

70 Li Rihua, *Zhulan huaying*, 38.

71 For Chinese scholars paying close attention and making great efforts to their living environment, see Chu-tsing Li and James C.Y. Watt eds., *The Chinese Scholar's Studio: Artistic Life in the Late Ming Period – An Exhibition from the Shanghai Museum* (New York: Thames and Hudson in Association with the Asia Society Galleries, 1987). For visual representation and interpretation of garden, see Craig Clunas, *Fruitful Sites: Garden Culture in Ming Dynasty China* (London: Reaktion Books, 1996). For gardened-building, see "Section III" in Alfreda Murck and Wen Fong, *A Chinese Garden Court: The Astor Court at the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1980), 20-25.

elegant activities, such as tea-drinking, playing chess, or taking a leisurely walk. Even though the visuality of these painting seems secluded from mundane business, their inscriptions often address issues that are far less reclusive. For example, Shen Zhen's 沈貞 (1400-ca.1482) painting *Bamboo Stove Mountain Lodge* (*Zhulu shanfang tu* 竹爐山房圖 , 1471) features a self-inscription that highlights the fact that the painting was requested by a temple monk, who had hosted the painter in his abode, giving him food and wine. Different genres of inscriptions may also assume different roles. Poetic inscriptions more often interplay with a lyrical idea, while rhapsodic colophons and dedications deal with social obligations. *Pure and White Veranda* (*Qingbaixuan tu* 清白軒圖 , fig. 2-16) by the Suzhou scholar-painter Liu Jue 劉玨 (1410-1472) is an example. This painting, which visually portrays the painter's austere pavilion, features a poem echoing with the lyric visuality. The non-verse part of the inscription, however, details the social situation in which the work was made.[72] If the inscriptions on these kinds of paintings are lost or damaged, they immediately become obscure and difficult to comprehend. Qiu Ying's *Master East-forest's Villa* (*Donglin tujuan* 東林圖卷 , Palace Museum, Taipei) is one such opaque example due to only two fragmentary inscriptions remaining.[73]

Festivals, such as New Year, mid-autumn day, double-ninth festival, and so forth, were celebrated at home. Artists interacted with family members, and might also receive guests, on such occasions. This might result in the creation of a "gathering painting," which, as Vinograd elaborates on Shen Zhou's *Watching the Mid-Autumn Moon* (late 15th cent.), was made to "recall the situation or memories of the occasion."[74] Inscriptions were

72 For *Pure and White Veranda* and the habit of literati painting in the Fifteenth century Suzhou, see Shi Shou-ch'ien, "Yinju shenghuo zhong de huihua – shiwu shiji zhongqi wenrenhua zai Suzhou de Chuxian" 隱居生活中的繪畫 ── 十五世紀中期文人畫在蘇州的出現 , *Jiuzhou xuelin* 九州學林 , Vol. 18 (2007): 2-36.

73 There are at least two extant versions of this scroll. Stephen Little believes that both are authentic. See "Du Jin's Enjoying Antiquities: A Problem in Connoisseurship," ed. Judith G. Smith and Wen C. Fong, *Issues of Authenticity in Chinese Painting*, 213-14.

74 Richard Vinograd, "Situation and Response in Traditional Chinese Scholar

added to make the commemoration visible and accessible. To return to Li Rihua, on a sleety day in the first month of 1427, the nephew of Li's wife visited the artist for the New Year festival. The painter gladly wielded his brush upon the guest's request, and then inscribed a short note admonishing his junior.[75] In this case, the inscription was simultaneously situational, educational, and reciprocal.

Apart from seasonal festivals, it was not uncommon to create inscriptions for special events and occasions, such as a birthday, the birth of a baby or passing examinations. Since a limited range of auspicious allusions and symbols stylized paintings with these subject matters, the inscribed texts often intended to personalize a stylized painting into a unique piece. Tang Yin's *Chastity and Longevity Studio* (*Zhenshou tang tujuan* 貞壽堂圖卷 , last colophon dated 1486) is a case in point. It is believed that the scroll was painted when the artist was only sixteen, and was commissioned for a lady's eighty-first birthday.[76] The noted official calligrapher Li Yingzhen 李應禎 (1431-1479) prefaced the painting, extolling the lady's magnificent feat: she had trudged a thousand miles to Guangdong 廣東 to bring her children and the coffin of her dead husband back to Suzhou. Living in widowhood, the lady raised the children and gave them a proper education. One of them, the commissioner Zhou Xizheng 周希正 (fl. 15th cent.), had passed the Provincial Examination and was appointed as an Instructor (*xueyu* 學諭) in Shandong 山東 Province. Li Yingzhen's preface on the painting enables any audience of the scroll to quickly grasp its context and the reason for its production. A picture portraying the senior lady's living place – the chastity and longevity studio – is followed by fourteen poems written by social celebrities. They

Painting," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 46, No. 3 (Spring 1988): 366.

75 Li Rihua, *Zhulan huaying*, 91.

76 For the painting record, see Gu Wenbin 顧文彬 (1811-1889) , "Tang Liuru 'Zhenshou tang tujuan'" 唐六如貞壽堂圖卷 , in *Guoyun lou shuhua ji* 過雲樓書畫記 , *juan* hua 畫 4, 1882 printed edition, 14b-16a. For studies on it, see Chiang Chao-shen, *Guanyu Tang Yin de yanjiu* 關於唐寅的研究 (Taipei: Guoli gugong bowuyuan, 1976), 103; Anne de Coursey Clapp, *The Painting of T'ang Yin* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 50, 57-58.

include the scholar painter Shen Zhou, Du Qi 杜啟 (son of the scholar painter Du Qiong 杜瓊 [1396-1474]), and the high official Wu Kuan 吳寬 (1435-1504). Most of these inscribers were native to Suzhou. The scroll of multiple components made for a birthday celebration exhibits a local characteristic typical of this kind of collaborative work produced within the Ming elite community.

Educated Ming men's passion for dwelling space led to a growing trend of depicting the space of the deceased. Li Rihua made a painting that was intended as a gift to congratulate a friend on the completion his new studio. Unfortunately, the commissioner in question died even before Li had even put brush to paper. Eventually finished, the painting, featuring a colophon mourning the death, was given to the deceased's son.[77] Li's colophon conferred a memorial implication upon the work that originally had a different purpose. The sympathetic inscription was crucial to conveying the appropriate sentiment.

Inscribing the space of the deceased is also exemplified by an existing work entitled *The Crude Hut of Mr. Zha* (*Zhashi bingshe tujuan* 查氏丙舍圖卷). This handscroll was created for the death a low-ranked Suzhou official named Zha Wen 查文 in the eleventh month of 1487. The son of the deceased, Zha Xun 查恂 , commissioned the locally celebrated literati-painter Shen Heng 沈 恆 (1409-1477) to paint a fitting memorial to his father. Shen Heng's picture depicts Zha Wen's secluded villa in an austere and simple style, and does not feature the father.[78] The picture section was mounted together with a frontispiece by the then up-and-coming young artist Chen Daofu and a long epitaph colophon by Li Yingzhen, both of which were done at Zha Xun's request. Yet, this was not the conclusion to this scroll. Soon after the death of Zha Xun in 1507, his sons repeated what their father had

77 Li Rihua, *Zhulan huaying*, 72-73.

78 The painting (ink and colour on paper, 25.7 × 113.4 cm) was in Hou-chen-shang-chai 後真賞齋 collection, Taiwan. For the image, see Suzuki Kei, *Chūgoku kaiga sōgō-zuroku* 中国絵画総合図錄 , Vol. 2 (Tōkyō: Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 1983), 4-5. It was put into Sotheby's auction in 2014, who also published the image. See "Hut Belonging To The Zha Family," accessed November 11, 2015, http://www.sothebys.com/content/sothebys/it/auctions/ecatalogue/2014/fine-classical-chinese-paintings-n09117/lot.675.html.

prepared for their grandfather. The scroll then incorporated two new sections: (1) memorial epitaphs requested by the eldest son of Xun and issued by Tu Yong 屠滽 and Wang Ao, both of whom were high ranking-officials; (2) a commemorative prose by Xun's second son in 1511. Thus, the creation of this artwork spanned twenty years, during which new inscriptions were absorbed. This handscroll is a token of Ming people's painstaking efforts not only to create a memorial work for a deceased ancestor, but also an artistic monument to the entire clan. The painting depicts the real space once inhabited by Zha Wen. The inscriptions invite the beholder to visit a symbolic space constructed by Zha Wen's associates and two generations of descendants, including the three commissioners and all their siblings.

Social Spaces of Convening

Spaces of convening also influenced inscriptions. Ming cultural elite named their assemblages as *yaji* 雅集, which means "elegant gatherings." The elegant gathering had a long established tradition, in which "Lanting Purification Gathering" (*lanting yanji* 蘭亭雅集) from AD 353 and the legendary "Western Garden Gathering" (*xiyuan yaji* 西園雅集) from the late eleventh century were most revered.[79] A succession of visualizations of famous assemblages in history attests to the new zeal that educated Ming men instilled into elegant gatherings. Distant predecessors aside, Gu Ying 顧瑛 (1310-1369) was a closer model for Ming gathering connoisseurs. Between 1348 and 1365, Gu Ying attained tremendous success by hosting more than one hundred social elite, including some outstanding late Yuan culture figures, at his parties in the Jade Mountain Studio (*yushan caotang* 玉山草堂). His parties became part of the collective memory for the literati around the Suzhou area. Shen Cheng 沈澄 (1376-1463)

79 Ellen Johnston Laing believes the well-known "West Garden Gathering" (*Xiyuan yaji* 西園雅集) was a fictional event. See "Real or Ideal: The Problem of the 'Elegant Gathering in the Western Garden' in Chinese Historical and Art Historical Records," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 88, No. 30 (1968): 419-35.

was very probably motivated by these occasions once happened in his hometown. Around 1418, he organized a "West Grange Gathering" (*Xizhang yaji* 西莊雅集) at his villa in the suburb of Suzhou city. His enthusiasm was passed on to his grandson Shen Zhou, and Shen Zhou's successor Wen Zhengming, who became the nexus of elegant gatherings in the Suzhou area.

The fashion for gatherings prevailed throughout the empire. In the spring of 1437, during a holiday break, nine leading figures held a party in Beijing. Among them there were three powerful officials: Yang Shiqi 楊士奇 (1365-1446), Yang Pu 楊溥 (1372-1466) and Yang Rong 楊榮 (1371-1440). Yang Shiqi, following the cultural icon Wang Xizhi's model of the Orchid Gathering, wrote a preface recording this memorable party, named after Yang Rong's private Apricot Garden. He also contributed a poem, and the other partygoers created nine poems, following his rhyme scheme. Yang Rong as host added a lengthy colophon describing the party scene in details. All these writings commemorate the food, wine, and music, as well as intelligent conversation and a sense of moral duty that their status required them to be mindful of at all times. They were later mounted together with a pictorial depiction of the party scene. Two versions of the final result, a handscroll known as *Elegant Gathering in the Apricot Garden* (*Xingyuan yaji tu* 杏園雅集圖, fig. 2-17), survive to this day. One in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the other in Zhenjiang Municipal Museum.[80] Both copies are attributed to Xie Huan 謝環 (ca. 1370-ca.1450), a court painter also present the gathering. It is widely acknowledged that both copies are genuine and are both painted in 1437. The two versions carry an almost identical set of inscribed texts, with an exception that the frontispiece on the Zhengjiang version is missing from the Metropolitan one. It is noteworthy that the colophons attached to the Zhenjiang version

80 For a further discussion of these two versions, especially the image part and authorship, see Maxwell K. Hearn, "An Early Example of Multiples: Two Versions of Elegant Gathering in the Apricot Garden," in *Issues of Authenticity in Chinese Painting*, ed. Judith G. Smith and Wen C. Fong, 221-58; Richard Barnhart, *Painters of the Great Ming: The Imperial Court and the Zhe School* (Dallas: The Dallas Museum of Art, 1993), 74-75.

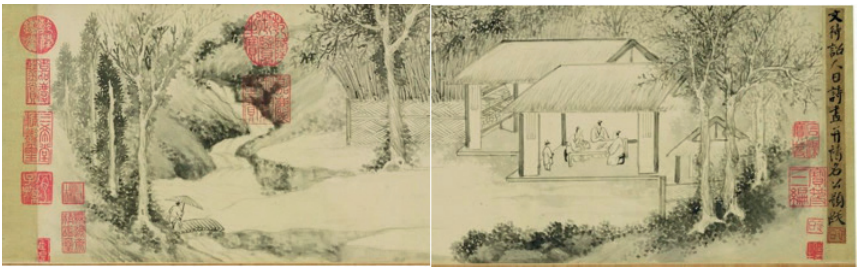
Fig. 2-17 The details of the pictorial section (above), the preface section and the detail of the colophon section (middle and bottom) of *Elegant Gathering in the Apricot Garden*, attributed to Xie Huan, ca.1437, ink and colours on silk, handscroll, image: 37.1 × 243.2 cm, overall with mounting: 37.5 × 1278.3 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

show a concern with their order, but the Metropolitan version is lack of this feature, which indicates that it is a subsequent copy of the other one. Moreover, the Zhenjiang version contains texts of a greater variety of brush mannerisms, while those on the Metropolitan version, except for the first two inscriptions, appear to be the work of a single hand.[81] The fact that the Metropolitan colophons carefully intimate the brush styles of the texts on the Zhenjiang version leads to a logical speculation that a scribal secretaries would have transcribed the inscriptions from the Zhenjiang scroll onto one or several duplicated copies. To this end, the multiplication of inscriptions did not necessarily have to depend on textual collections; the process could begin at the point of creation.

Another noteworthy point is that the pictorial parts of the two surviving versions are different. The different poses and positions of the painted figures strongly indicate that the images were sketched on the spot, possibly by more than one painter. Xie Huan was one of them, perhaps accompanied by an assistant. Each party participant would have received a copy. This hypothesis is supported by the observation of Li Dongyang 李東陽 (1447-1516) made some sixty years later. He noted that he had seen three copies held by the descendants of Yang Shiqi, Yang Rong and another party participant Wang Yin 王英, respectively, and that he had heard of the existence of the fourth copy, kept by a descendant Yang Rong.[82] It remains unclear whether the multiple copies were made one after another to meet the separate requests of the party participants, or the host Yang Rong made eight copies at one time for all of his guests. But it is almost certainly that each duplication contains the same set of inscriptions as that on the master copy. This careful inclusion of inscriptions into duplicating efforts strongly indicate the importance of inscriptions to the official and cultural elite in the early fifteenth century.

81 Maxwell K. Hearn, "An Early Ming Example of Multiples," 230-32.

82 Li Dongyang, *Huailu tang ji* 懷麓堂集, *juan* 73 (Wenhou gao 文後稿 13), SKQS edition, 14a-14b.



Below: Fig. 2-18 The painting section of Wen Zhengming's *Poems and the Painting on the Seventh Day of the First Month*, ink on paper, handscroll, painting plate 19. 5 × 59.3 cm, Shanghai Museum, Shanghai.

Gathering in the Apricot Garden, perhaps the finest depiction of a social event near the new capital of Beijing, tells a great deal about *yaji* as a social occasion incorporating visual and literary creations. The painting represents a similar scene to Du Jin's 杜　堇 (fl. 1465-1509) depiction of a group of unknown scholars appreciating a handscroll in an open garden (fig. 2-4). This would suggest that these kinds of social assemblages were popular events. Evidently, gatherings encouraged collective composing, reading, and appreciation of inscriptions. It enabled a reading experience that would have been very different from reading inscriptions in a book. *Yaji* paintings gained cultural momentum in the Jiangnan area. Suzhou, a hub of interactions among the cultural elite, became a centre of production for *yaji* paintings. These paintings show an apparent preference for the handscroll format, a preference that can also be found in commemorative paintings, especially those dedicated to specific recipients.[83] The convenience of this format is that when a person was absent from the party, he could make his contribution afterwards by adding an imaginative depiction or a poem in response to the others. *Poems and the Painting on the Seventh Day of the First Month* (*Renri shihua tu* 人日詩畫圖 , fig. 2-18), which commemorates a 1505 gathering for a festival by Wen Zhengming, his friends and his students, bore inscriptions by people who did not attend the party. The assemblage may even be fictional. *Venerable Friends*

83 Anne de Coursey Clapp, *The Painting of T'ang Yin*, 47-59.

(*Shangyou tu* 尚友圖 , fig. 5-4) is a typical example. This painting is not a record of an actual "elegant gathering," but rather a retrospective commemoration of a generation of social elite and their friendships.[84]

Rhymes in particular influenced what a Ming poet may inscribe on an assemblage. Routinely, a senior leading figure at a gathering would choose a rhyme from 106 rhyme categories. He or she and the other poets present would then compose poems based on the chosen rhyme. Wen Zhengming was the person who decided on the rhyme for the above-mentioned 1505 party in Suzhou. Indeed, the rhyming game implicitly suggested and reproduced social status, relations, and networks.

That rhyme-matching had become an ordinary and important activity created demand for instructive books in this topic. *A Thousand Poets* (*Qian jia shi* 千家詩) is a type of book that provides an elementary poetry education using selected classic poems. Emerged in the Song period, *A Thousand Poets* had dozens of versions in the mid-sixteenth century book market. Sensing the need for the knowledge of rhyme-matching and the necessity to publish something different from the old versions, some publishers added new poems matched the rhymes of classic poems. *New Imprint of Annotated Selection of A Thousand Poets with Rhymed Poems* (*Xinke jiezhu heyun qianjia shixuan* 新刻解注和韻千家詩選), published by an obscure printer from the Jiangnan area was one such book generated during this period (fig. 2-19). He Yuming's recent study on Ming book culture provides another example that was printed in Fujian and had a similar layout.[85] We can imagine, therefore, a novice poet in the late 1500s using such a book to learn the basic principles of poem rhyming. A reader in

84 For discussion of the date and nature of Venerable Friends, and comparison of three extant copies, see Chu-tsing Li and James C. Y. Watt eds., *The Chinese Scholar's Studio*, 143; see also Chu-tsing Li "Xiang Shengmo de 'Shangyou tu'" 項聖謨的《尚友圖》, in *Shanghai bowuguan jikan,* Vol. 4 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1987), 55-60.

85 He Yuming, *Home and the World: Editing the "Glorious Ming" in Woodblock-Printed Books of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2013), 9-12.

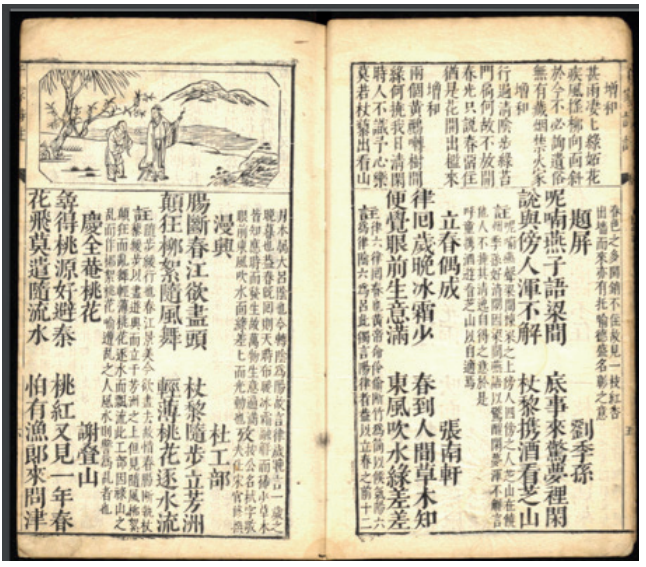


Fig. 2-19 A poem for a screen followed by the compiler's annotation and a rhyme-matching poem in the following page from *New Imprint of Annotated Selection of A Thousand Poets with Rhymed Poem*, compiler attributed to Tang Xianzu 湯顯祖 (1550-1616), printed by Wenhua xuan 文華軒 during the Wangli Reign.

the Jiangnan area might even learn about how to respond to a painted image by reading a poem created for a painted screen and a responsive poem to it. It is possible that these gatherings, embellished with poetry composition, were given extra impetus by the fashion in the Ming era for poetry clubs.[86] Poetry clubs regularly called their members to convened, and frequently, the clubs had themes and slogan in particular. For example, Wang Keyu once organized a club for creating poems based on Wang Wei's paintings.[87] There were also poetry-and-painting clubs. For example, when Fan Fengyi 范鳳翼 (fl. 1591-1596) was invited to lead a newly established poetry club, he responded with emphasis that this organization's future engagement would be a dual one: both poetry and painting.[88] The Ming clubs as a platform for interactions between poets and painters, were social occasions that almost certainly influenced inscriptions on paintings.

86 For Ming poetry clubs and painting inscriptions, see Cheng Wen-hui, *Shiqing huayi: Ming dai tihua shi de shiuha duiying yihan* 詩情畫意 : 明代題畫詩的詩畫對應意涵 (Taipei: Dongda, 1995), 150-81.

87 Wang Keyu, *Shanhu wang*, *Minghua tiba juan* 21, 15a-16b.

88 Fan Fengyi, *Fan Xunqing shiji* 范勛卿詩集 , *juan* 16, edition printed between 1627-1644, 13a.

It is arguable whether poems on paintings with an "elegant gathering" theme were created impromptu, at the scene, or whether they were transcribed onto the painting surface after the event. James Cahill believes that these integral works are collaborative results created by systematically recruiting painters, calligraphers and poets.[89] Chen Zhenghong, however, notices a rare example that suggests an impromptu production. The example is *An Elegant Gathering of Literary Men* mentioned in the introduction, a handscroll for a congregation that took place between 1488-1505. The scroll opens with a calligraphic frontispiece, and is followed with a picture by Wu Wei, one of the most popular painters at that time. The picture is succeeded by the textual part, comprising a preface and twenty poems. The interesting point, Chen suggests, is that the titles of the twenty poems share the same handwriting, which means they were issued from one hand. This is, however, not the case for the main body of the poems. Their diverse handwritings strongly suggest that each poem was inscribed by the poet in person. Contributors included the most prominent poets and writers at that time, like Xie Chengju, Li Mengyang 李夢陽 (1473-1520), Gu Lin 顧璘 (1472-1545), and Wang Yangming 王守仁 (1472-1529). An even more interesting point is that in six cases, the titles of the poems have been inscribed, but the space where the poem should follow is left blank. This would suggest the failure of six poets to improvise a text.[90] Failure to compose a poem or matching rhyme probably happened more often than we modern people imagine. *Herb and Mountain Dwelling* (*Yaocao shanfang tujuan* 藥艸山房圖) now in the Shanghai Museum bears a colophon by Wen Jia stating that during a gathering in 1540, he and his brother, along with six others, wanted to rhyme lines after a couplet written by

89 James Cahill, *The Painter's Practice: How Artists Lived and Worked in Traditional China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 26.

90 Chen Zhenghong, "Meishu shijie zhong de wenxue wenxian – Yi yijian Ming dai shihua hebi juanzi weili" 美術世界中的文學文獻 — 以一件明代詩畫合璧卷子為例 , *Zhongguo gudai wenxue wenxianxue guoji xueshu yantaohui lunwenji* 中國古代文學文獻學國際學術研討會論文集 (Nanjing: Fenghuang chubanshe, 2006), 444.

Peng Nian 彭年, but they failed (*bucheng* 不成). Subsequently, they turned to an easier way: each poet selected a rhyme and composed a poem on his own.[91] This failed attempt at rhyming is a good indication that that even for the highly literate elite, improvising rhyming poems was not an easy task. The colophons and poems on this painting crystallize the final result of an unsuccessful attempt for its audience.

Convening could also happen for specific purposes. A common reason was a farewell meeting. Ming people may have travelled more frequently and efficiently than we have previously thought, which meant that farewells were regular occurrences. This was especially the case for people in the Jiangnan area, where there was a dense network of capillary-like water canals. In the second half of the fifteenth century, the diary *Record of Floating on Sea* 漂海錄 (*Piaohai lu*) written by Ch'oe Pu (1454-1504), a Korean who drifted to China following a shipwreck, profiles travelling via waterway northwards from Hangzhou with impressive speed.[92] For those who held an official post, being transferred was a regular occurrence. Even the semi-retired official Li Rihua made two long-distance journeys between Beijing and his hometown Jiaxing following two personnel transfers in 1616 and 1625. Li's two diaries – *A Record of Returning from Ji* (*Ji xuan lu* 薊旋錄) and *A Record of Being Summoned by the Throne* (*Xi zhao lu* 璽召錄) – preserve precious records of the two trips in terms of weather,

91 *Lianju* 联句 generally means, "each poet contributes a couplet", but in Wen Jia's context obviously they also introduced rhyme-matching. The painting is also recorded by Guoyun lou shuhua ji. Cheng Zhenghong believes that the failure was due to some unknown disturbing reasons, but seems less plausible as the poem-making event was continuing after the first failed attempt. See Cheng Zhenghong, "Chuantong yaji zhong de shihua hebi ji qi zai shiliu shiji de xinbian – yi Mingren hezuo 'Caoyao shanfang tujuan' wei zhongxin" 傳統雅集中的詩畫合璧及其在十六世紀的新變 —— 以明人合作《藥草山房圖卷》為中心, in *Meishu shi yu guannian shi* 美術史與觀念史, ed. Fan Jingzhong and Cao Yuqiang (Nanjing: Nanjing shifan daxue chubanshe, 2009), 88-101.

92 See Timothy Brook, *The Confusions of Pleasure: Commerce and Culture in Ming China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 39-51. Ch'oe Pu's book has been translated into English. See John Meskill trans. *Ch'oe Pu's Diary: A Record of Drifting Across the Sea* (Tuscon: The University of Arizona Press, 1965). For relevant studies, see Ge Zhenjia, *Cui u 'Piaohai lu' pingzhu* 崔溥《漂海錄》評註 (Beijing: Xianzhuang shuju, 2002).

speed, accommodation, and so forth.[93] Non-officials travelled from time to time for various reasons. The point is that travelling became increasingly fashionable. The *Travel Diaries of Xu Xiake* (*Xu Xiake youji* 徐霞客遊記), an unprecedented private travelling record emerged in the late Ming, written by a non-official educated man Xu Hongzu 徐弘祖 , better known as Xu Xiake 徐霞客 (1587-1641).

Travel guides were tremendously popular among Ming merchants and provide compelling evidence for flourishing travelling activities. With the booming printing business, such books became increasingly accessible and affordable to Ming readers. Books like *Comprehensive Route Book* (*Yitong lucheng tuji* 一統路程圖記 , 1570) and *Categorized Essentials for Literati and Merchants* (*Shishang leiyao* 士商類要 , 1626) offered their targeted readers – both official and commercial – an epistemologically calculated waterway.[94] These books, in turn, facilitated people's travel and activities to a considerable extent. When travelling, Ming people liked to visit famous scenic spots and old acquaintances. The cultural elite were quite willing to wield their paintbrushes on such occasions. The above-mentioned *Bamboo Stove Mountain Lodge* is such a work, painted by Shen Zhen, then aged seventy-two, during a trip from Suzhou to Changzhou. It seems that wealthy merchants played an active role in hosting or sponsoring literati travellers,[95] but their position in the final productions of travel paintings is ambiguous.

More frequent travel meant more frequent farewells. Educated Chinese men had a long tradition of composing farewell poems for departing friends. The tradition initially reached a climax in the Tang period. The Southern Song saw a new practice

93 See Li Rihua, *Zhulan huaying*, 144-71.

94 For travelling and tourism books in the Ming book market, see Timothy Brook, *The Confusion of Pleasure*, 200-204. Timothy Brook, "Guides for Vexed Travelers: Route Books in the Ming and Qing," *Ch'ing-shih wen-t'i*, Vol. 4, No. 5 (1981): 32-76.

95 For the merchant-literati interaction in Ming travelling, see Li-tsui Flora Fu, *Framing Famous Mountains: Grand Tour and Mingshan Paintings in Sixteenth-century China* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2009), 68-71.

of using a painting as a carrier for the farewell poem. The inscribed painting as a whole was a delicate gift for the departing person. Miyeko Murase has analyzed the earliest extant example *Picture of a Priest from East of the Sea on His Way Home* (*Kaitō-shōnin Kikoku Zu* 送海東上人帰国図).[96] This small vertical scroll (63.6cm × 36.3cm) was a gift prepared by two Chinese literati for their Japanese acquaintance, an unknown monk who was about to return to Japan. The upper half of the painting is occupied by their farewell poems, expressing their sadness about parting and wishing him a safe voyage.

The Ming period saw a clear proliferation of farewell paintings and an evolution of this topos. Shih Shou-ch'ien has noted that the fifteenth century Jiangnan cultural elite transformed the Southern Song pattern, a pattern that had become rigid, being stuffed with symbols of affections. Alternatively, the Ming elite highlighted local living experiences. Since both the producers and the recipients shared the same memory of the Jiangnan area, this highlight effectively tied them together. These farewell paintings, Shih posits, conveyed messages of privacy seeking to be understood only within a small circle.[97] We should also see that without inscriptions, these farewell paintings could hardly attain the designed artistic effect. It was the inscriptions that encoded the paintings with personal meaning that could be immediately captured and decoded by any literate view, certainly including the recipient. Sometimes a well-thought out arrangement of the image and the inscription ensured a delicate structure for a work. One example is offered by a scholar-professional painter named Tao Cheng 陶成 (fl. 1466-1496), who does not adopt the routine visual motif for farewell paintings. Instead, he paints his recipient – an official being transferred to Yunzhong (modern Datong) – resting on a rock while holding

96 Miyeko Murase, "Farewell Paintings of China: Chinese Gifts to Japanese Visitors," *Artibus Asiae*, Vol. 32, No. 2/3 (1970): 211-36.

97 See Shih Shou-ch'ien, " 'Yuyu chunshu' yu Ming dai zhongqi Suzhou zhi songbie tu" 「雨餘春樹」與明代中期蘇州之送別圖 , *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo jikan*, Vol. 64, No. 2 (1993): 427-67.

and appreciating a handscroll. The painting's inscription, which should have been attached to the picture section, but which is missing from the existing scroll, provides an explicit note about the painter's inspiration: "When Mianxue [the recipient] has had enough of official duties, he can ride slowly into the countryside in order to examine the mountains and streams, and investigate the local fields. Here he will dismount from his horse and sit, unrolling this scroll and its poems." [98] Hence, the picture and inscription create a structure of "infinite reflection": the recipient in reality examines a handscroll; his portrait, on the handscroll, of him holding a painted handscroll, which supposedly paints him examining a portrait scroll. The interaction of image and inscriptions in such a work would no doubt intellectually stimulate and delight the recipient.

Aside from farewell paintings for close friends, a large number of farewell paintings were created for less familiar people. These paintings were heavily influenced by the Southern Song symbolic formula "parting at the shore". This formula represents misty mountains, with a flat and poetic river flowing in between, and perhaps one or several boats as an indication of the theme of departure. Dai Jin's *Parting at Golden Terrace* (*Jintai songbie* 金臺送別) adopts this formula in a highly stylized way. He should have painted the farewell locality - Jintai, i.e. Beijing – in its natural environment of Northern China, but instead what is depicted is a typical Jiangnan landscape of a riverbank amongst a low range of misty mountains. Another example is Tang Yin's *Farewell at Jinchang* (*Jinchang bieyi* 金閶別意 , ca.1507), painted for an official who was leaving his post as Suzhou Prefect. Tang Yin chose the motif of "parting at the shore," and added a mass of local officials and people in the picture to send the prefect off. The painter inscribed a poem explicitly extolling the prefect's virtues. A couplet reads: "How deeply sad were your old friends! Your helpless people weep continuously. 故舊情淒切 , 窮民涕泗漣 ."

98 Translation cited from Stephen Little, "The Art of T'ao Ch'eng," *Gugong xueshu jikan*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (Autumn 2005): 380. For an overall introduction to Tao Cheng and his extant works, see ibid., 367-95+638.

Was this prefect such a close and important figure to Tan Yin that his transfer could inspire such deep emotion? It is doubtful.

A farewell demanded an explicit narrative. Unlike congratulatory paintings, in which the visual motif assumed a significant role in indicating the painting's idea, farewell paintings had to employ inscriptions that spoke for themselves. Shen Zhou's *A Landscape Painting for Wei De* (*Wei Weide zuo shanshui tu* 為惟德作山水圖), is an impressive picture with strong but peaceful brushstrokes that form a tranquil composition that artistically imitates the styles of Yuan masters.[99] Equally impressive is the sincere emotion for a departing friend, conveyed via seven poems on the painting surface. One poems sighs: "I do not know if we can meet again, no more than I know that will be. 不知重會面 , 又是幾何時 ." The couplet transcends an educated Ming man in the fifteenth century felt about departing: parting for a long journey sadly always meant an unforeseeable reunion.

Case Study I: *Chanting for the Pictures*

Chanting for the Pictures offers us a good opportunity to take a closer look at the above-mentioned occasions - elegant gathering, travelling, and home-visiting. This heavily inscribed painting provides a sample of the context in which inscriptions were demanded and executed. The painting itself is lost, but its inscriptions are preserved in a number of connoisseurship catalogues. The earliest available record is in *The Great Sights in My Life* (*Pingsheng zhuangguan* 平生壯觀 , 1692), a catalogue written by the Ming loyalist Gu Fu 顧復 (fl. 1692-1712). Gu Fu recorded the scroll under the title of *Stone Lake* (*Shithu tu* 石湖圖), but only briefly documented it by specifying the contributors and their visual and literary styles.[100] A much more detailed and

99 Chen Zhenghong casts doubt on the authorship of this painting not being Shen Zhou but his cousin Shen Yun. See Chen Zhenghong, "Bei dashi zhebi de huajia – chongdu Shen Zhou 'Shitian gao' gaoben zhaji" 被大師遮蔽的畫家——重讀沈周《石田稿》稿本箚記 , *Suzhou wenbo luncong* 蘇州文博論叢 , No. 3 (2012): 128-35.

100 Gu Fu, *Pingsheng zhuangguan* 平生壯觀 , *juan* 10, facsimile reprint of a 19th

important source is *Precious Book Box of the Stone Chanel* (*Shiqu baoji* 石渠寶笈), a large government compilation project launched by Emperor Qianlong in the spring of 1744 and completed in the winter of 1745.[101] This art catalogue exclusively documents calligraphies and paintings from the imperial collection, which means that by the mid-eighteenth century *Chanting for the Pictures* still existed in the imperial collection. The ambition of this catalogue is notable and its extensive documentation carries remarkable details. Moreover, it seeks an appraisal system permeated by imperial authority. The catalogue records *Chanting for the Pictures* as an upper class work (*shangdeng* 上等). Every physical detail of works in this class are painstakingly documented, in contrast to those in lower class categories, which only have titles, and names of the painters and inscribers recorded.

The following analysis is based on *Precious Book Box of the Stone Drain*, without too much reflection on the source itself. By the mid-eighteenth century, *Chanting for the Pictures* had at least nine sections. The documentation records the sections physically from right to left. But date information relating to the inscriptions suggests that this mounting sequence was out of order. In other words, the current physical order fails to represent the right creative sequence. The table below (table. 2-1) organizes all traceable date information, and gives a tentative reconstruction of the right order that will serve the discussion that follows.

The first section, painted by Liu Jue, carries a lengthy self-inscription by the painter about the initial genesis of his section. Accordingly, on the twentieth day of the sixth month of 1466, Shen Heng, then aged 57, went on a sightseeing tour to Shangfang Hill with friends. Among them was a monk named Jing 敬 from

century manuscript. XXSKQS, *Zi bu*, Vol. 1065, 462.

101 See Zhang Zhao 張照 (1691-1745) et al., *Shiqu baoji* 石渠寶笈 , *juan* 33, SKQS edition, 64a-70a.

Table 2-1 The Restoration of the Creative Order of *Chanting for the Pictures*

Physical Order	Creative order	Painter-inscriber/ Painter and inscriber	Date (in lunar calendar)
1, 3	1, 2	Liu Jue, Shen Heng	20/6, *Bingxu* (1466)
4	3	Yang Jingzhang and Jin Lu	15/12, (see n.100)
6	4	Zhou Tingli and Chen Meng	Undated
7	5	Shen Zhou and Zhang Hao	16/1, *Dinghai* (1467)
2, 8	6, 7	Shen Zhen, Ma Yu	15/2, *Dinghai* (1467)
9	8	Shen Yun	20/6, *Renchen* (1472)
5	9	Monk Bixu	*Bingshen* (1476)?

the East Zen temple (*Dongchan si* 東禪寺). At dusk, Shen Heng and the monk returned to the latter's abode. Liu Jue paid them a visit, and the other two shared their sight-seeing experiences with him while drinking wine together. The monk grasped this opportunity to ask Liu Jue for a poem, in response (*he*) to the poems that he had composed during the day. The next day, a relative by marriage of Liu Jue passed by and conveniently composed another responding poem. Shen, Liu and this relative respectively painted a picture on which each inscribed his own poem. Their creations were left to the monk for "a good topic of conversation" for any future visits. Liu Jue's inscription ends with two poems in which he expresses a sense of vicissitude at being away from his hometown of Suzhou for over ten years. It can be seen that Shen Heng's section must have been created at the same time as Liu's. Perhaps because Liu Jue had recorded the motives behind their creations so well, Shen Heng did not give any information about the date or reason for the creation. In the catalogue, this section is recorded as the third one. These two connected sections were somehow disrupted by the mounting (or remounting) at a later date.

The section that is chronologically third, but physically

fourth in the catalogue is a collaborative effort. The inscriber, Jin Lu 金 輅, begins his inscription with a poem responding to the former inscribers' tour to Shangfang Hill and their elegant compositions.[102] He then explains the start of his alliance with a painter Yang Jingzhang 楊 景 章 (fl. 1465-1487): On the fifteenth day of the twelfth month of Chenghua *bingxu* (1467),[103] Jin visited East Zen temple. There, he happened to meet with a monk, Jing. The monk showed him the inscribed paintings that he had collected from Shen Heng and Liu Jue. "I was ashamed for not being able to paint," Jin wrote, "Fortunately Mr. Yang Jingzhang was present. He made this picture. Then I composed a *jueju*-quatrain, which matched with the rhyme that was used in the former poems."

Zhou Tingli 周 廷 禮 produced another cooperative work, inscribed by Chen Meng 陳 蒙. This section is undated. My positioning of this section in the table is rather tentative, but I believe it came after the creation of Yang and Jin, because Chen's inscription acknowledges their collaboration as following a model by Jin Lu. On the other hand, Chen Meng makes no reference to Shen Zhen's section. His section was very likely done during the two months between the end of 1466 and early 1467, before Shen Zhou's creation. On the sixteenth day of the first month of 1467, Shen Zhou contributed his section in collaboration with his grandfather Zhang Hao 張 浩. This section is recorded as the seventh in *Precious Book Box of the Stone Chanel*. Adopting an ordinary formula, Zhang Hao's inscription starts with a poem responding to the previous ones. What follows is a long prose record stating:

I visited the city for a local wine-drinking ceremony.[104] At

102 See Lu Jun 魯駿 (fl. 19th cent.), *Song Yuan yilai huaren xingshi lu* 宋元以來畫人姓氏錄, *juan* 16, 1830 edition, 9b.

103 The year of *bingxu* during Chenghua reign generally corresponds with 1466 in the Gregorian Calendar. But the twelfth month falls in the next calendar year, i.e. 1467. The precise Gregorian date is 20 January, 1467. See Keith Hazelton, *A Synchronic Chinese-Western Daily Calendar 1341-1661 A.D* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, History Dept., 1984), 126.

104 District wine-drinking ceremony (*xiang yin jiu* 鄉 飲 酒) refers to a

> night I slept over at monk Jing's abode at East Zen temple. By candlelight he shows me the eminent scroll *Poems and Paintings Commemorating Sightseeing at Shangfang* done by my son-in-law Shen Hengji 沈恆吉 (Shen Heng) and the matching works by Assistant Censor-in-chief Liu (Liu Jue) and other gentries. They are like pearls and jades lending radiance to one another that dazzle my poor-sighted eyes. The monk does not consider me decrepit and forces me to add something to this masterpiece. It is like putting a nag together with two coursers. How can it be working? But the monk does not accept any rejection. Thus, I inscribe twenty-eight characters with difficulty. I let my grandson Shen Zhou to complete the picture, just following the model set by the previous inscribers.

One month later, on the fifteenth day of the second month of 1467, Shen Heng's elder brother Shen Zhen painted another section. This is listed second in the Qing record. It bears a responsive poem, followed by a short record about the author's visit to East Zen temple with his friend Ma Yu 馬愈 (*zi* Yizhi 抑之). There, the two friends saw the 1466 paintings by Liu Jue and Wei Yuanji 魏元吉 (presumably the relative by marriage mentioned in Liu Jue's inscription) belonging to Monk Jing. The monk also asked them to contribute their own brushworks. Shen Zhen and Ma Yu respectively painted a small-scale landscape picture, and inscribed a responding poem to the 1466 poems. Ma Yu's section appears eighth in the Qing catalogue. It was uniquely matched with a ci-poem. In a short colophon, Ma Yu recounted his tour with Shen Zhen on a decorated barge to Stone Lake. The pictorial part hence was probably done on the same day as Shen Zhen's section.

The ninth recorded section was undertaken by Shen Zhou's cousin Shen Yun. The artist's long colophon, dated the twentieth

ceremony honouring the elderly by local magistrates at Confucian schools. The ritual was described by Confucian classics *The Rite of Ritual* (*Li ji* 禮記) in "The District Ritual of Rural Wine-drinking" and Xunzi 荀子 in the end of "Discourse on Music". During Tang and Song times, the ceremony developed into a prerequisite to qualifying for meaning the civil service examination. See John W. Chaffee, *The Thorny Gates of Learning in Sung China: A Social History of Examinations* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 52, 158-59.

day of the sixth month of 1472, reads:

> In the fifth month of 1471, I passed by East Zen Temple. Monk Jing invited me to the Ivy-moon Pavilion, and showed me the poems and paintings that several gentlemen created in memory of the tour to the west hill (Shangfang Hill). [...] The monk asked me to paint a picture. I dare not rival the works of elders and betters, yet I intend to make a wretched sequel. I managed to paint this picture to answer his invitation. This summer I pass by East Zen Temple again. The monk has already passed away. His disciple monk Xin 信 is also an aficionado. He invites me to make a poem to complete my picture. I chant: "White clouds are still in front of the old temple." It shows some deep feeling, hasn't it?

The last section chronologically (the fifth one in the record) is by a monk Bixu 碧虛 . Unfortunately, the monk only left a simple poem without specifying the context of his creation. Also, there is no useful information in later records. The monk's poem indicates that it was inscribed ten years after Liu Jue's poem. Hence, the creation would have occurred in 1476. The monk may well have a connection with the previously mentioned East Zen Temple.

A space stimulating inscriptions

The above inscriptions marked spatial trajectories across the urban and suburb regions of Suzhou, which are helpful in reconstructing the visual contents of *Chanting for the Pictures*. The scroll is supposed to have portrayed Shangfang Hill and the adjacent Stone Lake. Ten kilometres southwest of Suzhou city, the hill and lake were a scenic resort for Suzhou residents since the thirteenth century.[105] The mid-Ming Suzhou literati were

105 See the entries of "Stone Lake" in Lu Xiong 盧熊 , *Hongwu Suzhou fuzhi* 洪武蘇州府志 , *juan* 7, Fangzhi, Huazhong difang 華中地方 , Vol. 432. Facsimile reprint of 1379 manuscript edition (Taipei: Chengwen chubanshe, 1983), 321-23. For Shangfang hill, see *Gusu zhi* 姑蘇志 , *juan* 9, compiled in 1514, SKQS edition, 5a.

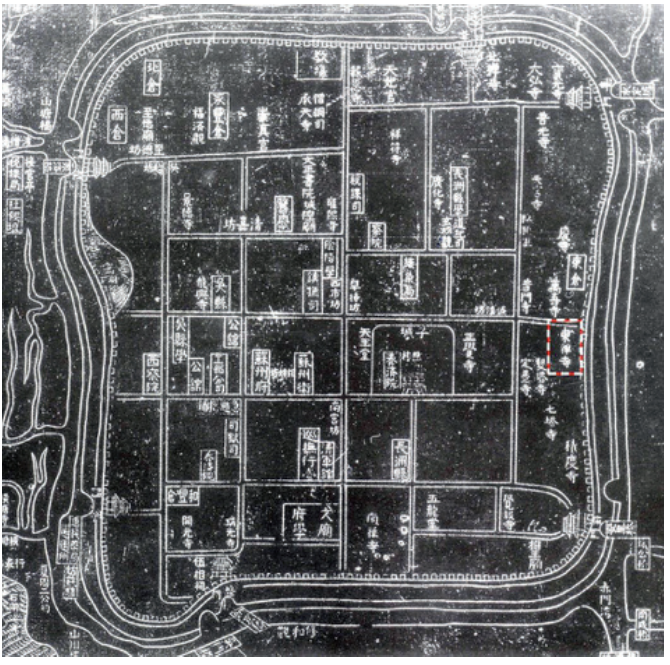


Fig. 2-20 East Zen temple (marked by rectangular frame) in "Map of the Prefectural City of Suzhou" (*Suzhou fucheng tu* 蘇州府城圖) drawn from *The Gazetteer of Gusu* (*Gusu zhi* 姑蘇志 , 1436). Source: *Zhongguo gudai dituji: Chengshi ditu* 中國古代地圖集：城市地圖 (Xi'an: Xi'an ditu chubanshe, 2005), 57.

very familiar with this local excursion spot. They rendered a considerable number of textual and visual representations of the place during or after their visits, and many of them still exist.

Another locality deserving of our attention is East Zen Temple. This temple requires us to return to Suzhou city, where all the artistic creations actually happened. The temple was established no later than 851 in the east of the inner city (fig. 2-20).[106] One of the earliest Suzhou maps, engraved in 1229 (fig. 2-21), already marks its existence. It is not uncommon for a Buddhism temple to be involved in the creation of artworks. Temples represented a space that was non-state-controlled. They were also convenient in terms of availability and locality. The Ming cultural elite heavily utilized this space to host cultural pastimes.[107] They often either temporarily lodged there during a

106 East Zen temple's history of once being reconstructed and renamed raises problems in dating its "coming-into-being". Official gazetteers and non-official records provide with three dates: AD 238-51, 851 and 961. See Wang Jian, *Song Pingjiang chengfang kao* 平江城坊考 (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1986), 125-26.

107 For the Ming literati's use of Buddhism space, see Timothy Brook, *Praying for Power: Buddhism and the Formation of Gentry Society in Late-Ming China*

sojourn or had appropriated a long-term space there, outside the home.[108] The demand for a space inside the city was fuelled by the situation in the fifteenth century where many Suzhou gentries still lived outside the city for reasons of land management.[109] For them, temporary lodging in the city was a pragmatic matter. For instance, the Shen clan lived in Xiangcheng 相城, a town north of Suzhou city, 35 kilometres away from Stone Lake. The distance was too far for a return leisure journey in one day.[110] East Zen temple was at a distance of only 10 kilometres from the lake and 25 kilometres from Xiangcheng, making it ideal for an overnight stay, and, of course, the temple was always amenable to hosting cultural celebrities.

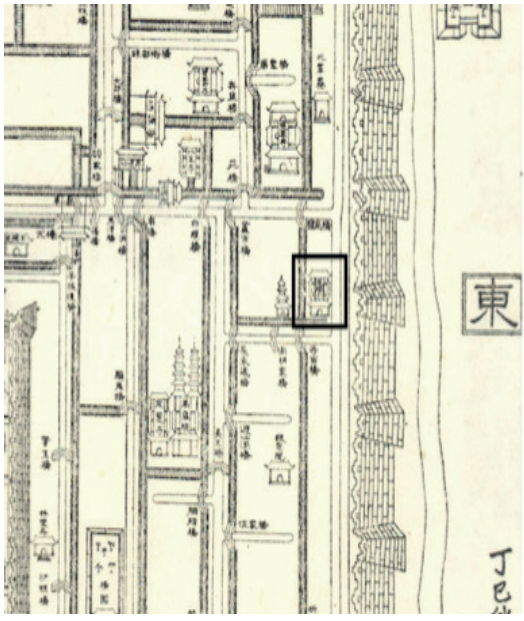


Fig. 2-21 East Zen temple (marked by rectangular frame) in *Map of Pingjiang* (*Pingjiang tu* 平江圖), rubbing of Suzhou map engraved on stone in 1229. The stone is now in the Museum of Engraved Stone Tablets in Suzhou, China. Source: Appendix to Wang Jian, *Song pingjiang chengfang kao* 宋平江城坊考 (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1986).

Searching for these localities on a fifteenth-century map of Suzhou (fig. 2-20), a question is raised: Why did the small and plain East Zen Temple attract a group of elite, rather than other locations

(Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993), 114-19.

108 Ibid., 114-17.

109 For the urban plan of Suzhou and the relation between urban and rural, see Yingnong Xu, *The Chinese City in Space and Time: The Development of Urban Form in Suzhou* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000), 77-88.

110 Choe P'u spent two days travelling the 110-kilometre distance between Hangzhou to Jiaxing, and one day travelling 85 kilometres from Jiaxing to Suzhou. But their journey was determined by a travel permit, which meant that it was undertaken much faster than a leisure sight-seeing trip would have been. See *The Confusions of Pleasure*, 39-51.

in the city, or the temple exactly located at the aforementioned Shangfang Hill?[111] The elite in fifteenth-century Suzhou repeatedly reported their close connections with the clergy in East Zen Temple, among whom Monk Jing was a vital figure. His active role is best demonstrated in the acknowledgements in the inscriptions on *Chanting for the Picture*. After his death in 1470, monk Xin seemed to have been successful in maintaining the temple's close association with Shen Zhou, the most influential Suzhou artist, which can be attested by several poems written by Shen Zhou in the 1480s and 1490s.[112] On the occasion of the Dragon Boat Festival in 1495, Shen Zhou and his brother Shen Bing 沈翾 (fl. 15th cent.) respectively painted *Hollyhock and Lilies* (*Shukui baihe tu* 蜀葵百合圖) and *Elegant Gathering at East Zen* (*Dongchan yaji tu* 東禪雅集圖).[113] Despite Monk Xin's death in the end of fifteenth century, Shen Zhou sustained his connection with the temple until he died in 1509.[114] This temple visiting tradition was passed on to a new generation of young artists. The calligrapher Zhu Yunming 祝允明 (1460-152) created a series of works whilst staying overnight at the temple in 1513.[115] Wen Zhengming was another regular temple guest as well.[116] If Shen Zhou was representative of the rural gentries who occasionally went to the city for one reason or another, Zhu and Wen were representative of the urban elite who lived inside the city walls – their residences were only three kilometres away from the temple

111 The temple named Shangfang Temple (old name Lengqie 楞伽 Temple) and was a popular religious site as well. See *Hongwu Suzhou fuzhi*, *juan* 43, 1747; Wang Jian, *Song Pingjiang chengfang kao*, 251.

112 Chen Zhenghong, *Shen Zhou nianpu* 沈周年譜 (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 1993), 209-10.

113 Ibid., 239.

114 Shen Zhou wrote a condolence poem for monk Xin's death. The poem is entitled "*Wan Dongchan Xin gong* 挽東禪信公," *Shitian shixuan* 石田詩選, *juan* 7, *SKQS* edition, 54b-55a.

115 For the image of this work, see *Tumu*, Vol. 15, 81-82.

116 For example, Wen Zhengming has a poem entitled "Improvising poems with Can Jiukui at East Zen Temple" (*Dongchan si yu Cai Jiukui tongfu* 東禪寺與蔡九逵同賦), see *Wen Zhengming ji* 文徵明集, comp. Zhou Daozhen (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1987), 44.

- but spent time at religious sites for cultural activities.[117]

It is unknown whether these elite individuals were financially supporting East Zen Temple. Nonetheless, their artistic productions, including dedicatory inscriptions, were essentially a way that different social groups networked with each other. To this end, *Chanting for the Pictures* offers a sample of the mid-Ming Suzhou elite's exploitation of inscriptions for their networking with a temple, and the process was largely on the basis of an established or establishing network.[118] On *Chanting for the Pictures*, this gesture of patronage is mainly projected in the non-verse inscriptions. We can imagine that the possession of such a work, issued by local elite, could raise a temple's prestige in the local literati community. On the other hand, the inscriptions also bear a sense of reciprocity, in relation to the temple's hospitality. For the temple clerk, having cultural icons lodge was a perfect opportunity to forge interpersonal connections, as well as an opportunity to directly request artworks without appealing to an agent or middleman. In addition to supplying people with accommodation and food, the monks showed their guests literary and visual arts. Thus, they created a subtly reciprocal environment that meant a request for a painting or an inscription could hardly be refused. Despite Zhang Hao's euphemistic protests at an eighty-five-year-old exhaustingly being asked to wield the brush under candlelight, he eventually compromised as he realized that "the monk does not accept any rejection."

The relations among the inscribers

Chanting for the Pictures was relationship-driven. In addition

117 Wen Zhengming's residence was located at Family Cao Lane (*Caojia xiang* 曹家巷), and Zhu Yuming at San Mao Guan Lane (*San maoguan xiang* 三茅觀巷). The two were only two hundred metres apart. Living between Shen Zhou and Wen Zhu were gentries like Du Qiong who moved into the city. Cf. Wu Jen-shu, "Jiangnan yuanlin yu chengshi shehui – Ming Qing Suzhou yuanlin de shehui shi fenxi" 江南園林與城市社會 —— 明清蘇州園林的社會史分析, *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo jikan* 中央研究院近代史研究所集刊, No. 61 (2008): 12.

118 For the literati's patronage to Buddhism in late Ming, see Timothy Brook, *Praying for Power*, 159-84.

to the relations between the temple clergy and the artists, it is notable that all twelve contributors were either from or had associations with the Shen clan. The monk Jing might have knowingly invited people associated with each other. If so, the inscriptions can be seen as a result of an established network, rather than a social factor that forms a new network.

The core of this network was four members from two generations of the Shen clan: Shen Zhen, his third and probably the youngest son Shen Yun, Shen Zhen's younger brother Shen Heng, and his eldest son Shen Zhou.[119] Around the core of the family were relatives who appeared to be more skilled at inscribing than at painting. Jin Lu was one such relative; he was the husband of Shen Zhou's paternal great-aunt. Zhang Hao was another elder family member and Shen Zhou's maternal grandfather.[120] Chen Meng was of the same generation as Shen Zhou and his wife was Zhou's younger sister.[121] He made frequent sightseeing trips and poem exchanges with Shen Zhou.[122] A surviving floral painting by Shen Zhou, dated 1481, carries the dedication "For the relative by marriage Yi'an (Chen Meng)."[123]

Robert Hymes uses the term "horizontal social relationship" when referring to the network pattern within which network members "disregarded or remained neutral on or left unspecified whatever other inequalities might distinguish them."[124] Although it is questionable whether "equality" could be feasibly achieved, the term is a useful supplement to "friendship," a concept that

119 Chen Zhenghong has a thorough research of Shen Yun as an ignored painter in the Shen Clan. See Chen Zhenghong,"*Bei dashi zhebi de huajia*," 128-35.

120 Chen Zhenghong, *Shen Zhou nianpu*, 5.

121 Ibid., 76.

122 In Chenghua 9 (1473) the two took a sightseeing tour to Tiger Hill and Guxu Platform together. For the poem exchange, see Ibid., 105-106.

123 The painting is entitled *Spring Plant and Autumn Flower* (*Chuncao qiuhua tujuan* 春草秋花圖卷, 1481), ink and colour on silk, 30.1 × 147cm, in Kunizō Agata 阿形邦三 collection. See Suzuki Kei, *Chūgoku kaiga sōgō-zuroku*, Vol. 4 , 218-19.

124 Robert Hymes, Forward to Jaret Wayne Weisfogel, *A Late Ming Version for Local Community: Ritual, Law, and Social Ferment in the Proposals of Guan Zhidao*, ed. Sarah Schneewind (Minneapolis: Society for Ming Studies, 2010), xv.

provided space for ideological argument in the Ming period.[125] One contributor to *Chanting for the Pictures*, Ma Yu, a Suzhou *jinshi* in 1464, is illustrative of Hymes' proposal that the "same geographical unit" was a way of forging a horizontal network. Apparently, he was such a good friend of Shen Zhen that the two went sightseeing together to Shangfang Hill. He also had connections with many celebrities in the surrounding area, such as the literati-official leader Wu Kuan and the notable painter Chen Daofu 陳道復 (1483-1544).[126] Liu Jue offers another instance, not only in terms of hailing from the same place, but also sharing the same vertical tie. Liu Jue was under the supervision of the same teacher of Shen Zhen and Shen Heng. He befriended Shen Zhou, the son of his school peer, and taught the young how to paint. This friend-and-teacher identity was superimposed with affinity when Shen Zhou's younger sister married Liu Jue's eldest son,[127] insofar as a marriage alliance always played a crucial role in reinforcing interpersonal ties and in controlling social recourses in late imperial China.

A biography of Wei Yuanji remains unknown, and his creation disappears from the eighteenth century record. It is also unknown just how close Yang Jingzhang was to the Shen family. A Suzhou portraitist, Yang once created a portrait for Shen Zhen's seventy-second birthday in 1472.[128] On the same occasion, Shen

125 For the idea of "friendship" in the pre-modern society of China, see Joseph P. McDermott, "Friendship and Its Friends in the Late Ming," in *Jinshi jiazu yu zhengzhi bijiao lishi lunwenji* 近世家族與政治比較歷史論文集 , ed. Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo and History Department of the University of California, Davis (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo, 1991), 67-96.

126 Ma Yu's father Ma Shi 馬軾 was a lower official-holder, an Erudite of Water Clock (*louke boshi* 漏刻博士) in the Directorate of Astronomy, but enjoyed a wider reputation as a painter that have been paralleled with Dai Jin by the author of A Record of Ming Paintings (*Ming hua lu* 明畫錄). See Xu Qin 徐沁 (1626-1683), *Minghua lu*, *juan* 3, in *Mingdai zhuanji congkan yilin lei Ming hua lu deng wuzhong* 明代傳記叢刊藝林類 (明畫錄等五种), ed. Zhou Junfu (Taipei: Mingwen shuju, 1991), 49.

127 Chen Zhenghong, *Shen Zhou nianpu*, 6.

128 See Li Rihua's *Weishuixuan riji* 味水軒日記 (*Water-tasting Diary*) on the twenty second day of the eight month of 1610. *Weishuixuan riji* 味水軒日記 , *juan* 2, Jiayetang 嘉業堂 imprinted edition, in XXSKQS, 330.

Zhen inscribed an extempore poem on another commemorative painting by Shen Yun. The other two contributors, Zhou Tingli and monk Bixu, are not well known, The latter seems to have been an acquaintance of Shen Zhou, but Gu Fu raised serious doubts about Bixu's section and suggested that, in fact, it was ghost-painted by Shen Zhou.[129]

While many of these relations between painter and inscribers were clearly declared in the inscriptions and therefore were completely visible to any viewer of the painting, others remained invisible. Fear of this invisibility drove Song Luo, the last scroll-inscriber known to us, to ensure that as much of the inscribers' background as possible featured in his 1697 inscription. His information-offering gesture indicates the fact that late-seventeenth-century audiences were probably already unfamiliar with fifteenth-century Suzhou literati. Hence, he felt obligated to outline a network map for his audience.

Inscriptions as a technique of social interaction

The end of this case study focuses on the poetic painting inscriptions, considering them as a networking technique. As shown above, the inscribers of *Chanting for the Pictures* (with the exception of Song Luo) adopted a mixture of prose and verse. Non-verse inscriptions were employed to ensure that the audience could immediately grasp the intentions behind the inscribing and painting practices. Poetic inscription, in comparison, emphasized the small coterie comprised by the inscribers and the recipient.

With rhyming beginning to play a role in social interactions, a series of rhyme-matching rules evolved, and each rule had its own name. *Yongyun* 用韻 means "using the same rhyme words without following the sequence," *heyun* 和韻 "using the same rhyme without necessarily using the same rhyme characters," *heshi* 和詩 "responding to the original poetic idea," and *lianju* 聯句 "each person contributing a couplet to form a whole poem." The strictest rule, however, is *ciyun* 次韻 (or *buyun* 步韻), meaning

129 Gu Fu, *Pingsheng zhuangguan*, 462.

"matching the rhyme characters and orders of others." This rhyming game could naturally and instantly create intertexuality between a new poem and an old one(s); this intertexuality could then forge or foster a connection between a new, intruding poet and a poet who had joined the gamer earlier.

Ciyun emerged at a time when stricter rules for classical Chinese poetry were taking shape in the sixth and seventh centuries. In the late eight and early ninth centuries, Bai Juyi and Yuan Zhen 元稹 (779-831) fuelled the repertoire of *ciyun* poems not only with their own productions, but also a clear awareness of *ciyun* being a way of communication. They were keen to produce long *ciyun* poems. Sometimes, their poems employed 100 rhyme-words, which created an atmosphere of intelligent competition.[130] In the eleventh century, Su Shi's circle gave substantial momentum to *ciyun* practice. According to research by Yugen Wang, over 40 percent of Huang Tingjian's extant poems fall into the *ciyun* category. Wang believes that this technique led to a shift in the primary source of poetry from natural objects to existing literary texts. "By taking previously created texts as the basis of poetic inspiration and composition," he claims, "[*Ciyun* poem] weakens the traditional linkage between poetry and the physical world."[131] However, the cases of Bai Juyi, Huang Tingjian and *Chanting for the Pictures* suggest a different picture, that, in fact, *ciyun* was targeted at the physical world; more precisely, the connection between one poet and another.

Of the poems made during the initial sightseeing tour to Shangfang Hill and Stone Lake, only Shen Heng's has survived. This *jueju* poem uses the rhymes words *bian* 邊, *nian* 年, and *qian* 前, which provided the rhyme for poets to come. The basic techniques of rhyming seldom change over time, but phonological

130 For a detailed examination of the development of rhyme-match-poems by Yuan Zhen and Bai Juyi, see Hanabusa Eiju, *Haku kyoi kenkyū* 白居易研究 (Kyoto: Sekai shisō sha, 1971), 201-23.

131 Yugen Wang, *Ten Thousand Scrolls: Reading and Writing in the Poetics of Huang Tingjan and the Late Northern Song* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asian Center, 2011), 11.

changes differentiated rhyming in one age from another.[132] Regardless of phonetic differences in dialects, the Ming rhyming scheme was largely based on *New Published Rhyme Scheme of Pingshui* 平水新刊韻略 (*Pingshui xinkan yunlue*, 1229), published in the Jin empire, and *New Published Rhyme Scheme by the Ministry of Rites in the Year of Renzi* (*Renzi xinkan libu yunlue* 壬子新刊禮部韻略, ca. 1252) in the Southern Song. The rhyming system had 106 rhyme words, a significant simplification of the *Guangyun* 廣韻 system, with 206 rhyme words, that was popular in the Tang and Northern Song. This system was later known as "pingshui rhyme," and gained official recognition having been used in civil service examinations during the Yuan and Ming periods. Thus, "pingshui rhyme" succeeded other systems, such as *Rhymes of the Central Plain* (*Zhongyuan yinyun* 中原音韵, 1324), to become the most widely accepted rhyme system for poem-making.

In the case of *Chanting for the Pictures*, Shen Heng used *xian*-rhyme 先 (-ien) in "Pingshui rhyme." It was soon matched by Liu Jue's two poems, which employed exactly the same rhyme feet. The tricky point in a *ciyun* game, as Yugen Wang posits, is that each round of rhyming brought a higher degree of difficulty for the next person.[133] Six months afterwards, Jin Lu "rhymed with the former poems into a *jueju*." In the following two months, Chen Meng, Zhang Hao, Shen Zhen, and Shen Yun respectively added their poems. The only metrical exception was Ma Yu's *ci*-poem, which was produced during the sightseeing trip and was later transcribed onto the painting. Around 1476, Monk Bixu resuscitated this past event and participated in it by composing his own poem in response to those written one decade earlier.

It was not clear whether monk Jing requested every poet to pay attention to the rhyme. Only Liu Jue appears to consciously make an attempt to rhyme. Yet, what is certain is that the monk did ask for every image to be inscribed with a poem, as evidenced

132 Wayne Schlepp has a brief introduction of rhyme in Chinese verse and deeper exploration of rhyme in *sanqu*-poetry. See *San-ch' ü: Its Technique and Imagery* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1970), 43-84.

133 Yugen Wang, *Ten Thousand Scrolls*, 101.

by Shen Zhen's inscription: "while [I] appreciating [the former sections] monk Jing also requested that my poem and painting match." This statement strongly suggests that inscribed paintings for social occasions had reached an unprecedented prevalence in mid-fifteenth century Suzhou amongst well-educated men.

Social Spaces of Reciprocity

The above case study already touches upon the importance of reciprocity in the creation of painting inscriptions: the non-verse part of the inscriptions on *Chanting for the Pictures* implicitly or explicitly acknowledge the hospitality of the monk at East Zen Temple. Social interactions, unsurprisingly, entail reciprocal obligations, and the best manifestation is gifts. In *The Gift*, the anthropologist Marcel Mauss (1925) presents his well-known argument that gifts are given and reciprocated obligatorily, and voluntary presents exist only in theory.[134] Mauss uses the term "total services" to describe the obligation that a present should be given, received and reciprocated.[135] Arjun Appadurai's introduction to *The Social Life of Things* (1986) considers gifts in relation to barter and commodities, and gives a broader picture in which these forms of objects are transferrable. He is particularly interested in how meanings of material objects are constructed and changed. That is, to claim, as summarized by Pieter ter Keurs, that "meaning is not inherent in the object itself, but is shaped in social networks."[136]

Reciprocity is pervasive in the society of human beings no matter whether it is in the Pacific Islands, Indonesia, or any other geographical or anthropological region. In China, *Record of Rites* (*Li ji* 禮記), a pre-Han classical writing on ritual, establishes the

134 Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (London: Routledge Classics, 1925, reprint, 2002), 3.

135 Ibid., 16-17.

136 Pieter ter Keurs, *Condensed Reality: A Study of Material Culture: A Study of Material Culture; Case Studies from Siassi (Papua New Guinea) and Enggano (Indonesia)* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 30.

notion as a fundamental principle in the interactions between human beings. According to this venerated canon, to receive without the response of giving was contrary to propriety. [137] In the context of ancient Chinese society, reciprocity was quite often achieved in the form of non-monetary barter between friends and family members. To a large extent, it is rooted in the Chinese institution of *guanxi* 關係 network, i.e. the webs of relationships based, in principle, on human feelings (*renqing* 人情).[138] On the other hand, whether reciprocity occurred properly and smoothly also shaped the *guanxi* network.

This section further studies Ming painting inscriptions embedded in social interactions by exploring those produced as a result of reciprocal commissions and the need for reciprocity. I will carry out another case study on a mid-Ming handscroll entitled *Paying a Debt of Gratitude to a Good Name* (*Baode yinghua tujuan* 報德英華圖卷 , hereafter *Paying a Debt*), a gift presented to a physician in gratitude for treatment.

Inscriptions Negotiated Social Debts

People become indebted in response to a favour being done. When Ming painters found themselves indebted, they frequently presented their painting works as repayment. This section, consistent with the whole dissertation, is concerned with the elite. Bai Qianshen proposes a series of issues that elite artists would have concerned when preparing a calligraphic work out of social obligation: What is the social etiquette? How long has the painter been associated with the requester? Who is the middleman (if any)? What materials are available? Is the artist planning immediate repayment? What is the cultural level of the recipient? What is the painter's public image.[139] To this we could add the

137 English translation cited from James Legge trans. *The Sacred Books of China: The Texts of Confucianism,* Part III: *The Li Ki* I-X (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885), 65.

138 James Cahill, *Parting at the Shore*, 39.

139 Bai Qianshen, "Cong Fu Shan he Dai Tingshi de jiaowang lunji Zhongguo shufa zhong de yingchou he xiuci wenti" 從傅山和戴廷栻的交往論及中國書法中

essetial gesture that Bai Qianshen's omits to mention: inscribing the painting with an appropriate message. No Ming artist could afford to ignore this requirement.

A lot of celebrated Ming artists had bad experiences struggling with mountains of requests for artworks from friends, or friends of friends. Myriad records report painters being bothered by painting seekers and having blank paper and silk piled up on their desk waiting to be painted. The number of requests that some big names had to cope with was often beyond their ability.[140] Interestingly, Ming literati painters used inscriptions to vent their complaints about the onerous painting tasks that they had to deal with. Du Qiong, for example, produced a candid self-inscription saying: "One after another, the painting debts are impossible to pay. Day after day, I wield my brush in my studio. The idle mountains outside the city, would also pity me for being kept busy by others. 紛紛畫債未能償 , 日日揮毫不下堂 . 郭外有山聞自在 , 也應憐我為人忙 ."[141] His complaint might not be an affectation; a famous painter like him would have had plenty of requests, which were tremendously time-and-energy consuming. Xue Longchun's study on Wang Duo reveals a similar situation in this eminent late Ming calligrapher's daily life. In correspondence with friends, Wang Duo grumbled about fatigue, dizziness, nausea and lack of spirit. In addition to physical issues there were also mental sufferings. In a calligraphic inscription on his brother's fan, Wang expresses his resentment and tiredness about the overwhelming requests from "those who do not understand you (*zhiji* 知己)."[142] Wang Duo's contemporary, the celebrated calligrapher Fu Shan 傅山 (1607-1684), had similar experiences. Despite suffering from eye disease, hemorrhoids, an injury caused by falling from a donkey, and other indispositions,

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的應酬和修辭問題 , part one, *Gugong xueshu jikan*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (Summer 1999): 132.

140 Michael Sullivan, *The Three Perfections*, 41.

141 Yu Fengqing 郁逢慶 (ca. 1573-ca.1642), *Shuhua tiba ji* 書畫題跋記 , *juan* 12, 1911 *Fengyulou congshu* 風雨樓叢書 edition, 15a.

142 Xue Longchun, "Yingchou yu biaoyan," 172-73.

he had no choice but to keep writing for the commissioners.[143] Du Qiong, Wang Duo, Fu Shan, and probably many more Ming artists resorted to inscriptions as a psychological release. Ironically, these muttering inscriptions finally entered the social realm to be reciprocated and exchanged by other members of the social group. In other words, the network eventually digested any personal complaint.

What might have worsened the Ming artists' living situation was the pressure from art seekers, who seized every opportunity to press their requests. Li Rihua produced the following grumbling inscription: "When the oriole has just woken from sleep, a visitor is already knocking at the door with a painting to be inscribed a poem."[144] If Li Rihua's unhappiness about an improper early visitor was euphemistic, Wang Duo's tone was clearly bitter when he muttered about being awoken from a good dream by an annoying calligraphy requester.[145] Nevertheless, debts were unavoidable. Du Qiong, Li Rihua and Wang Duo were complaining while wielding their brushes.

Certainly, the engagement of social life did not mean that all the literati painters lost artistic autonomy. There are frequent accounts in Ming and Qing artistic writings about Wen Zhengming's generosity to low-class requesters, in contrast with his firm rejection of subinfeudated princes, foreigners and eunuchs.[146] Yet, as Craig Clunas has shown, this Ming virtuoso could not enjoy as much freedom as he wanted. Moreover, since the fourteenth century, commissioners had an increasingly stronger desire to dictate a work and set a deadline for its completion.[147] Ni Zan once indignantly expressed his anger in this respect: "The painting seekers always insist on my following their dictations and finishing at a certain time. They do not hesitate

143 Bai Qianshen, "Cong Fu Shan he Dai Tingshi de jiaowang," 126-29.

144 Li Rihua, *Zhulan huaying*, 21.

145 Xue Longchun, "Yingchou yu biaoyan," 173.

146 He Liangjun, *Siyou zhai congshuo* 四友齋叢說 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 128.

147 James Cahill, *The Painter's Practice*, 72.

to hurl insults and abusive language."[148] Another example is a Buddhist monk's commission for a poem by Shen Zhou, which reads: "[…] A painting of the climbing vines of Shanxi, with several layers of river surface and green mountains. When your brush painted the very place where springs fall from cliff, please add a monk gazing at cloud by the side of the stone."[149] The fact that the commission was written in poetry may have been intended to soften the commanding tone and make the commission more acceptable. Commissions like this support Anne Burkus-Chasson's argument that the rhetoric transformed a request for a work of art into "an invitation to join an exchange of wits."[150]

Ming literati painters, on the other hand, strove to keep their own position when confronted with endless demands. Shen Zhou was a predecessor who deeply embedded painting inscriptions into his social intercourses. Despite being exceedingly obligated, he still made great efforts to embed his own ideas by dint of inscriptions. This helped his works avoid becoming platitudes. Sometimes, when a request for a painting was too tricky to paint, Ming artists resorted to inscriptions as a way out. For instance, a friend of Li Liufang once asked for an album of "fairyland" (*shiwai* 世外), completely different from an ordinary landscape. Aware of the difficulty of the subject, Li artfully claimed in his self-inscription on the finished work that he had replaced the required "fairyland" landscape with landscapes that "once existed but were no longer possessed by human beings."[151] The inscription thus legitimated his ten pictures, which did not meet with the requester's demand. In fact, early in the late Southern Song period, there were sayings like "one can succeed through

148 He Liangjun, *Siyouzhai congshuo*, 265. The English translation adapted from James Cahill, *The Painter's Practice*, 72.

149 Zha Weiren 查為仁 (1695-1749), *Lianpo shihua* 蓮坡詩話, *juan* zhong 中, *Zhetang waiji* 蔗塘外集 edition, printed in 1741, 3a-3b.

150 Anne Burkus-Chasson, "Elegant or Common? Chen Hongshou's Birthday Presentation Pictures and His Professional Status," *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 76, No. 2 (1994): 296-97.

151 Chen Zhuan 陳撰 (1678-1758), *Yuji shanfang huawai lu* 玉幾山房畫外錄, *juan* 1, in MSCS 1. 8, 93-94.

poetry in completing the scenes that are most difficult to paint."[152] However, the sayings stressed the need to boast about one's extreme wit in solving artistic puzzles. By the time of Li Liufang, however, the emphasis had more or less shifted from artistic concerns to social concerns.

Some literati painters developed their own tactics for handling the debts of painting and inscribing. Wen Zhengming, for instance, prepared calligraphy works in advance in case the need should arise later.[153] Dong Qichang had a similar strategy. A considerable number of his paintings, mostly hanging scrolls, had more than one self-inscription. James Cahill has compared these paintings with those done for close friends on particular occasions. He keenly notices that the latter usually bear particularized and intimate inscriptions, while the inscriptions on the former are less innovative. On the doubly inscribed paintings, the first inscription provides the painting title and date, and the later inscription(s) is a dedication to the recipient or the owner.[154] Cahill presents a plausible reconstruction of the creative procedure of these paintings. Dong might have painted a number of such works with no recipient in mind. When a visitor came and expressed a desire to own a work of his, he would add an inscription to one and present it to that person. The gift put the recipient in a position that was, Cahill notes, "expected to make some recompense, or feel himself obligated to Tung [Dong] and discharge the obligation later."[155] Dismissed from the central administration in 1598, Dong Qichang lived a life as "a mountain man in official costume (*chaofu shanren* 朝服山人)."[156] However, he never completely severed his connections with the political arena. Double inscribing enabled him to regulate his time more efficiently, and to prepare a painting as a political gift more

152 Charles Hartman, "Poetry and Painting," 481.

153 Wen Zhengming, *Wen Zhengming ji*, 1451.

154 James Cahill, *The Painter's Practice*, 50.

155 Ibid., 50.

156 Shih Shou-ch'ien, "Dong Qichang 'Wanluan caotang tu' ji qi gexin huafeng" 董其昌《婉孌草堂圖》及其革新畫風, *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishiyuyan yanjiusuo jikan* 中央研究院歷史語言研究所集刊, Vol. 65 (June 1994): 309-10.

explicitly. This active strategy of inscribing may have contributed to his status in his day.[157]

The mechanism behind double inscribing is that only when a presenter and a recipient arrived at mutual understanding about the nature of the painting as a gift, could they could affirm and consolidate their relations. Hence, Ming painters actively provided information about the dedicatee in inscriptions by stating "*wei* 為 …(name) *ti* 題 … (painting title)." "*Wei*" means "for" in Chinese, and implies doing something for somebody. This message further conveys two social implications: I am doing something that is a favour for you or I am doing something to repay your favour. Both implications lead to reciprocity. It was not uncommon for Ming people to exploit inscriptions to reciprocate, repay someone, or to project a sense of indebtedness. Li Rihua, for example, inscribed a freshly finished painting for a friend, expressing his wish that the recipient, who is good at poetry, "will definitely inscribe some words to repay (*bao* 報) me."[158] Li's acknowledgement of this friend's poetic skill is not pointless. His inscription puts the friend in an indebted position, and then projects a not so subtle request from this person.

Case Study II: *Paying a Debt*

As its title suggests, an existing Ming handscroll *Paying a Debt*, illuminates the idea of *bao* 報 , or reciprocity.[159] This handscroll painting has multiple components. Below is a list of

157 Chen Zenglu, "Lingyizhong silu xia de 'Si Wang'" 另一種思路下的四王 , in *Nanzong zhengmai: Huatan dilixue* 南宗正脈 ── 畫壇地理學 , ed. Shanghai bowuguan (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2012), 272.

158 Li Rihua, *Xu Huaying*, in *Zhulan huaying*, 1936 edition, 77.

159 This painting does not attract many scholarly interests. Xu Bangda is the first to give identification opinion to the scroll. See " 'Baode yinghua' shuhua hejuan de jianding" 《報德英華》書畫合卷的鑑定 , *Wenwu* 文物 , No. 4 (1981): 73-74. This paper is later embodied into *Gushuhua wei'e kaobian* 古書畫偽訛考辨 (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1984) as part of a long essay entitled "Zhenwei zarou de gu shuhua juance" 真偽雜糅的古書畫集卷冊 . For background investigation and style analysis on the scroll, see Wu Gangyi, "Shen Zhou shanshui huihua de fengge yu ticai zhi yanjiu" 沈周山水繪畫的風格與題材之研究 , (PhD diss., Central Academy of Fine Arts, 2002).

these components, and as a reference in the following discussion, each component is designated with a number:

I. Frontispiece (*yinshou*) by Liu Jue in running-regular script (fig. 2-22).
II. Painting on paper with landscape theme, comprised of three sub-sections:
A. One attributed to Liu Jue, now widely accepted as an imitation;[160]
B. One by Shen Zhou (fig. 2-23);
C. The last one chiefly by Du Qiong with a long self-inscription dated 1469 (fig. 2-24).
III. Colophon section (*tuowei*) on the extended paper-sheets (fig. 2-25), which can be divided into two parts:
A. Thirteen poems respectively composed by Wang Yue 王越 , Xia Jun 夏濬 , Zhang Yi 张懿 , Shen Zhen, Xu Yong 徐庸 , Lü Xuan 吕暄 , Chen Dahe 陳大和 , He Fu 賀甫 , Shen Zhou, Jiang Ji 姜濟 , Yan Yue 嚴樗 , Chen Yu 陳毓 , Wu Kuan;
B. Two colophons respectively by He En 賀恩 dated 1470 (**1**) and by Chen Liu 陳鎏 dated 1547 (**2**).

The commission of the painting

According to He En's colophon (III-B), the painting should have contained a poem by Chen Kuan 陳寬 and a preface of Zhu Hao 祝顥 , both of which are missing from the present scroll.[161] If *Chanting for the Pictures* reflects a handscroll took gradually its shape, *Paying a Debt* represents a work accomplished within a short period of time based on the commissioner's careful plan. The scroll opens with a frontispiece giving the title, telling any beholder that it is about the theme of "repayment," and then

160 Xu Bangda firmly identifies this section a fake. See "Zhenwei zarou de gu shuhua juance," 215.

161 Xu Bangda dates the fake section no later than the Kangxi Reign. He also speculates that it is cut off along with Zhu Hao's preface and Chen Kuan's poem, and then remounted into a new handscroll to be sold. See Xu Bangda, " 'Baode yinghua' shuhua hejuan de jianding," 74.

Fig. 2-23 The frontispiece of *Paying a Debt* by Liu Jue. Length unknown. The Palace Museum, Beijing. Source: *Tumu,* Vol. 20, 73.

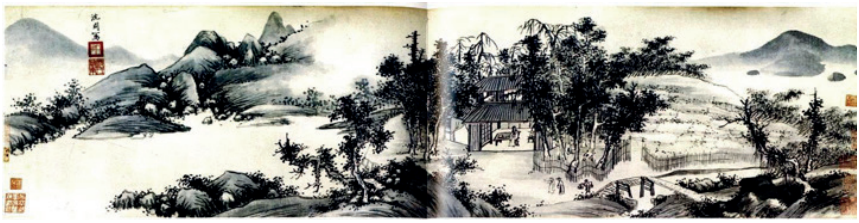

Fig. 2-24 The second picture of *Paying a Debt*, ink on paper, 29 × 251.5 cm, The Palace Museum, Beijing. Source: *Meishu*, Huihua bian 繪畫編 Vol. 7 Mingdai huihua zhong 明代繪畫 , 8-9.

Fig. 2-25 The third painting section of *Paying a Debt*, ink on paper, 29 × 251.5 cm. The Palace Museum, Beijing. Source: *Meishu*, Huihua bian 繪畫編 Vol. 6 Mingdai huihua shang 明代繪畫上 , 86-87.

proceeds to three pictorial sections. The inscription sections - II-C and III – are the focal point for the following discussion. II-C is a long prose preface that the painter Du Qiong inscribed on his picture. This preface gives a clear account of the commission of the painting:

> Mr. He Meizhi 賀美之 (He Fu) felt very much indebted to Du Yuanji 杜原吉 (Du Xiang 杜祥) who cured his son's illness. Meizhi wanted to acknowledge this with money. But Yuanji declined by saying: "I and your son, who won the first place in the provincial examination, are brothers in law. How can I do it just for remuneration! It would be enough if I could receive a painting by the owners of West Villa, the men of the Shen clan."

Fig. 2-26 The colophon section of *Paying a Debt*. Source: *Tumu*, Vol. 20, 74-75.

This preface is dated "Double Ninth Festival (the ninth day of the ninth month), the autumn of Chenghua *jichou* (1469)." The frontispiece and pictorial sections (I and II) were the first batch that had been completed around the Double Ninth Festival in 1469. Du Qiong's preface proceeds to introduce the contributors to the pictorial part:

> Meizhi then invited Wang Xingzhai 王省齋 and me to visit West Villa together. We passed by Liu Qianxian's 劉僉憲 (Liu Jue) place. He did a painting for the front; Qi'nan 啓南 (Shen Zhou) then did one to put after it; this left me to do one for the last position. Tao'an 陶菴 (Shen Zhen), the head of the West Villa, said: "The brushwork of Dongyuan 東原 (Du Qiong) is certainly marvelous, but not skillful enough in texturing and depicting mountains in the shape of screen. I ought to perfect it for you." I agreed enthusiastically. Tao'an then wielded his ink brush freely to make up for the imperfections of my picture. Right at that time, it started to rain. He had to go out for a while to take a look of his grain crops. [Thus] he ordered his youngest son Wenshu 文叔 to finish his work.[162] The picture was so wonderful that nothing could be added. Meizhi exclaimed in excitement. He said: "How lucky am I! Now it is enough to repay Yuanji!"

Anyone reading this preface would be well informed about the background of this painting's commissioners, recipient, and purpose. For the sake of convenience, I extract information offered by the inscriptions of He En – one of the commissioners – to reconstruct the whole story of the creation of the work.

He En fell ill in late 1468 or early 1469, and the illness grew worse over the next three months. In the spring of 1469, a physician named Du Xiang gave him medical treatment. In the summer or autumn of 1469, He En largely recovered. His

162 Xu Bangda believes that *jizi* is the youngest son of Shen Cheng 沈澄 (1376-1463), i.e. Shen Heng, the father of Shen Zhou. See *Gushuhua wei'e kaobian*, 216. But Shen Cheng died in 1463, three years before creation of the painting. Moreover, there is no trace in other inscriptions indicating Shen Cheng's participation. Wu Gangyi argues that *jizi* should be the son of Du Qiong. See Wu Gangyi, "Shen Zhou shanshui huihua de fengge yu ticai zhi yanjiu," 95. However, if we put this sentence back to its original context, it is evident that since the sentence "Tao'an, the head of West Grange" onwards, the narrative focuses only on Tao'an, i.e. Shen Zhen. It was Shen Zhen who perfected Du Qiong's painting, and who went out to inspect grain corps. Therefore, Shen Zhen is also the person who requested the youngest son to finish the brushwork. The consistency of the sentential subject in the flow of speech possibly led Du Qiong made an omission. If so, *jizi* refers to Shen Yun 沈㮮 , the third (and also youngest) son of Shen Zhen and the cousin of Shen Zhou. He was once known for his painting skill. See Chen Zhenghong, "Bei dashi zhebi de huajia," 128-35.

restoration immediately meant an imperative social duty to pay back Du Xiang. Because the physician Du declined money, the He family began to mobilize their network to obtain what the recipient Du Xiang desired: a literati painting from the hands of the Shen clan. Seen from one poem on III-A, dated the first day of the ninth month of 1470, and He En's colophon (III-B-1) from early in the third month in the same year, the inscriptions on the colophon paper were not written down chronologically, one after another, from right to left. There is no mounting seam between III-A and III-B-1, therefore it is very likely that He En first inscribed the end of the colophon paper, and then brought the paper to each inscriber. This is a different strategy from that manifested in *Facing the Bamboo*, the commissioner of which distributed paper sheets separately to each inscriber and collected them separately. Later The He family's strategy required them to precisely gauge the amount of the space available for each inscriber. It is not clear how long this process took. Some scholars speculate that it took perhaps several years.[163] But this speculation somewhat contradicts the notion that the sooner a reciprocal gift could be produced the better. Based on the date information available from the painting's surface, I tend to assume a period of half a year.

The recipient and presenter

The recipient of *Paying a Debt* Du Xiang was a *shiyi* 世醫 , a "heredity physician" with an innate linkage with the elite who shared the same ideological and moral codes.[164] Du Xiang's request for a painting by the Shen clan might have been due to a personal interest in art, or personal admiration of the Shens. In light of his close relations with the He family, it is also possible that he conceived monetary repayment, a form of remuneration mostly between strangers, to be inappropriate.

163 Xu Bangda, *Gushuhua wei'e kaobian*, 216.

164 Yüan-ling Chao, *Medicine and Society in Late Imperial China: A Study of Physicians in Suzhou, 1600-1850* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009), 107-25.

The commissioners, He En and his father He Fu, were not from a prominent family. He Fu's grandfather assumed some minor positions during the Hongwu 洪武 Reign (1368–1398). Unfortunately, he died early and his death resulted in a lawsuit, which tremendously impoverished the family. He Fu inherited his father's teaching career but only in private schools. However, his thirty-years of teaching proved a success in terms of scouting young examination potentials. He Fu was also talented in literature and his name appears in Qian Qianyi's biographical list of competent Ming poets.[165] Thanks to his occupation and literary skill, despite He Fu not holding a degree, his family maintained a reputation among the eminent Suzhou elite.

To prepare their gift, He Fu and He En first invited the local celebrities with whom they had direct associations. Relatives were naturally their first concern. We see He En's uncle-in-law Zhu Hao and another relative Chen Kuan appear in the scroll.[166] The tacher-pupil relation also played a part. He Fu's student Wu Kuan and He En's teacher Xia Jun (*jinshi* 1529, d. 1561) were invited. (Wu Kuan was also a close friend of Shen Zhou, but in this case he was more likely to have been directly invited by his teacher.[167]) Family friends were key contributors as well, including Du Qiong. His friendship with He Fu was established no later than 1448 when the two co-organized a literature club.[168] Perhaps the person who had the closet connection to the Shen family that He Fu knew,

165 Qian Qianyi, *Liechao shiji xiaozhua* 列朝詩集小傳, compilation *yi* 乙 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1983), 223.

166 Wu Kuan, "He Fu'an xingshu" 賀復庵行述, *Paoweng jiacang ji* 匏翁家藏集. SBCK edition, *juan* 58, facsimile reprint of Zhengde edition, 8b. The epitaph does not specify what kind of relative they were to the He family.

167 Wu Kuan wrote epitaphs for He Fu, his father, his son He En and a daughter. When He En died in 1483 at Beijing amidst another attempt in the metropolitan examination, Wu Kuan was at his side. See Wu Kuan, "He Fu'an xingshu" 賀復庵行述, *Paoweng jiacang ji*, *juan* 58, 7b-9a; "Jieyuan He jun muzhiming" 解元賀君墓誌銘, ibid., *juan* 60, 6a-7b; "He Ganlou xiansheng muzhiming" 賀感樓先生墓誌銘, ibid, *juan* 63, "Xianfu He shi muzhiming you xu" 賢婦賀氏墓誌銘有序, ibid., *juan* 66, 2a-3b. This collection also embodies a birthday celebrating essay for He Fu's father entitled "Shou He Ganlou xiansheng xu" 壽賀感樓先生序, *juan* 45, 3a-3b.

168 Shen Zhou, *Du Dongyuan xiansheng nianpu* 杜東原先生年譜, in *Guoyun lou shuhua ji*, 6b.

Du Qiong naturally took responsibility for recruiting the desired people from his circle. The participation of Shen Zhen, Shen Zhou and Liu Jue would presumably be at Du's request. Another painting inscriber Xu Yong, who hailed from Wu County, was a town fellow of He En. He participated in the 1448 poetry club as well. We have scant knowledge of the other inscribers. Some of their signatures show that they were natives of Changzhou 常州 and Daichuan 埭川, places near Suzhou. It is logical to assume that some of them, if not all, were local friends of He Fu. In a sense, the scroll is crystallization and an extension of the He family's networks.

He Fu and He En unsurprisingly presented themselves on the gift scroll. The father contributed a long poem and the son a conclusive colophon; both expressed their deep appreciation. He En was clearly thrilled by the excellent assemblage scroll that he and his father had achieved. His colophon extols: "the paintings, the poems, the proses, the calligraphies, are all the best selected of our time." Indeed, it certainly seems to be the best present that the He family could offer, and He En cheered: "How lucky am I! Now it is enough to repay Yuanji."

Is the repayment sufficient?

He En, however, immediately hesitated. Was it indeed enough? The long colophon (III-B-1) reveals his state of mind:

> Inscribed after *Paying a Debt*
> In the winter of the Chenghua *wuzi* year [late 1468 or early 1469], I was on the point of leave for the national civil service examination. Suddenly I fell ill. My family, from my parents to the others, was too anxious to follow anybody's suggestion. Thanks to Mr. Du Yuanji's medical treatment I finally recovered. Yuanji and I have good relation so that he did not accept any payment. But I do not want to just bear his favour in mind. Therefore I begged Mr. Du Dongyuan, Mr. Liu Wan'an 劉完菴 (Liu Jue), and the recluse Mr. Shen Shitian 沈石田 to paint

> three pictures. The seniors including Mr. Chen Xing'an 陳醒菴 (Chen Kuan) and Xu Nanzhou 徐南州 (Xu Yong) inscribed a few poems. My respectful uncle-in-law Mr. Zhu 祝 who is an Administration Vice Commissioner wrote a preface. I mounted them on a handscroll. Mr. Wan'an inscribed the frontier as "Baode yinghua." Alas, is it sufficient as a repayment to Yuanji?

This colophon tells more or less the same process of making the scroll, yet it reveals more about the underlying incentive for making *Paying a Debt* a painting-inscription-assemblage. It reveals that the He family put an extraordinary weight on repaying the practitioner's treatment as a result of the invisible pressure of reciprocity. Reciprocity, as a fundamental principle in human society, certainly exerted its role in the Ming China. In the Chinese language, the word that refers to the notion of reciprocity is the character *bao* in the scroll title. *Bao* refers to reciprocal actions either in reward, "to recompense," "to report," "to repay," or in punishment, "to revenge." Pervading all kinds of human relation, the notion of *bao* has a profound influence on Chinese institutions.[169] Within a family, it is the basis of *xiao* 孝, or "filial piety," a key virtue in Confucian doctrine. A son should be filial and return what he has received from his parents. For parents, nursing a son is a form of investment; thus, an unfilial son is the most unwanted.[170] In this vein, Du Xiang's miraculous cure, which relieved He En's parents' deep worry, actually saved the son's "filial piety" required by social convention. Therefore, the son continued to write:

> Because my carelessness caused this disease and my parents' grief, the sin of my unfiliality is huge. When you removed it, turning anxiety to joy, so that I am not unfilial, what else was this but inevitable? Whether I am filial or unfilial all depended

169 Lien-sheng Yang, "The Concept of 'Pao' as a Basis for social Relations in China," *Chinese Thought and Institutions*, ed. John K. Fairbank (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), 301-302.

170 Ibid., 302.

> on Yuanji. Therefore how can [this affair] can be merely the difference between life and death that his virtue should be repaid?

He En had just won the first place in the 1468 provincial examination in Nanjing, the most competitive level in all the levels of the civil service examination. Coming first no doubt meant a tremendous honour to the title-holder. It also meant candidacy at the metropolitan examination in Beijing, and a guarantee of privileged status at the local level, even if the metropolitan examination was failed. With hindsight, we know that He En did not succeed in progressing any further before his death in 1483.[171] Yet, in 1468, at that critical moment, serious illness or death was devastating not only to the examinee but also to the entire family. The cured He En hence was doubly indebted. He should repay the practitioner for saving his life and also his moral integrity. Thus, he contemplated of how to repay the doubt debts:

> I thereby realize that [the scroll] does not suffice to pay back Yuanji. Whether they are paintings, poems, essays or calligraphy, they are a sample from the best of their age, worthy to be passed on for ever. Although we accept the reasons for Yuanji's repayment, is there a way to transmit Yuanji's name without relying on it [repayment]? What the world appreciate, whether it is gold and jade, pearls or money, dazzles the eyes, but can it last for ever? And, can it be Yuanji's repayment? I cannot but reject one course and prefer another. Yuanji's name is Xiang, and his sobriquet is Heng'an 恆庵. He has inherited the medicine profession handed down from the family for generations, and is going to be appointed as the district physician of Chongchuan 崇川 County.[172]

171 See Wu Kuan, "Jieyuan He jun muzhiming," 6a-7b.

172 Chongchuan was an alternative name of Tongzhou 通州, a county under the jurisdiction of Yangzhou 揚州 in the mid-fifteenth century. In 1830, scholars from Tongzhou published a book entitled *A Record of Chongchuan from a Foot Away* (*Chongchuan chiwen lu* 崇川咫聞錄) to commemorate local culture and

He En dated this long colophon the third month of 1470, which indicates that the process of preparing this gift took perhaps half a year from the autumn of 1469 to the spring of 1470. The most time-consuming part of the entire scroll would have been the colophon section. However, Du Xiang only designated a picture without any specification for a calligraphic inscription as well. It is unknown who first raised the idea for inscriptions. More probably, it was already a routine to match a painting with inscriptions in the literati community. The final result, a rich combination of paintings, calligraphies, and poems, was praised by Xia Jun as "Three Perfections of Wu." The scroll, thanks to the close collaboration of the eminent Suzhou elite, may have exceeded Du Xiang's expectations.

The last part of He En's colophon touches on a recurring topic in classical Chinese writing about the immortality of fame. He En entrusted his hope for an imperishable fame for the recipient of *Paying A Debt of Gratitude* to the scroll as an object and, at the same time, a carrier of texts. This idea was more or less shared by the entire intellectual community and thus Xia Jun sighs with emotion in his inscribed poem: "The gold and jade to be presented are limited, but the writings to be circulated never wear out." Xia was keenly aware of the value of the inscriptions. He asserted that: "From now on (Du Xiang's) name will be remembered forever."

The last colophon (III-B-2) on the scroll body was written by Chen Liu dated 1574, at the request of Du Xiang's grandson. This colophon reveals a different scenario. By then – around one hundred years later – the He family had completely declined. Chen hence wrote: "From the outset, the He family was intended to transmit Du's name. Now, He's name is transmitted by Du instead." His colophon makes the scroll a token that has witnessed the vicissitudes of human's fate. Yet, to some extent, thanks to the inscriptions, both families are remembered by us.

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history.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter has placed the production of painting inscriptions in the social context of Ming everyday life. It has first examined the interaction between inscriptions and three main painting formats: handscroll, hanging scroll, and fan. The social function of these formats conditioned the length, content, and materiality of an inscription. At the same time, an inscription played a key role in realizing the social intention of a painting in a certain format. The first half of the seventeenth century, Ming critics began to voice ontological reflections on inscriptions, regarding their importance to a painting composition and to its "completeness." In the following centuries, these sincriptions reflected rising anxiety about the negative effect that a "vulgar" inscription might cause to a painting. I have argued that this anxiety concerning vulgarity mirrored the anxiety in the face of downward social mobility.

The second and third part of this chapter have examined Ming inscriptions, especially poetic inscriptions in the social circumstance in which they were demanded, produced, appreciated, and circulated. More precisely, the second part focuses on two specific spaces that were important to a Ming literatus' everyday life: dwelling and convening. With a case study on *Chanting for the Pictures*, my argument is that inscriptions played an active part in constructing these two spaces, and enabled the Ming literati to network with their family, clan, and peers. In these processes, inscriptions were objects that could be collectively viewed or exchanged. On the other hand, they were also texts that offered scope for literay techniques, such as poetic rhyming, which writers could use to create interpersonal connections.

The third part turns to another type of space, that is reciprocity. Facing ever pressing and stressful requests for paintings, Ming literati painters used inscriptions to their own ends: to communicate with the audience; to control practical

expectations; or, to accelerate their artistic production. With another case study on *Paying a Debt*, this discusstion also explores how the literati strategically employed the practice of inscribing as well as inscriptions to deal reciprocally with their own or the others' social obligations. The larger point is inscriptions that transformed a painting into a gift with reciprocal obligations, and made this transformation clear to all sides participating in the painting's creation.