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Writing Chinese art history in early twentieth-century China

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Citation

Guo, H. (2010, March 3). *Writing Chinese art history in early twentieth-century China*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/15033>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

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Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Chapter 2 From Japan to Europe: Teng Gu's Internalization of Western Art Historical Ideas

The early decades of the twentieth century in China witnessed a period of intense artistic communication between China, Japan and Western countries. Chinese scholars started to internalize foreign theories of art history in order to (re)construct a history of art for China during the late Qing and Republican period. In this chapter, I analyze Teng Gu's practice in the field of art history as a case study of Chinese responses to external stimuli to draft a new art history for China.

The discussion will focus on the impact of Western art historical practices on Chinese intellectual life during the 1920s and '30s. Japanese influence remained an important factor in art historical scholarship at that time, but the Western impact became dominant. I argue that a transition from an indirect connection with the West via Japan to a direct contact with Western thought brought about crucial changes. Most importantly, it encouraged a transformation in Chinese art historical writing from a more superficial adoption of Western patterns for ancient Chinese art to a more concrete and profound appropriation of Western theories. Teng Gu is an interesting case in point. He first studied in Japan in the 1920s and subsequently received professional training in art history in Germany at the beginning of the 1930s. Throughout his academic career, Teng introduced foreign art historical ideas to Chinese scholarly circles; he responded to Japanese and Western writings on Chinese art; he adapted foreign frameworks of art history to the Chinese context; and, he aimed to create a new Chinese art historical discourse for Chinese readers. The most important ideas that Teng Gu developed were style analysis of Chinese art, a Chinese history of artworks rather than artists, and a rejection of the traditional division of Chinese painting.

2.1 Contact with the West

Art historians have long acknowledged the influential role of Western art in Chinese art circles of the early twentieth century. The earliest scholarship on modern Chinese art explained the changes in the Chinese art world from the late nineteenth century to the first half of the twentieth century as responses to Western art and civilization.

Identifying Japan, Europe, and Russia as three major sources of renewal for art in China, Kao Mayching has analyzed the reforms, which found their most creative expression in both Chinese artists' studying experiences abroad and the appearance of new art agencies (including recently-established art schools, art associations, art movements, and art exhibitions) in China (Kao 1972). She has also explored the unprecedented activities to

spread Western-style art in China between 1919 to 1929, which she considers as a response to the challenge of the West (Kao 1981). Moreover, Kao has focused on art education as the most important foundation “that prepared a favourable reception for Western art” (Kao 1998: 146).

For years, Michael Sullivan’s books comprised the standard survey of twentieth-century Chinese art (Croizier 1998: 787). The central theme in his scholarship is “the rebirth of Chinese art in the twentieth century under the influence of Western art and culture” (Sullivan 1996: xxvii). Based upon his personal connections with twentieth-century Chinese art scenes, Sullivan has provided a wealth of material highlighting the tension and interaction between Chinese and Western art (Sullivan 1959, 1996, 1997). Labelling the period from 1900 to 1937 as “the impact of the West”, Sullivan has emphasized how much Western-style painting in early twentieth-century China challenged Chinese traditional painting (Sullivan 1996).

Both Kao and Sullivan’s research has contextualized modern Chinese art in a general history of culture, society, and politics in late Qing and Republican China. Their approaches resemble the historiography of modern China in America and Europe between the 1940s and ’60s led by the late John Fairbank. The formula of Western influence and Chinese response created by Fairbank dominated the discourses of both history and art history at that time. In this framework, the West was the modernizing force for China in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Since Fairbank’s day, however, Western scholarship has moved away from this preoccupation with the overwhelming Western impact on China. Since the publication of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* in 1978—which says nothing about East Asia—Western scholars have reconsidered the role of Western modernity in Chinese history (Crossley 1997: 641-42). Similarly, art historians have attempted to establish a unique modernity in Chinese art different from what many assume is the dominant model of Western modernity. They stress the artistic exchanges among Asian countries rather than the Western influence on Asia in one direction (Clark 1993).

Even so, Western impact will still be an important part of my discussion. The Chinese historiography on art from the turn of the twentieth century has responded to and negotiated its relationship with Western scholarship on art. However, my focus is on how Chinese scholars during the early decades of the twentieth century actively internalized foreign approaches into their analysis of Chinese art and therefore engaged in writing a new indigenous history of art.

Of major interest is the fact that practices in the historiography of Chinese art have been absent in any discussion of Western influence. This absence is remarkable, considering that Western impact played an important role in the establishment of a Chinese art historical

discipline, particularly after the increase of direct contact between the art worlds of China and the West during the 1920s and '30s.

During the early decades of the twentieth century, many Chinese students went to Japan and Western countries to study art. While most of them concentrated on art practice, a few students took art historical courses and majored in art history. Probably the most famous is Cai Yuanpei, who studied philosophy in Berlin and Leipzig between 1907 and 1912. Cai attended some art historical courses, including lectures on Ancient Greek sculpture, Roman architecture and sculpture, and Dutch painting in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Another example is Teng Gu, the focus of this chapter, who received his PhD degree in art history from Berlin University in 1935.

In early twentieth-century China, institutional borrowings from Western art educational systems were noticeable. Courses of art history appeared in the newly-established school system. In 1912, Cai Yuanpei, then Minister of Education, began to promote aesthetic education. In the opinion of Cai and his followers, art in the Western sense could be helpful in strengthening social morality. Their proposition stabilized the position of art, including art history, in government education programmes. The philosophical ideas of art promoted by Cai Yuanpei actually “necessitated the teaching of art history” (Andrews and Shen 2006: 31). From then on, art schools modelled on Japanese or European art academies hired scholars and artists to teach art history courses in China. For example, Li Shutong (1880-1942), one of the earliest Japan-trained artists and art educators, took teaching positions in art and music at different schools after his return from Japan in 1912. He opened a course on Western art including lectures on the history of Western art at Zhejiang First Normal School in Hangzhou. His lecture notes eventually became the first history of Western art in China, but Li refused to publish his notes and the manuscript has been lost (Sullivan 1996: 29).

Furthermore, Chinese scholars became acquainted with the development of art in the West from the many books published by leading publishing houses, as well as from articles in art periodicals issued usually by art schools and art societies. Either in translation or by adaptation, the introduction of Western ideas concerning art gathered pace in the 1920s and '30s (Kao 1981: 96-100; Sullivan 1996: 64-66).

Western works on Chinese art also caught Chinese scholars' attention. *Chinese Art* (1904) by Stephen Bushell (1844-1908) was popular in China after a complete translation was published in 1928. Bushell was an English physician who became a collector of Chinese art during his appointment as medical officer to the British legation in China between 1868 and 1900. Afterwards he returned to England and devoted himself to writing on Chinese art. Li Puyuan mentioned Bushell's work in his *Outline of Chinese Art History*

(*Zhongguo yishushi gailun*, 1931) when he discussed Han sculpture (Li 1931: 104). Bushell also appears in the bibliography of Zheng Wuchang's *A History of Chinese Art* (*Zhongguo meishushi*, 1935). Zheng used Bushell's data for his account of Ming porcelain (Zheng 1935: 153). In 1937, when Fu Baoshi compiled *Chronological Table of Chinese Art*, he cited seventy-one publications, which he divided into Chinese and Japanese sections. The Chinese section contained seventeen titles¹⁵; the Japanese section included fifty-four titles. Two of these sources were translations of Western texts. One was the Japanese translation of *Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art* (1912) by Ernest Fenollosa, the American pioneer in the study of Asian art who lived much of his life in Japan. The other was the Chinese translation of Bushell's *Chinese Art*.

Unlike Bushell's book, other Western works on Chinese art were not fully translated into Chinese in the early twentieth century. Nonetheless, their impact on Chinese art historical treatises is undeniable. Li Puyuan introduced the Swedish art historian and sinologist Osvald Siren's (1879-1966) book *Histoire des Arts anciens de La Chine* (History of Ancient Art in China, 1929-30), citing in particular Siren's information on bronze, jade, pottery, and sculpture (Li 1931: 45-68, 104-05, 10-19). *Outlines of Chinese Art* (1918) written by John Ferguson (1865-1945), the American missionary and art collector in China, appeared in the endnotes of *Art History of the Qin and Han Dynasties* (1936) by Zhu Jieqin. Zhu was interested in Ferguson's comments on the position of painting in Chinese art which he read in *Outlines of Chinese Art*. He agreed with Ferguson on distinguishing the visual inspiration of painting from calligraphy (Zhu 1936: 31). Zhu also referred to Ferguson's book when he discussed the bronze drums of the Han dynasty (Zhu 1936: 60).

Among Chinese intellectuals, Western texts on Chinese art were valued for their accounts of bronze, sculpture, and porcelain. These art forms had long been neglected in the discussion of art in pre-modern China. Western scholarship, on the other hand, had been interested in them from the beginning of Western contact with Chinese art. Dealing with the recently-adopted modern Western notion of art in China (see Chapter Four), Chinese scholars had to rely on a number of Western sources for narrative accounts of those genres still relatively unfamiliar to them. In the case of calligraphy and painting, the two most prestigious categories of Chinese art for Chinese traditional scholarship, Chinese researchers seldom referred to Western works. They were more confidently reliant on the extensive Chinese traditional writing on calligraphy and painting.

More difficult to trace is the actual assimilation of Western art historical theories into Chinese writings. Some Chinese scholars intended to apply Western methods in their

¹⁵ Several titles in the Chinese section were collections of Chinese works on art, such as *Encyclopaedia on Calligraphy and Painting of Peiwenzhai* (*Peiwenzhai shuhua pu*).

analysis of Chinese art during the 1920s and '30s. Direct evidence of this is their citations of Western ideas about non-Chinese art. Zhu Jieqin's *Art History of the Qin and Han Dynasties* (1936) is an example. Zhu translated one sentence from a J.A. Symonds: "The effort of art is to interpret the workings of the human spirit." Symonds was probably John Symonds (1840-1893), the English poet and art critic. Zhu Jieqin found this citation in *The Conception of Art* (1913) by the American scholar Henry Rankin Poore (1859-1940). Poore used Symonds' words at the beginning of Chapter Five concerning Chinese and Japanese art. In his own discussion, Zhu complemented this citation of Symonds with a sentence by Yang Xiong (58 BCE-18 CE), the philosopher, poet, and philologist. From Yang's *Words to Live By* (*Fa yan*, ca. 2 BCE), Zhu cited:

"Speaking is the sound of the heart; writing is the picture of the heart. Through the sound and picture of a person, it becomes visible whether this person is gentle or mean."
(Zhu 1936: 2)

He believed that these two aphorisms respectively from a Westerner and an ancient Chinese philosopher shared a similar idea about the human spirit behind artworks.

Further on, Zhu quoted one paragraph in Chinese from a book he called *Social Significance of Ancient Art* (*Gudai yishu shehui de yiyi*). According to Zhu, this text was written by a Mr. Calverton. Zhu applied Calverton's description of the Egyptian Pyramids to comment on the construction of the Great Wall in China:

"The style [of the Great Wall] can be seen in the construction of the Egyptian Pyramids. 'Although the Pyramids possess an awe-inspiring appearance and unlimited immensity, they are monotonous without any delicacy and ingenuity. We can see nothing of brave experimental spirit or exquisite imaginative talent in them. What they awe and amaze us with is their gigantic size. They are a miracle of human force and fully prove the power of autocracy. They reach the limit of grandeur that manual labour produces in solemn architecture'." (Zhu 1936: 11)

Zhu Jieqin thought that just like the Egyptian Pyramids, the Great Wall, which was built with the wealth and manpower of the entire country, was an expression of the emperor's authority and a guarantee to protect his territory. He regarded the Great Wall as the representative achievement in architecture during the Qin period.

As Kao Mayching and Michael Sullivan have suggested, Chinese approaches to Western art theories were rather superficial in the 1920s and '30s. Both of them cite Lu Xun and agree with him on the confusion of "isms" in the Republican period (Kao 1981: 98-99; Sullivan 1996: 65). It is true that Chinese scholars were eager to publish anything about Western aesthetics and art from ancient Greece to modern Europe without making systematic choices. However, Teng Gu was probably an exception. Here was a scholar who

understood profoundly the contemporary field of art history in the West, and especially, the leading claims of German scholarship.

2.2 Art Historical Research

Teng Gu was born in 1901 at Baoshan county near Shanghai. He spent his childhood pursuing a traditional education in the Chinese classics. In 1918, he graduated from the Shanghai Art Academy (then the Shanghai Drawing and Painting School), at the same time that he started to develop an interest in literature. At the age of 18, he co-authored, with a now unidentifiable collaborator, a collection of novels entitled *Anecdotes of Ninety-Six Female Knights* (*Jiushiliu nüxia yiwén*) (Yang 1998: 664). He went to Japan at the end of 1919 and started to learn Japanese and German. According to one account, Teng Gu enrolled at the Imperial University in Tokyo in 1920 (Andrews and Shen 2006: 23). However, others have claimed that Teng attended the Oriental University, a private university in Tokyo (Shen 2001: 37; Xue 2003: 1; Chen 2000: 219). During his stay in Japan, Teng studied art theory and became acquainted with important Chinese and Japanese literary figures. At the beginning of 1921, he co-founded the Mass Drama Society (*Minzhong xijushe*) with thirteen other Chinese scholars, including the writer, literary critic, and archaeologist Zheng Zhenduo (1898-1958), and the dramatist Ouyang Yuqian (1889-1962). In March 1921, Teng joined the Literary Research Society (*Wenxue yanjiuhui*), founded in Beijing in January 1921. Teng Gu also communicated with members of the Creation Society (*Chuangzao she*), including the poet, playwright, and archaeologist Guo Moruo (1892-1978), and the writer Yu Dafu (1896-1945) (Shen 2001). The Creation Society, founded in June 1921, was another literary society established by a group of Chinese intellectuals in Tokyo. Teng received advice from Liang Qichao on Chinese art history (Teng 1926b: 1), and paid visits to influential Japanese scholars, such as Akutagawa Ryūnosuke (1892-1927). During this period, Teng stated in a letter to one of his friends in China that his research at that time involved several subjects, namely, philosophy, literature, drama, and art criticism (Shen 2001).

During the two summers of 1922 and 1923, Teng Gu returned to Shanghai to teach art theory and aesthetics at the Shanghai Art Academy. In the Kantō Earthquake of 1923, Teng's temporary apartment was commandeered by the Japanese government to rehouse earthquake victims. During the crisis, he lost several of his most precious art books and research notes. In 1924, Teng received his BA in Tokyo, and he then took up a formal teaching position at the Shanghai Art Academy.

In the late 1920s, Teng Gu was involved with a number of art activities. In July 1925,

he participated in the seventh exhibition of the Tianma Society (Tianma hui), an art society initiated by Liu Haisu together with some of his colleagues at the Shanghai Art Academy. In February 1926, Teng Gu joined an art education investigation team from Jiangsu, and visited Japan for about a month. The group visited museums and galleries in Tokyo and Kyoto as well as various Japanese art professors and *yōga* painters, among whom were Fujishima Takeji (1866-1929) and Ishii Hakutei (1882-1958) (Teng and Wang 1926). In March 1926, Teng assisted in organizing the Shanghai Art League (Shanghai yishu xuehui), an art association that incorporated different art schools and societies in Shanghai.

Throughout the 1920s, influenced by late nineteenth-century European aestheticism, Teng Gu wrote several novels, poems, and dramas, for instance, *Wall Painting (Bihua)* (1924) and *Water Lily (Shuilian)* (1929). He even published *The Literature of the Aesthetic Movement (Weimei pai de wenxue)* (1927), the first Chinese treatise on aestheticism. This book systematically introduced key figures of aestheticism in Europe, such as Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) and Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867). Altogether, Teng published six collections of his own literary works.

In 1928, Teng Gu entered the political circle of the Nationalist Party in Nanjing. However, not long afterwards he was expelled, following an internal conflict. He fled first to Shanghai, and then, in 1929, to Japan. In the spring of 1930, he left Japan and started his European journey.

In 1931, Teng Gu enrolled formally in the Department of Philosophy at the Friedrich Wilhelm University of Berlin (now the Humboldt University of Berlin). Founded in 1810, the university was one of the earliest in the world to establish a professorship for art history in 1844. The Swiss art historian, Heinrich Wölfflin (1864-1945), was Professor of Art History at the university between 1901 and 1912. Wölfflin's influence was still palpable during Teng Gu's residence. Teng's major was the art history of East Asia. His minors included archaeology, history, and philosophy. In June 1932, after three semesters, Teng submitted his thesis "*Chinesische Malkunsttheorie in der T'ang und Sungzeit* (Chinese Theory of Painting in Tang and Song Times)" and applied for an oral examination for the PhD degree. Otto Kummel (1874-1952), Director of the Far Eastern Asiatic Museum of Berlin at that time, and Professor Albert Erich Brinckmann (1881-1958), the expert on Baroque art, graded Teng's dissertation respectively as "*valde laudabile* (very laudable)" and "*laudabile* (laudable)". Teng Gu's *viva voce* took place on 21st July, 1932. With a mediocre performance in the examination, Teng gained an overall grade of "*laudabile*". Subsequently, after the publication of his dissertation in the 10th and 11th issues of *Ostasiatische Zeitschrift: Beiträge zur Kenntnis der Kultur und Kunst des Fernen Ostens* (The Far East: an Illustrated Quarterly Review Dealing with the Art and Civilization of the

Eastern Countries) between 1934 and 1935, Teng Gu officially received his PhD on 16th October, 1935 (Shen 2003).

At the end of 1932, Teng returned to China. He held a succession of governmental and social positions related to art, including administrative commissioner of the Central Antique Preservation Committee (Zhongyang guwu baoguan weiyuanhui) from 1933; trustee of the Palace Museum from 1934; and member of the Sino-German Institute (Zhongde xuehui) from 1935. He stopped publishing novels and poems. Instead, he devoted the last ten years of his life to art historical research, archaeological investigation, art activities, and Sino-German cultural exchange. Teng Gu, as member of the standing committee for national exhibitions, participated in the preparation of *The Ministry of Education Second National Fine Art Exhibition (Jiaoyubu di'erci quanguo meishu zhanlanhui, 1937)* between 1936 and 1937. During the exhibition, he organized four lectures by scholars on Chinese art. Later he edited these lectures with a number of other articles in an anthology entitled *Collected Essays on Chinese Art (Zhongguo yishu luncong)*. Teng Gu founded the Chinese Research Association of Art History (Zhongguo yishushi xuehui) with a group of scholars in May 1937. Between 1938 and 1940, he was assigned by the Ministry of Education to be principal of the National Art Academy, which combined the two national art schools in Beijing and Hangzhou. From the end of 1939, the academy moved inland, first to Yunnan and then to Sichuan. Teng Gu died in Chongqing on 20th May, 1941, without accomplishing his ambition to write a comprehensive history of art in China (Shen 2001; Andrews and Shen 2006: 23).

Teng Gu's art-history-related research

Teng Gu's academic career occupied the second half of his life in the 1920s and '30s. He conducted most of his research on art history and archaeology. Based on the content and patterns of his research, I have divided Teng Gu's academic research into two periods.

During the period from the late 1910s to 1929, before his departure for Europe, Teng Gu absorbed internal Chinese traditions and external Western elements by way of Japan. He explored a broad field of art, ranging from painting to literature in order to define his academic interests.

During the 1910s, Teng Gu obtained painting training at his hometown and in Shanghai. In 1925, one of his paintings, in a traditional Chinese style, was exhibited in the seventh exhibition of the Tianma Society. The object has since been lost, and only a review of this artwork remains, stating that "it is indeed clear and elegant, likely from the hands of a poet". The local historical records of Teng's hometown, reveal him to be a successful art

theorist, poet, and calligrapher who loved to paint lotus blooms (Shen 2001).

Studying in Japan, Teng Gu began to encounter both the classical and the modern Western theories on aesthetics, art, and culture. He wrote articles introducing Western thought, including one concerning the artistic theories of Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) and August Rodin (1840-1917) (Teng 1923c). Teng Gu's interests also led him to the ideas of the Italian aesthetician and philosopher Benedetto Croce (1866-1952) (Teng 1921) and to the cultural opinions of the English writer H. G. Wells (Teng 1923a). Following translations of their works into Japanese, both men experienced increased popularity in Japan. The translation of Wells' *The Salvaging of Civilization*, for instance, appeared in Tokyo in 1922 as *Bunmei no kyūsai*.

In the 1920s, one of Teng Gu's foci was the classification of epistemology. He attempted to define the notion of art and its position in the human knowledge system. In several articles, employing German terms, such as *Kunstwissenschaft* and *Kulturwissenschaft*, Teng discussed the relationship between art and culture, as well as between art and science, poetry and painting.

Meanwhile, Teng Gu started to analyze Chinese classical art theories and to parallel them with Western ideas. In particular, he associated the Six Laws of Xie He with both the Greek notions of macro- and micro-cosmos and Theodor Lipps' empathy theory (Teng 1923e, 1926c). The relationship between the Six Laws and empathy theory had been posited in Japan at the beginning of the 1920s by Japanese specialists of East Asian art, perhaps the most significant of whom was Kinbara Seigo (Kinbara 1924), as discussed in Chapter One.

The principal contribution of Teng Gu to the study of Chinese art history in the 1920s was his book *A Brief History of Chinese Art* (1926). Despite the loss of his research data, Teng managed to finish the draft in 1925 and to publish it with the Commercial Press in 1926. Julia Andrews and Shen Kuiyi describe it as a "more philosophical than art historical" text, and what is significant about this book is Teng Gu's innovative approach, which divides the history of Chinese art into "four organically progressing periods" (Andrews and Shen 2006: 23) (see Chapter Four).

The second stage of Teng Gu's academic career coincides with the last twelve years of his life, and commences with his trip to Europe. In this period, Teng devoted most of his energy to art historical and art-related archaeological research and translation. His political position in the Republican government made him an authority on cultural and art issues. His social activities too were mainly centred around promoting art historical studies.

During his stay in Europe from 1930 to 1932, Teng Gu kept pace with the contemporary developments of art history in German-speaking countries and Europe more generally. He wrote academic articles in both Chinese and German. Apart from the

publication of his dissertation in *Ostasiatische Zeitschrift*, the same journal also published three of his essays: one concerning the Southern School of Chinese landscape painting; one about the writer, poet, artist, and statesman Su Dongpo's (1037-1101) art criticism; and one on the discussion of ink play (*mo xi*) (Teng 1931a, 1932a, 1932b). It is impressive that his writings were published in a leading academic German journal of East Asian studies, and it indicates his successful interaction with German scholarship on Chinese art history.

After returning to China in the winter of 1932, Teng Gu pursued his aim to introduce Western research methods into Chinese art historical and archaeological studies. To this end, he conducted archaeological research and became variously involved in art historical criticism and translation. In 1933, Teng published an article criticizing Herbert Read's ideas on Chinese art (Teng 1933b) and his translations of three other Western works (one on art history and the other two concerning archaeology) further demonstrated his comprehension of Western scholarship (see more discussion in the next section).

Living in Nanjing from 1933 to 1938, Teng Gu held positions in the government and became a professor at Jinling University. His continued interest in the ancient history of Chinese art now focused mainly on archaeological materials from Han and Song, and his publications at this time were closely related to his explorations at different archaeological sites. He worked with other Chinese intellectuals, such as the archaeologist Huang Wenbi (1893-1966) and the historian-linguist Zhu Xizu (1879-1944). In contrast to archaeological reports by his fellow researchers, Teng Gu's essays were visually oriented from an art historical perspective. For example, at the end of 1934, Teng Gu explored some archaeological sites in Henan and Shaanxi, and used his findings on this trip to produce an essay entitled "A Tentative Study on the Stone Sculptures of Huo Qubing's Tomb and Sculpture of the Han Dynasty (Huo Qubing mushang shiji ji Handai diaoke zhi shicha)" (1934). In this text, Teng published twelve illustrations, half of which were photographs taken by himself at the Han general Huo Qubing's (140-117 BCE) grave in Shaanxi. The remaining six images were pictures of stone sculptures attributed to Eastern Han sites at various locations in China. One of them was a photograph of a stone sculpture of a lion which no longer existed. Teng discovered this image in a book by Ōmura Seigai. Analyzing the patterns on all these samples, he compared the Western Han pieces from Huo's tomb with Eastern Han items. Consequently, Teng characterized a simple but bold and masculine Western Han style in sculpture, which he distinguished from the more delicate and sophisticated style of the Eastern Han period.

Under the influence of Japanese and Western scholarship, Teng Gu produced important publications for Chinese studies of art history in the first half of the twentieth century. His initial immature general survey of Chinese art history with rather bold claims

had now transformed into detailed studies of one particular genre of artworks with well-developed arguments, and in the process Teng contributed to the nascent discipline of art history in China.

2.3 Internalization of Western Ideas

In his earlier works during the 1920s, Teng Gu consistently introduced many Western concepts, most of which had been only recently developed by Western scholars. Teng first became familiar with these ideas in Japan. Most notable among the Japanese authorities he referred to was the philosopher of the Kyoto School Tanabe Hajime's (1885-1962) *An Introduction to Science* (*Kagaku gairon*, 1918). More often, however, Teng Gu mentioned Western publications and quoted heavily from Western sources.

Teng Gu's attraction to aestheticism is evident in his writing. It is no surprise that in May 1923 he singled out Oscar Wilde's aesthetic ideas when introducing Western art theories (Teng 1923c). At the end of 1923, he also wrote an essay on Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), the poet and painter of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, the English forerunner to aestheticism. Teng Gu described Rossetti's accomplishment in both poetry and painting, demonstrating that his own approaches to Rossetti's poetry and to Rossetti's painting were different. Given that he wrote a commentary on the subject, it is quite possible that Teng had read most of Rossetti's poems; he was unlikely, however, to have been able to view all of Rossetti's paintings. When discussing these, he mostly quoted from Western commentary, which included remarks by the German art historian Richard Muther (1860-1909) (Teng 1923b).

Teng Gu's PhD dissertation in German "*Chinesische Malkunsttheorie in der T'ang und Sungzeit*" contained a bibliography of several publications in European languages. Some were treatises written by his German teachers, such as the Neo-Kantian philosopher and theorist of aesthetics Max Dessoir's (1867-1947) *Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft* (Aesthetics and General Art Studies, 1923) and Otto Kümmel's *Die Kunst Chinas und Japans* (Art of China and Japan, 1929). Some were important treatises on Western art, such as the leading theorist of iconography Erwin Panofsky's (1892-1968) "*Idea*": *ein Beitrag zur Begriffsgeschichte der älteren Kunsttheorie* ("Idea": A Concept in Art History, 1924), and Heinrich Wölfflin's *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (The Principles of Art History, 1915), the representative text of its author's theories of formal analysis. In the main text of his thesis, Teng Gu cited Western scholarship on the Renaissance when comparing art in the European Renaissance and art during Tang and Song times. The materials he used were the Austrian art historian Julius von Schlosser's

(1866-1938) *Die Kunstliteratur* (Art Literature, 1924) and the English essayist and literary critic Walter Pater's (1839-1894) *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* (1877) (Teng 1934b: 238, 1935a: 56-57). In the preface to his dissertation, Teng Gu reviewed the recent research on Chinese art theories. He mentioned four Japanese specialists and their works: Ōmura Seigai's *History of Chinese Art: Sculpture* (*Shina bijutsushi: chosohen*, 1922); Umezawa Waken's *Art in the Six Dynasties* (*Rokuchō jidai no geijutsu*, 1923); Ise Senichirō's *Chinese Painting* (*Shina no kaiga*, 1922); and Kinbara Seigo's *Research on Ancient Chinese Painting Theories* (*Shina jōdai garon kenkyū*, 1924). Teng Gu also singled out a few texts on Chinese art by Western scholars, such as the German-American sinologist Friedrich Hirth's (1865-1927) *Über die einheimischen Quellen zur Geschichte der chinesischen Malerei* (Concerning the Indigenous Sources for the History of Chinese Painting, 1893), and Herbert Giles' (1845-1935) *An Introduction to the History of Chinese Pictorial Art* (1918) (Teng 1934b: 157-58). Giles was a British diplomat in China (1867-1893) and Cambridge University's second Professor of Chinese. Teng Gu's German dissertation had almost no influence whatsoever on other Chinese intellectuals engaged with art history in Republican China, and even today it remains untranslated.

In his Chinese works on art, Teng Gu cited a number of works by Japanese and Western researchers. While he mostly quoted ancient Chinese sources in his discussion of Chinese painting, he generally referred to texts by scholars outside China for information on sculpture and architecture. In *A Brief History of Chinese Art* (1926), Teng recommended three Western works: Friedrich Hirth's *Über Entstehung und Ursprungslegenden der Malerei in China* (Concerning the Genesis and Legendary Origin of Painting in China, 1900); the French sinologist Edouard Chavannes' (1865-1918) *Mission Archéologique dans la Chine Septentrionale* (The Archaeological Mission in Northern China, 1909); and the German scholar Oskar Münsterberg's (1865-1920) *Chinesische Kunstgeschichte* (Chinese Art History, 1910-1912). Teng considered Hirth's book to be the most precise and penetrating foreign text dealing with art from the late Han (ca. 58 CE) to the Southern and Northern Dynasties. He saw Chavannes' work as a valuable non-Chinese reference concerning the Yungang Grottoes. Similarly, Münsterberg's study was a masterful work on art of the Tang and Song dynasties (Teng 1926a: 16, 19, 38). Teng Gu's recommendation of these volumes and his emphasis on them as foreign works suggest his close attention to Western achievements on Chinese art.

During the 1930s, Teng Gu's writings indicate that he consulted the latest foreign publications of archaeological investigations into Chinese art. Writing about Tang mural painting, he mentioned Sawamura Sentarō, whose work *Research on Oriental Art History* (*Tōyō bijutsushi no kenkyū*, 1932) published important mural fragments from Central

Asia. Teng also referred to an illustration of a Tang funerary object from *Tang-Plastik: chinesische Grabkeramik des VII. bis X. Jahrhunderts* (Tang Sculpture: Chinese Tomb Ceramics from the seventh to tenth Centuries, 1924) by Eduard Fuchs (1870-1940), the German historian, writer, and art collector (Teng 1934c). Meanwhile, he noted a number of images from Osvald Siren's *Chinese Paintings in American Collection* (1927) and *A History of Early Chinese Art: the Prehistoric and Pre-Han Periods* (1929), Otto Kummel's *Chinesische Bronzen* (Chinese Bronze, 1928), the French sinologist and historian Paul Pelliot's (1878-1945) *Les Grottes de Touen-houang* (The Dunhuang Grottoes, 1914-1924), and the Hungarian-British archaeologist Aurel Stein's (1862-1943) *Ruins of the Desert Cathay: Personal Narrative of Explorations in Central Asia and Westernmost China* (1912) (Teng 1935c, 1936).

Moreover, Teng Gu contributed three careful translations of Western works. In 1935, he published his translation of an English essay "From Northern China to the Danube" (1930) which originally appeared in *Ostasiatische Zeitschrift*. Nothing is known of this essay's author Zoltán de Takács, but his three-page article discusses six bronze objects from Northern China housed in the Francis Hopp Museum of Eastern Asiatic Arts in Budapest. Using ten illustrations, the author showed the affinity between the forms of these artworks and items ascribed to the Avar Periods (375-720 CE) which had been discovered in the Danube valley in present-day Hungary. Takács deduced that these objects represented a Chinese influence imported to Eastern European art, following the immigration of the Huns in the fourth century (Teng 1935d). Teng Gu was particularly interested in this kind of research on artistic diffusion. The detailed analysis of patterns evident in this article converged closely with the research methods that Teng adopted for pre-Tang decorative patterns on tiles, tomb stones and sculptures. He mentioned his translation again in another article "The Animal Patterns on Eave Tiles in the Southern Capital of Yan (Yan xiadu bangui wadang shang de shouxing wenshi)" to draw parallels between ancient Chinese art and ancient European art (Teng 1936).

In the same year, Teng Gu began to translate "Methode (Methodology)", the first part of Oscar Montelius' (1843-1921) book entitled *Die älteren Kulturperioden im Orient und in Europa* (Ancient Cultural Periods in the Orient and Europe, 1903). Montelius was a Swedish antiquarian and archaeologist whose primary contribution to scholarship was the development of a relative chronological dating method based on typology and named seriation. When no evidence for clear dates of archaeological findings can be traced, and scientific methods, such as carbon dating, cannot be applied, seriation is useful. When formulating an evolutionary framework of artefact forms, it helps to arrange objects in a relative chronological sequence. These objects are usually attributed to the same cultural

tradition or to comparable geographical regions. In this way, researchers can demonstrate a developmental sequence for the culture to which these items belong. The idea of evolution in human cultures influenced Montelius to elaborate this method of typology. For example, he arranged some unearthed Iron Age cloak pins in a developmental sequence. Montelius also established a concept of diffusion that helped to argue how certain characteristics of the early civilizations in the Near East had spread to Europe (Renfrew and Bahn 1996: 25, 34).

Teng Gu deliberately chose to translate this text in order to introduce Montelius' typological approach. Montelius provided detailed explanations for how to employ changes of patterns to date artefacts. Conscious of the difficulties in dating ancient objects recovered in China and the weaknesses in Chinese scholarship in relation to analyzing patterns, Teng believed that Montelius' theory could refine methodology for Chinese scholars to study ancient materials and relics. In his preface to the translated version, Teng also suggested five other treatises written by Montelius for Chinese scholars to consult. Most important were *Die Bronzezeit in Orient und Griechenland* (The Bronze Age in the Orient and Greece, 1890) and *Die vorklassische Chronologie Italiens* (The Pre-Classical Chronology of Italy, 1912). In his mind, these works provided the technique to help art historians scrutinize art pieces without corollary textual evidence. Teng Gu believed that Montelius' typological methodology brought a fresh impetus to the study of objects' shapes and decorative patterns in the history of art in China (Teng 1937b).

Teng Gu's most important translation is "Art History (Meishushi)", which became part of an anthology *German Academia during the Past Fifty Years (Wushinian lai de Deguo xueshu)* published by the Commercial Press in 1937 (Teng 1937a). The author of the original text, Adolph Goldschmidt (1863-1944), was a German art historian who specialized in medieval art. When Teng Gu studied at the University of Berlin, Goldschmidt was head of the art history department. This article introduced the German field of art history from the second half of the nineteenth century to the 1920s. At the beginning of the article, Goldschmidt specified three different approaches to art history: to treat art as a historical fact which was consistent with the methodology of history; to envision that the history of art exposed a unique development of forms (*Formnenentwicklung*), a phenomenon that required its own methodology; and to allow art history to function as an explanation of artworks to the general public, in order to facilitate their appreciation of art. The author moved on to three basic requirements for art historical research: a wide knowledge of all kinds of objects and their histories; a penetrating virtuosity trained by different experiences with objects; and a *Qualitätsgefühl* which Teng Gu translated as "an intuitive response to material (*zhigan*)". A perpetual direct observation of objects, Goldschmidt considered, would prepare a scholar to achieve all these requirements. He claimed that researchers

should take art history seriously and view it not as a leisure entertainment but as a scientific discipline. He applauded the institutional development of art history; especially in as far as it had overseen some technical improvements: the use of projectors to show images in art history courses and the dissemination of artworks through good-quality illustrations.

Goldschmidt went on to summarize the overall development of the discipline within the previous fifty years. He saw a transformation of emphasis from history to art and then back again to a slightly different conception of history. He listed eleven art historians from German-speaking countries as representatives of these three stages. He included Anton Springer (1825-1891), Carl Justi (1832-1912), Hermann Grimm (1828-1901), Jacob Burckhardt (1818-1897), and Henry Thode (1857-1920) in the first stage. According to Goldschmidt, these scholars either described an individual art master or an artistic school as the axis of their historical accounts. He suggested that the second stage, before the end of World War One, could be characterized by August Schmarsow (1853-1936), Heinrich Wölfflin, Alois Riegl (1858-1905), Franz Wickhoff (1853-1909), and Max Dvorak (1874-1921). His perception was that this group focused on art objects to narrate a history which “went beyond any individual artist (*chao geren*)”. He classified Max Dvorak’s research after World War One as a return to *Gesamtgeschichte* which Teng Gu interpreted as “an overall history (*quanbu de lishi*)”. Inclined to a cultural analysis containing literature, religion and social practices, art historical studies were then different from the first stage. Goldschmidt believed that the future of art history would be a formal analysis (*Formale Analyse*) within an approach that he termed “history of spirit” (*Geschichte des Geistes*). He admitted that some scholars, such as Georg Dehio (1850-1932), could not be positioned in any of the groups mentioned above, for Dehio’s work possessed characteristics from all three different stages. Ultimately, Goldschmidt urged art historians to create a field of art history whose primary value would be to inspire other disciplines of human knowledge.

Goldschmidt’s points were exactly those about which Teng was eager to inform his Chinese colleagues. However, Goldschmidt’s text was for a German audience familiar with the field of art history in Germany. Facing a Chinese reader with little background knowledge of the German art historical discipline, Teng Gu was forced to add several footnotes in his translation to aid the general reader’s comprehension. He made brief biographical notes on Goldschmidt, the author of the article, and on the eleven art historians mentioned in the article. He listed major publications by these twelve scholars and made a few concise remarks on their publications to lead his readers through the vast German field of art history. For example, he wrote that Anton Springer’s principal work on art *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte* (The Handbook of Art History) was quite popular at that time, but after several versions edited by different scholars, the original text produced in the 1880s no

longer survived. He confirmed for his readers the undeniable influence of Heinrich Wölfflin on the contemporary art history discipline. He thought that Wölfflin's treatises, for instance, *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (1915) and *Italien und das deutsche Formgefühl: die Kunst der Renaissance* (Italy and the German Sense of Forms: The Renaissance Art, 1931), should be compulsory reading for art historians and even for scholars of other disciplines.

Teng Gu provided his Chinese readers with plenty of supplementary sources because the original text was very succinct and abstract. Every one of the eleven art historians listed by Goldschmidt merited lengthy discussion, but Goldschmidt simply mentioned the name of each scholar and added no more than a sentence to identify them. A Chinese reader at that time was unlikely to know who these scholars were, and even less about what they had published. Thus, Teng recommended his readers consult extra readings by two German art historians: Ernst Heidrich's (1880-1914) *Beiträge zur Geschichte und Methode der Kunstgeschichte* (Dealing with the History and Method of Art History, 1917) and Walter Passarge's (1898-1958) *Die Philosophie der Kunstgeschichte in der Gegenwart* (The Philosophy of Art History of the Present, 1930). We can deduce, from all the information he supplied to Chinese readers that Teng Gu had an unprecedented acquaintance with contemporary German developments in art history. While other Chinese scholars still understood Western art historical studies superficially, Teng Gu was the first Chinese researcher—probably the only one in Republican China—to possess such a comprehensive knowledge of modern German scholarship.

Teng Gu did not limit his interests to the German academic world. He also took account of research on Chinese art in other European countries. For example, in 1933, Teng Gu published a Chinese article commenting on Herbert Read's (1893-1968) views of Chinese art. Another book by Read entitled *Art Now* was translated into Chinese by the writer and translator Shi Zhecun (1905-2003) in 1935. Read was an English poet and a critic of art and literature. He was one of Britain's most remarkable cultural theorists in the twentieth century, consistently advocating the position of avant-garde art in art circles. Teng Gu was impressed by *The Meaning of Art* (1931), in which he encountered Read's ideas on Chinese art. After translating the relevant sections into Chinese, Teng Gu responded with his own remarks.

He agreed with Read that the differences between Chinese, Ancient Greek, and Gothic art originated from their distinct attitudes towards the universe. According to Teng Gu's translation, Read argued that Ancient Greek artists rationally accepted and emotionally enjoyed the world around them, and that Gothic artists felt fearful in front of the religious world and worshipped unquestioningly. By contrast, Chinese people held, according to Read, a mysterious attitude towards the world around them. Unlike Ancient Greeks, they

accepted the world without pretending to know every part of it, and, unlike Europeans in the Gothic Age, they felt the mystery of the world without being frightened by it. Chinese thinking used what Teng interpreted from Read as a “natural instinct (*benxing*)”, with which to apprehend the world. Read believed that art in China represented this state of mind¹⁶.

However, Teng Gu disagreed with Read’s idea of Chinese art as one kind of art that transcended different nations. Read stated that Chinese art was “something more than national”(Read 1951: 76). Teng admitted that at an early historical stage, art in China had exchanged elements with foreign art, but after the Tang dynasty, Chinese art advanced in the direction of deepening Chineseness. He also disapproved of Read’s comment that Chinese art never “cultivated the grandiose”, especially since the achievements of architecture in China were apparently not as great as Chinese sculpture and painting. He thought that Read’s prejudice stemmed from the Western notion of architecture’s centrality. Read made an aesthetic judgement on Chinese buildings according to his appreciation of Greek temples and Gothic churches. According to Teng, Read ignored the native artistic values of Chinese architecture. Teng Gu also believed that Read overlooked the close connection between three forms of the fine arts (architecture, sculpture, and painting) in China. Although two of these three—architecture and sculpture—are not canonical Chinese art forms, Teng identified examples of a Chinese association between these forms.

Moreover, Teng Gu rejected Read’s opinion that religion dominated Chinese art. He saw a Confucian impact on the Han dynasty, and also a Buddhist influence on the Six Dynasties. But for the remaining periods, he believed that the religious stimuli to create art were relatively weak. Teng stated that Confucianism and Buddhism were not the exclusive forces driving the development of art in China. Daoism and Zen were also important. For him, these ideologies no longer belonged to the category of religion after the Six Dynasties. Rather, Daoist and Zen thought in the hands of successive scholar-elites became a powerful weapon against the practices of Confucianism and Buddhism. Teng Gu suggested that they helped literati art—the dominant social category of art in China—to pursue the ideal beauty in society (Teng 1933b).

Reception of the discipline of Western art history and its assumptions

Michael Podro has traced the origins of modern Western art history to its philosophical and aesthetic roots in the late eighteenth century (Podro 1982). Remarkably, Teng Gu’s own

¹⁶ Surprisingly, I cannot find such an account by Read in the 1950 edition of *The Meaning of Art*. One possibility is that the original 1931 version contained these ideas. It is certainly intriguing that the points with which Teng Gu disagreed were kept by Read in the later edition while the ideas with which Teng concurred had disappeared two decades later.

intellectual career resonates closely with this Western epistemological development. His concerns with philosophy and aesthetics in his early years facilitated his subsequent art historical studies. Absorbing some Western philosophical and aesthetic theories in Japan, he established his opinions on art studies, art history, and the relationship between art and culture in the 1920s.

In one of his earliest academic articles “Croce’s New Theory on Aesthetics (Keluosi meixue shang de xin xueshuo)” (1921), Teng Gu mentioned the Italian aesthetician and philosopher Benedetto Croce’s division of knowledge. According to Teng, Croce categorized human knowledge into two forms: intuitive knowledge and logical knowledge. Teng Gu developed this further to explain that intuitive knowledge was a kind of knowledge about each individual, the product of imagination; while logical knowledge was a kind of knowledge about the relationship between individuals, the product of concepts. Croce believed that intuitive knowledge was an activation of beauty, which lay the foundation for logical knowledge (Teng 1921).

Teng paid further attention to the classification of knowledge in the years following 1921. In 1922, he published an essay entitled “What does *Kulturwissenschaft* mean? (Hewei wenhua kexue?)”. Quoting from Tanabe Hajime, Teng constructed a brief history of the Western classification of knowledge from the seventeenth century onwards. Francis Bacon’s (1561-1626) three categories of History, Poetry, and Philosophy endured until the beginning of the nineteenth century, and only then did the division between natural science and humanities operate decisively. Teng Gu illustrated the separation of natural science and humanities with a comprehensive classification of knowledge suggested by the German psychologist Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920). Then he moved on to the main target of his enquiry—the ideas of the Baden School (the Southwest School). This represented a group of German thinkers among the first generation of the 1860s Neo-Kantian movement, which included Wilhelm Windelband (1848-1915) and Heinrich Rickert (1863-1936). In his view, the classification established by the Baden School inaugurated a new era after Wundt. Teng suggested that the starting point of this new classification was to use research methodology as a guide to classify different fields of science. In this account, the term *Kulturwissenschaft* (cultural science) replaced *Geisteswissenschaft* (humanities) as a scholarly enquiry different from *Naturwissenschaft* (natural science). Teng Gu focused on Heinrich Rickert, whose theory, Teng considered, was the standard thought of *Kulturwissenschaft*. Rickert’s *Kulturwissenschaft* emphasized the cultural value (*Kulturwert*), which was absent in natural science. Teng realized that Rickert’s *Kulturwissenschaft* was a cultural science of history drawn from the ideas of German historicism. After setting forth opinions opposed to Rickert’s classification, Teng Gu highlighted the antithesis between *Kulturwissenschaft*

and *Naturwissenschaft* which had been widely accepted in Western institutions. For him, however, the debate on the position of historical science remained unresolved in Western scholarship. At the end of his article, Teng listed two revised versions of Rickert's classification system in Japan, presented respectively by Tanabe Hajime and Suzuki Munetada (1881-1963), the philosopher and scholar of religious studies. In their versions, history became a branch of cultural science (Teng 1922b). Teng Gu did not directly explain the relationship between these Western theories and Chinese art. At this stage he attempted to draw a clear diagram of different academic studies from which he could figure out his major interests.

Teng Gu's next step was to locate art studies in the classification of human knowledge. In his 1922 article "The Dawn of Culture (Wenhua zhi shu)", he established a close connection between art and culture. Teng developed this essay from a talk given at the summer school of the Shanghai Art Academy in 1922. He told his students that *Kunsttrieb* (art motivation or drive), as Friedrich Schiller termed it, was an essential part of culture. Taking Ancient Greek culture as an example, he pointed out the contribution of Ancient Greek art to the glory of its culture (Teng 1922a). In "The Origin of Culture in the Perspective of Art Studies (Yishuxue shang suojian de wenhua zhi qiyuan)" (1923), Teng Gu repeated the crucial role of art in culture, elucidating how *Kunstwissenschaft* (art studies) occupied a position in cultural science. Referring to the German aesthete and art historian Konrad Lange (1855-1921), Teng differentiated *Kunstwissenschaft* from aesthetics. In his mind, aesthetic research dealt with both art and natural beauty (*Das Schöne in der Kunst und Natur*) while art studies stressed purely human art production. Influenced by the German scholar Ernst Grosse (1862-1927), he envisaged *Kunstwissenschaft* as an independent discipline composed of *Kunstphilosophie* (art philosophy) and *Kunstgeschichte* (art history). His *Kunstphilosophie*, including *Kunsttheorie* (art theory), emphasized the essence and value of art. In Teng's view, the main focus of art history was a series of historical researches on art to illuminate the transition of time and religious thought. He believed that, when treating the historical facts as part of a philosophical investigation, *Kunstwissenschaft* became a branch of "scientific research (*kexue de yanjiu*)". Thus, he positioned *Kunstwissenschaft* in the category of *Kulturwissenschaft*. In his view, because art was an essential part of culture, the study of cultural history should always take *Kunsttrieb* into consideration (Teng 1923d).

Furthermore, Teng Gu discussed what ought to be an appropriate methodology for art studies. He thought that applying scientific methods from different fields was crucial to art studies. He was interested in employing an ethnological method (*ethnologische Methode*) in research, in order to comprehend the arts of various ethnic groups at different times. What

he claimed to be an *ethnologische Methode* was actually the use of cultural anthropological findings in the context of “primitive tribes”. He gave an example of a comparative study between aboriginal art and artworks produced by children. He thought that this method was helpful for the study of prehistoric art and for the study of the origins of art (Teng 1923d). In his 1924 essay “Art and Science (Yishu yu kexue)”, Teng Gu demonstrated several German scholars’ ideas on art studies, including the previously mentioned Konrad Lange, Ernst Grosse, Max Dessoir, and the philosopher and art critic Konrad Fiedler (1841-1859). He noted that although they defined aesthetics and art studies differently, most of them attributed the methods for art studies to the methodology of cultural science. He admitted that beauty and art could be analyzed by logic, but the analytical approach learned from natural science was not sufficient to discuss art. He embraced the “hyper-logical stage” of beauty specified out by James Baldwin (1861-1934), the American philosopher and psychologist. He agreed that art was not anti-logical, but at the same time art could not be restricted by logic. In his mind, it was obvious that the analysis of art should adopt the philosophical method of cultural studies. In a derivation of Heinrich Rickert’s proposition, Teng supposed that natural science studies would usually employ the method of generalization to discover universal principles. Cultural studies, he assumed, placed great emphasis on the heterogeneous elements of studied targets in order to individualize each object. He suggested that art in pursuit of freedom and creativity could not be judged on universal principles by its viewers. Rather, the standards of art judgment should vary from case to case (Teng 1924).

Existing histories of Western art share a set of assumptions concerning questions of causality and evidence (Preziosi 1998: 13-16). These assumptions, which concern time, place, and genealogical development, are the fundamental principles of Western art history. Starting from his years in Japan, Teng Gu’s works implicitly or explicitly showed his understanding of these assumptions.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Chinese scholars on art, for example Pan Tianshou and Yu Jianhua, began to realize that an artwork was representative of its original time and place. Most histories of Chinese art produced in the 1920s and ’30s introduced the social and cultural background of artists and art production before going into detailed accounts of art. For instance, Chen Shizeng’s lecture notes published as *A History of Chinese Painting* (1925) devoted one chapter at the beginning of every period of painting to an overview of the cultural context in which Chinese painting was created (Chen 1925). Pan Tianshou stated in his book *A History of Chinese Painting* (1926): “Literature and painting both represent the thought of a nation” (Pan 1926a: 47). In the eyes of these writers, an art object was a product of a historical background, which usually included social, political,

economic and religious conditions. They were clearly influenced by Japanese scholarship on art at that time. For the late Meiji Japanese intellectuals, Hegelian *Zeitgeist* (spirit of the age) provided a way to establish a history of the Japanese nation (Tanaka 1994: 8-9). Chinese researchers in late Qing and Republican China adopted this Japanese assimilation of Hegel's idea. Hegelian philosophy indicated a goal for Chinese intellectuals to record the spirit of an age through art¹⁷. In their mind, biographies of individual art creators were no longer sufficient for a historical narrative of art production. Accounts of the contemporary milieu of both a maker and his or her creation would help to explain artworks. Thus, these art historical writers interpreted the larger contexts of artworks to reveal how and why artistic production had changed.

Teng Gu was one of these pioneers. *A Brief History of Chinese Art* (1926) was his history of Chinese national spirit in art. Teng's narrative pattern and research methodology in this book possessed "the main characteristics of German scholarship in Japan" (Chen 2000: 215). In *A Brief History of Chinese Art*, Teng Gu suggested that national spirit was "the flesh and blood (*xue rou*)" of Chinese art, and, in a striking pursuit of the same metaphor, he suggested that foreign thinking might be nutritious to the development of Chinese art. He termed the Wei, Jin, and Six Dynasties' centuries to be "an era of cross-fertilization (*hunjiao shidai*)", which he considered as the most glorious period in the history of Chinese art. He reasoned that the special spirit of the Chinese nation at that time learned from a foreign Buddhist culture, and, in turn, demonstrated a vigorous creativity. Meanwhile, Teng considered the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties to be "a period of stagnation (*chenzhi shidai*)", caused by a loss of Chinese spirit (Teng 1926a: 15, 20, 39, 50). At this stage, the influence of this notion of "spirit", which he had grasped from German thinking in Japan, helped Teng Gu to shape a history of Chinese art. He built the initial scheme of an art historical narrative according to the idea of national spirit. Still, many details of his intended history of Chinese art were missing. His 1926 text continued to rely on a number of huge, vague, and abstract terms without specific references, such as "foreign culture (*wailai wenhua*)", "painting style of the Western Regions (*xiyu huafeng*)", and "national style (*minzu fengge*)". Teng was faced with the problem of how to prove his postulation by a detailed analysis of artworks and artists. Only after his direct contact with German scholarship in the 1930s, did he find a powerful tool of style analysis to fill the gaps in his framework of Chinese art history.

¹⁷ The Chinese introduction of Hegelian philosophy began in 1903, but Hegel was less popular than Kant, and his original works were first translated into Chinese only in the 1930s. Despite the lack of direct evidence for Hegel's influence on art history in China, I believe it is highly probable that Chinese art historians' knew of the Japanese art historical version of Hegel's theories.

Absorption of Wölfflin's style analysis

As Michael Podro has noted, the critical strengths of Heinrich Wölfflin's *The Principles of Art History* render it an irreplaceable model for the analysis of painting (Podro 1982: 98). Wölfflin's historical system of successive styles is exactly what traditional Chinese scholarship on the history of painting lacked. It is not surprising, therefore, that it was attractive to Teng Gu. He recognized that Wölfflin was a noted authority in the modern German field of art history who concentrated on style analysis (Teng 1931b: 77). Teng applied the same method in the 1930s, hoping to elicit a breakthrough in his narrative of Chinese art: basically, that in terms of style, authenticity was not crucial to Chinese art history.

In his 1931 essay "An Investigation into the History of Academic Style Painting and Literati Painting (Guanyu yuantihua he wenrenhua zhi shi de kaocha)", Teng Gu cited the German writer on art Wilhelm Hausenstein's (1882-1957) definition of style: "Style (also translated as "mode" or "form"), strictly speaking, is a synthesis that one form integrates from any other one"(Teng 1931b: 76). Accepting this concept, Teng established his notion of style in the history of Chinese painting.

The impact of the term "style" on Teng Gu is also evident in his 1934 account of Chinese mural painting (Teng 1934c). The title of his article contains a rather jarring idiom "A Brief Investigation of Tang-Style Mural Paintings (Tangdai shi bihua kaolüe)". The additional "style (*shi*)" in the title reflects his effort to draw on such Western terms as "Romanesque" and "Baroque". Borrowing the Chinese translation of "Romanesque (*luoma shi*)" and "Baroque (*baluoke shi*)", he established his idea of Tang style. He stated clearly that Tang-style artworks were not necessarily products of the Tang dynasty. As he wrote in the essay, Teng viewed more than twenty mural paintings belonging to two private collectors in Nanjing. It was unclear to him where and how these paintings had been discovered. Teng Gu thought that they were much likely to be Tang mural paintings based upon his understandings of Tang style. He analyzed the line management (*Linienführung*), colour, human representation, and subject-matter in these paintings to locate similarities between them and other existing paintings commonly accepted as Tang products. Only after an attentive study of every posture of each figure along with the various decorations on them and the objects held in their hands, did he dare to propose a definite conclusion for these paintings' style. In fact, it was unimportant to Teng whether these paintings were the products of the Tang dynasty. He believed, nevertheless, that their style was close to the painting style of the Tang dynasty (Teng 1934c).

The search for a principle to "account for the transformation of style" remained crucial for Wölfflin throughout his career (Podro 1982: 100). Teng Gu too attempted to

figure out the style transformation in the case of Chinese painting. In his introduction to *A History of Painting from Tang to Song Times*, he used the term *Stilentwicklung* and interpreted it as “the development/transformation of style (*fengge fazhan/zhuanhuan*)”. He considered the development of style in artworks to be the most important element of a history of art. He believed that the emergence, development, and transformation of one style was determined by its inner impetus, and that it was also influenced by its social context. He did not believe that a dynastic change in a history of politics caused the transformation of a style (Teng 1931b: 65-67, 1933a: 2). His discussion of style development stressed the Tang and Song centuries.

The middle Tang period labelled as “High Tang” had long been considered the most prosperous period of Chinese art by Chinese intellectuals. Teng Gu cited Su Dongpo’s claim of unparalleled achievement in Tang art, including poetry, prose, calligraphy, and painting. In Teng’s opinion, the prosperity of the middle Tang contained special significance in the history of Chinese painting. He reiterated two epoch-making changes in the middle Tang period. During the flourishing years of the Tang dynasty, landscape became the dominant composition of painting, and, allegedly, an indigenous Chinese style replaced the foreign styles from Ancient India and Central Asia in Buddhist painting. Since then landscape painting had become the most important art genre in China; and art in China developed its own style rather than following Gandharan or Gupta styles. These two aspects, Teng envisioned, heralded a new era in the development of Chinese painting (Teng 1931b: 65, 1933a: 23). Teng’s narrative suggested that following the establishment of an indigenous style during the middle Tang period, later generations of artists experienced the weakness of this style, but subsequently improved it, and brought it to perfection. The crucial factors, he considered, were techniques in brush and ink as well as in the arrangement of painting space. He listed these new skills as bold stroke (*tubi*), ink wash (*pomo*), and balance between brush and ink (*bimo jiangu*) (Teng 1933a: 39).

More innovatively, Teng Gu described various Tang painting styles with Western art historical notions. A comparison between his works and one influential contemporary text by the Japanese scholar Kinbara Seigo discloses Teng’s direct application of some of Wölfflin’s concepts to the Chinese field of art history.

According to Fu Baoshi’s 1935 translation of Kinbara Seigo’s work, Kinbara used three main diagnostic tools—line (*xian*), colour (*se*), and ink (*mo*)—in analysing different paintings. Clinging to these traditional terms in Chinese painting, such as raindrop texture stroke (*yudian cun*) and axe-cut texture stroke (*fupi cun*), Kinbara traced a systematic change in various painters. He reckoned that the artist Wu Daozi’s (active ca. 710-760) paintings showed the characteristics of line in Tang painting; the painter Li Sixun’s (651-716)

artworks represented the feature of colour; and the poet and painter Wang Wei's (699-759) art indicated the quality of ink (Kinbara 1935: 29). Kinbara also traced the changes in painting lines as the art historical development of Chinese painting from the fourth century to the first half of the thirteenth century. He posited three stages of lines in Chinese painting: the Six Dynasties, the Tang dynasty, and the Song dynasty. He thought that Gu Kaizhi's "iron-wire line (*tiexian miao*)" was representative of the Six Dynasties and envisaged that Gu made no change in speed and pressure from the start to finish when he painted a line. Kinbara positioned Wu Daozi's lines at the centre of Tang painting. He analyzed a variation in the velocity of Wu's movement when Wu drew a line, which resulted in the shape of a line being altered at different parts of it. He discovered changes in both speed and pressure in lines in Song painting. Song painters, especially those who belonged to the Northern School (*beizong*), he suggested, sometimes pressed their brushes hard in the process of painting a line; yet at other times they lifted their brushes slightly. Consequently, these painters created a "pressing-lifting (*ya ca*)" effect in their lines (Kinbara 1935: 13-14). Kinbara still employed traditional Chinese terms of painting techniques to express his ideas. These terms were based on empirical experience of Chinese artists. Comparatively, Teng Gu's accounts of Tang and Song painting were more radical. Like Kinbara, Teng noted the differences in line and colour between Wu Daozi and Li Sixun. However, he not only quoted important ancient accounts of these Chinese notions, but he also borrowed terms from contemporary Western art historical theories to demonstrate the differences between various Tang painting styles. In this way, Teng started to change the long-fixed vocabulary of Chinese art and to renew the lexicon with specific Western terms.

One extraordinary example is Teng's usage of one of Wölfflin's five opposite pairs *Zeichnerisch* (linear) and *Malerisch* (painterly). As early as 1931, Teng Gu began to import new terms for Chinese painting. He mentioned this pair of terms "*Zeichnerisch*" and "*Malerisch*" in his essay entitled "An Investigation into the History of Academic Style Painting and Literati Painting" (1931). He referred to Wölfflin's *The Principles of Art History*, in which Wölfflin portrayed the style of the German painter and printmaker Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528) to be "*Zeichnerisch*" and the style of the Dutch painter Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn (1606-1669) to be "*Malerisch*". In the context of Tang painting, Teng translated *Zeichnerisch* into *xiede* to address Wu Daozi's painting style; and he used *Malerisch* as *huade* to define Li Sixun's painting style. According to Teng, Wu Daozi's amazing brush work demonstrated the linear style while Li Sixun's brilliant usage of golden and green colours fitted the painterly style. Teng Gu considered the painting style of Wang Wei, to be linear as well (Teng 1931b: 68-71).

In *A History of Painting from Tang to Song Times* (1933), Teng Gu used different

notions to characterize these early Tang painting masters. He applied three terms to distinguish their style: Wu as “bold (*haoshuang de*)”; Li as “ornamental (*zhuangshi de*)”; Wang as “lyric (*shuqing de*)”. For him, these were three equally significant approaches in Chinese painting. He offered no relatively superior or inferior judgement for any of them (Teng 1933a: 36).

The aforementioned accounts of Tang and Song art exploited a biographical engagement with art history. In distinction to this period of his work, in his “The Characteristics of Tang Art (Tangdai yishu de tezheng)” (1935) Teng Gu no longer fixed his discussion on well-known artists. Instead, he added more examples from both sculptures and recently found paintings by unknown artists, such as mural paintings discovered in the Dunhuang caves. Meanwhile, Teng recognized a change in Chinese painting style of the Tang period, a shift that he attributed to the import of the painting skill he termed as “*chiaroscuro (ming'an fa)*” from Ancient India. He still described this process of change as one from the linear to the painterly, but his Chinese translations for both “linear” and “painterly” differed from those in his 1931 article. Now, he introduced “linear” and “painterly” respectively as “*xianmiao de*” and “*xuanran de*”. He demonstrated more caution in his application of these two formal categories than he had done previously. He explained in his endnotes that these two notions contained special connotations that could be traced in Heinrich Wölfflin’s book *The Principles of Art History*. He wrote:

“The German art historian Wölfflin has pointed out the difference between art in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, [and] he has referred to it as a change from ‘the linear’ to ‘the painterly’. The linear usually pursues the clarity in the edges of forms, while the painterly dispenses with the boundaries, and adopts blurred edges (see his book *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe*. München. 1915). Of course, my borrowing of these two terms here is not so strict. What I mean is that stressing the lines in order to represent the clarity of forms can be considered as the ‘linear’; that emphasizing the colours and applying chiaroscuro in order to form the depth of objects can be considered as the ‘painterly’.”

He exemplified his claim in Wu Daozi’s painting. In his opinion, Wu was the vital link in the progression from the linear to the painterly. From the painting *Maharaja Deva of Child-Bearing (Songzi tianwang tu)*, attributed to Wu, Teng claimed that Wu’s brush lines were not simply the edges of forms; instead they expressed power and tension beyond the bodies and the clothes of human figures. He also mentioned pre-modern Chinese texts on art, such as *Painting History (Huashi)* by the calligrapher, painter, and connoisseur Mi Fu (1052-1107), from which he noted that the figures painted by Wu Daozi had a three-dimensional impression like sculptures. Both visual and textual evidence convinced Teng Gu that Wu Daozi represented a trend towards Wölfflin’s “painterly”. He believed that the

change in lines was part of the important development which could not be neglected in the history of Chinese painting. Nevertheless, he admitted that under the technical conditions of painting in China, in which the aesthetic appeal of lines tends to be paramount, painting in China could not completely transform from the linear to the painterly. The thorough transition between the linear and the painterly, which meant eliminating the Chinese brush style, could never happen in China. Teng Gu explicitly stated that his application of these formal categories was based on a few “symptoms (*zhengzhao*)”. Its correctness would need further confirmation, and would depend on more visual materials to furnish the necessary evidence of future studies (Teng 1935c).

Exploring the style development in late Song painting, Teng Gu again translated Wölfflin's words on the Italian Renaissance from *Die Klassische Kunst* (Classic Art; 1924) into Chinese:

“Usually, when a new style appears, people think that various objects which compose a painting change. However, viewing carefully, [we find that] not only the architecture in the background or the decorations vary, but also the postures of figures are different from former times. Only the new expression reflected by the depiction of the human body and its movement is the core of a new style. Thus, the notion of style carrying this special connotation, compared with its usual usage, is more significant.” (Teng 1933a: 92)¹⁸

His use of Wölfflin's style transformation was important to his interpretation of Chinese painting development. It helped him to explain the core of style development in court painting of the late Song period. He realized the significant style transformation represented by ruled-line painting, which Teng called “*gongshi louge hua*” (commonly known as *jiehua*). In his opinion, this kind of court painting not only contained architecture drawn with the aid of a ruler, but also included mountains, rivers, plants, rocks, and human figures drawn without a ruler. In particular, he pointed out the style transformation of ruled-line painting in depictions of court beauties. The innovative ideas in the representation of court ladies' deportment and movement appeared in late Song painting. According to Teng, this improvement which had changed court painting had not been given enough credit by traditional Chinese scholars who despised ruled-line painting. Teng Gu emphasized

¹⁸ I located this paragraph in the 1968 edition of Wölfflin's *Die Klassische Kunst* as follows: “*Wenn man sagt, es sei ein neuer Stil emporgekommen, so denkt man immer zuerst an eine Umformung der tektonischen Dinge. Sieht man aber näher zu, so ist es nicht nur die Umgebung des Menschen, die große und kleine Architektur, nicht nur sein Gerät und seine Kleidung, die eine Wandlung durchgemacht haben, der Mensch selbst nach seiner Körperlichkeit ist ein anderer geworden, und eben in der neuen Empfindung seines Körpers und in der neuen Art, ihn zu tragen und zu bewegen, steckt der eigentliche Kern eines Stiles. Dabei ist dem Begriff freilich mehr Gewicht zu geben, als er heutzutage hat.*” (Wölfflin 1968 (1924): 253)

that change within this overlooked category of painting showed the key elements in style transformation (Teng 1931b: 75-77, 1933a: 91-93).

Teng Gu's practice of Chinese art history followed the ideas of Wölfflin closely. Wölfflin's approach was different from those of the pure formalists, because he linked style to history and culture (Adams 1996: 32). Teng, too, saw style as a fashion advocated by the taste of a whole society rather than a creation of an individual. Embracing Wölfflin, Teng Gu formulated a narrative of style to analyse a history of art in China which was closely related to a history of Chinese culture.

2.4 Originality in Chinese Art History

Promoting a history of artworks

Internalizing Japanese and Western art historical methods, Teng Gu made great efforts to write *Kunstgeschichte* (a history of artworks) rather than *Kunstlergeschichte* (a history of artists). Throughout his entire book of *A History of Painting from Tang to Song Times* (1933), he stressed the significance of *Kunstgeschichte*. He began the book with a statement on the importance of original artworks:

“A researcher on painting history, no matter whether he takes the positivist position or the ideological position, should draw conclusions from artworks. It is the correct direction. Unfortunately, Chinese writers of painting history through the ages have not taken this correct route. Nevertheless, they are blameless. China has lacked great museums to systematically display artworks from successive ages for viewers' appreciation and research. Also private collections dispersed at different locations are guarded in secret. Under these circumstances, scholars have no opportunity to conduct their research. As a result, they cannot produce a satisfactory history of painting.”

Focusing on art products, Teng fully acknowledged the difficulty in style analysis due to the lack of visual images and authentic works. Printed reproductions were not sufficient for detailed research. However, he determined to start his transformation of Chinese painting history using what he called “ice-cold written records” and reaching out to real art objects (Teng 1933a: 1-2).

Teng Gu urged his readers to treat visual evidence seriously. He circulated information on recent publications which reproduced paintings, such as picture albums about sculptures and wall paintings from Dunhuang. He hoped that a reader could look at these sources and gain some visual impression of painting in Tang and Song times. He also recorded the locations of all the extant paintings that he knew of. He noted in his account of the figure painter Yan Liben (ca. 600-673) that Yan's scroll *Painting of Emperors* (*Diwang*

tu) was then owned by Liang Hongzhi. Similarly, he recorded that the same artist's *Painting of Landscape (Shanshui tu)* was held by Guan Mianjun (Teng 1933a: 19). Even in the case of paintings which he had no opportunity to view, he informed his readers of their probable location. For example, he cited Luo Zhenyu to state that *Portrait of Maharaja Deva (Tianwang tu)* by Yuchi Yiseng (7th century), the early Tang painter, once in the hands of the Qing politician and collector Duan Fang (1861-1911), was now in America (Teng 1933a: 21). This awareness of China's cultural heritage in an international setting was new.

In his accounts of works of art, in cases where he had seen a painting before, Teng Gu described as many details of the painting as he could. For instance, he provided a careful depiction of *Admonitions of the Court Instructress* picture scroll (*Nüshi zhen tujuan*). He had probably seen reproductions of this painting if not the authentic image before. He was not concerned whether it was painted by Gu Kaizhi or not. He was more concerned with arguing that it was the only visual evidence of a fourth- and fifth-century style of Chinese painting. Teng highlighted the figures in the painting. He considered that the painted style in the faces of the court instructress had been developed by later artists into portraits of *bodhisattvas*. He adored the smooth lines representing drapery, which he claimed provided musical harmony for the painting surface. He saw no merits in other aspects. He disliked the stiffness of objects in the bedroom scene of the painting, which he noted had awkward shapes. He pointed out the disproportion between animals, mountains, and human figures in the mountain and hunter scene (Teng 1933a: 13-14).

When no actual paintings were available to him, Teng Gu was forced to cite previous comments from different Chinese treatises. In such cases, he always reminded his readers of his reluctance to use these textual sources. He stated that most paintings during the period from the fifth century to the beginning of the seventh century no longer existed. He stressed that it was difficult to deduce the painting history of this period. He had no choice but to devise a brief outline of the painting development drawing entirely on textual documents (Teng 1933a: 14). When referring to earlier written records, Teng Gu maintained a distance from them. In a typically critical attitude, after citing records on the painter Zhan Ziqian (mid-late 6th century), he claimed that he did not trust the ambiguous approval of Zhan by earlier generations of Chinese critics. Since none of Zhan's works had been handed down, Teng could not grasp the meaning of comments that claimed "Brush touch is full of emotions to its object, [and] the completeness is amazing" (Teng 1933a: 17). In the case of Wang Wei, Teng Gu suggested that the influential art critic Dong Qichang (1555-1636) and his followers had exaggerated Wang's achievement in painting. He did not deny that a poetic flavour in Wang Wei's painting might have existed, but he doubted the technical invention by Wang in brush and ink that later enthusiasts claimed. Teng proposed that from

the painting *The Snowy Landscape* (*Jiangshan xueji tu*), traditionally attributed to Wang, the artist had not invented “texture-ink (*xuandan fa*)” but remained at the stage of “outline drawing (*gouzhuo*)”. Teng Gu suggested that art historians should distinguish “excessive flatteries” from “penetrating judgment” (Teng 1933a: 35-36).

Teng Gu professed that the transformation from a history of artists to a history of artworks in Chinese art history would not be easy. He declared that even in Western scholarship it took time for such an essential change to happen. Given the various conditions in Chinese academia, Teng believed that it was nigh on impossible for him to accomplish a history of artworks (Teng 1933a: 39). To promote such an art historical approach, Teng was eager to discover more visual materials. This is the major reason why he shifted his attention to artistic materials in several archaeological findings during the 1930s.

After his return from Europe, Teng Gu turned to some relics from the Han and Tang periods for archaeological research. He was keen on acquiring as much visual evidence as possible for his historical accounts. He produced several essays on decorative patterns in tombs or on tiles. Since there was no way to ascertain who the creators of these patterns were, Teng focused solely on the pictorial aspect and its formal analysis. In his mind, style analysis was a powerful means of dealing with a tremendous number of Chinese artworks whose creators were unknown or uncertain, a fact that had previously disqualified these objects from any analytical treatment.

In his 1936 essay “The Animal Patterns on Eave Tiles in the Southern Capital of Yan”, Teng Gu analyzed decorative patterns on tiles discovered in the former southern capital of the State of Yan (roughly equivalent to Hebei province) during the Warring States period. Teng chose fifty samples with clear patterns from a few hundred Yan tiles. He photographed them and made rubbings of them, before dividing the patterns on these tiles into seven large categories and subsequently into sixteen sub-categories. He explored the origin and development of these decorative patterns, comparing them with the patterns on bronze vessels. In accounting for his decision to bring these two kinds of seemingly incompatible art production together, Teng Gu acknowledged the huge material differences between bronzes and tiles, citing also production procedures, function, and value. However, he argued, that since he could obtain no other ancient tiles with decorative patterns, he had no comparative recourse other than bronze vessels. He focused on the motif of *taotie*, a set of animal features which had long been a theriomorphic design on different media, including bronze and jade. Analyzing the horns, foreheads, eyebrows, eyes, noses, wings, and feet of *taotie* on different pieces, he suggested that, like the *taotie* pattern on bronze vessels, the same pattern had been stylized to its symmetrical extreme on these tiles. On the other hand, unlike on bronze vessels, it had lost its fierce expression, which meant

that it became purely decorative and without religious connotation. He moved on to show that there was no influence from Scythian-Siberian zoomorphic patterns on the Yan tiles. Believing that the Scythian-Siberian influence on Chinese art dated to the Han dynasty, Teng suggested that the Yan tiles were produced later than the early bronze items of the Spring and Autumn period and earlier than objects from the Han dynasty. He therefore dated these Yan tiles to the Warring States period (Teng 1936).

Adopting the same method, Teng Gu investigated Han tomb sculpture and stone carving as well as sculptures in the tombs of the Six Dynasties (Teng 1934d, 1935b, 1937c). These valuable visual materials and his preliminary examination positioned him to write a promising new history of artworks in China, an ambition which his early death precluded.

Challenging some conventional beliefs

Teng Gu disregarded the traditional meanings of literati painting, which he termed scholar-bureaucrats' painting (*shidafu hua*). He summed up three different aims of literati painting commonly exploited to narrate the history of Chinese painting: 1) literati painting distinguished the literati as creators of painting in distinction to artisans who followed workshop instructions; 2) literati painting defined painting as a form of recreation for the literati; 3) literati painting adopted the subject of landscape in order to develop schools, such as the famous the Southern and Northern schools (*nanbei zong*). Teng took pains to avoid any of these topics, especially the third one which he considered an invention by Ming scholars purely to promote their own art theories. In fact, he proposed that all painters of the past who had left their names in history belonged to the literati group. He attributed the development in Chinese ink painting after the middle Tang period to the literati who struggled against the shackles imposed upon them by religion or political control (Teng 1933a: 71-72). The differences in style between various examples of literati painting were caused by the different personalities and lifestyles of the literati. His examples included those who were actively involved with social issues, and others who preferred the life of a recluse (Teng 1933a: 80). These diverse lifestyles created distinct tastes for literati painting. Using the same logic, he proposed that catering to court taste was the origin of the academic style in Chinese painting. In his opinion, this academic style fully developed into an independent style of its own in the Southern Song dynasty (1127-1279). He replaced the term “academic style (*yuantì*)” with “pavilion style (*guāngē tí*)” because he felt that the bias contained in “academic style”, which had been misused for so long, was no longer apt for a more objective rationalization of historical painting experience (Teng 1933a: 88-89, 109-10).

Teng Gu realized that the Ming separation of the Southern and Northern Schools

was not a historical depiction of the real situation. According to Teng, this division was first proposed by the painter Mo Shilong (1537-1587). Dong Qichang accepted this claim and promoted it in his writing. Both theorists separated Chinese painting from the Tang dynasty into the Southern School whose founder was Wang Wei and the Northern School whose founder was Li Sixun. Teng Gu's critique of this claim was based upon the fact that during the Tang and Song centuries, an absolute division between the Southern and Northern Schools simply did not exist. According to him, Wang and Li's styles were not opposed to each other. Even in the Song period, the academic style emerged as one branch of literati painting and enriched the styles of literati painting (Teng 1933a: 6-7). For instance, according to traditional views, Mi Fu was considered to be an artist with a strong preference for the Southern School tradition. However, Teng pointed out that Mi also practiced coloured landscape painting which possessed a more realistic style (Teng 1933a: 97). Furthermore, Teng Gu strongly disagreed with any proposition to place one school over another. He suggested that the Northern School, which had been equated with more craftsmanship, was actually as full of literati spirit as the Southern School. Teng uses Zhao Boju (1119-1185) as an example to illustrate this revision. Zhao was representative of the academic painters at the Southern Song court, and Teng Gu cited the promoter of the Southern School Dong Qichang's admiration for Zhao. Dong had praised Zhao's meticulous fine brushwork as harmonious with a literati spirit. In Teng's eyes, not just Zhao, but all technically competent court painters were heir to literati painting (Teng 1933a: 97-99). He realized that Dong Qichang's authoritative proposition closed the options for alternative ideas to develop Chinese painting history.

In the traditional narratives of Chinese painting, the painting masters in the early years of the Tang dynasty were considered as both the creators and unassailable paradigms of the Chinese painting tradition. The later generations were described as followers and imitators. Teng Gu had his own opinion. He agreed that these early masters were the creators, but he did not believe in their paradigmatic status. Their followers not only imitated their styles, but also improved these styles and even gradually generated new styles. In this sense, he imagined that it was difficult to affirm the superiority of artists in the first half of the Tang dynasty. He asserted a claim that no Chinese scholar had dared before: painting from the late Tang period was superior to the early Tang dynasty. He stated that late Tang painting enriched every part of the style constructed during the previous ages. He believed that the art production from the Tang to Song centuries moved forward towards an ideal state of perfection (Teng 1933a: 39, 46, 53). Teleology of this nature was a striking departure from the usual views of the past.

Teng Gu was opposed to two standard structures in the history of painting, namely

the dynastic periodization, and the diagnostic isolation of paintings according to long-established categories of content. In his view, style changes should not be coeval with dynastic substitution (Teng 1933a: 2). He used the painting style from the Five Dynasties to the early Song period as an example. Teng maintained that the western area of Sichuan and the eastern zone of the lower Yangzi were the two centres of painting in the Five Dynasties. From the Five Dynasties to early Song, in spite of changes of ruler and dynasty, painters in these two areas, Teng reckoned, continued to paint according to priorities most likely grounded in local conditions rather than in some supposed meta-geography of supreme rulership. He repudiated attempts to discuss Five Dynasties painting and Song painting separately (Teng 1933a: 53). Likewise, Teng Gu proposed that paintings in the early years of the Tang dynasty, more or less following the style of painting during the Six Dynasties and Sui, should be associated primarily with this prior period (Teng 1933a: 17).

Also, Teng Gu disapproved of the complete separation of painting history into different subjects, such as landscape painting and figure painting. He suggested that a style developed simultaneously in all these topics rather than in isolated instances. Matching the development of landscape painting during the Five Dynasties and Song period, Teng Gu maintained that a similar transformation occurred in Buddhist and Daoist figure painting, flower-and-bird painting (*huaniao hua*), and ruled-line painting. Topical categorizations were irrelevant. He declared that in Tang and Song times Buddhist and Daoist figure painting gradually lost its religious function. Contemporary painting of plants and animals exhibited a kind of natural beauty. Twinned together, such tendencies supported a historical shift that Teng could rationalize through his early enthrallment with aestheticism. Teng believed that this development facilitated the welcome reception of these painting genres by the scholar painters apart from and beyond their insistent fixation with landscape painting. He concluded that Chinese painting generally became closer to the attainment of a literati spirit in which priority for the genre of landscape painting became redundant (Teng 1933a: 53, 60, 70). He admitted that landscape painting had been the mainstream of Chinese painting from the Five Dynasties, but he proposed equal historical attention for achievements in other subjects and genres from the same period.

Teng Gu's untimely death prevented him from completing the entire process of revision that he embarked on, but he remained influential. His contemporaries accepted his ideas. Zheng Wuchang compiled a textbook entitled *A History of Chinese Art* in 1935. The first chapter of this book was a combination of Teng Gu's comments on Herbert Read's ideas and an abridged version of Teng Gu's *A Brief History of Chinese Art* (1926). Similarly, Pan Tianshou used Teng Gu's periodization in his 1935 article "A Brief History of Chinese

Painting (Zhongguo huihua shilüe)”. Fu Baoshi, too, in 1940, agreed with Teng’s periodization of Chinese art (Fu 1986 [1940]: 287). Important art journals in Republican China published and reprinted Teng’s creative writings. For example, after the publication of “An Investigation into the History of Academic Style Painting and Literati Painting” (1931) in the *Academic Journal of Furen University*, editors of *Art Tri-monthly* (*Yishu xunkan*) realized the importance of this article, and gained Teng Gu’s permission to reprint this article in 1932 (Teng 1932c).

Teng Gu’s influence remains strong even today. Lothar Ledderose recalls that his own teachers in Germany are members of a generation whose age permits them to recall from memory that Teng Gu was an impressive art historian¹⁹. Today, a group of leading Chinese art historians has rediscovered Teng Gu and has determined to follow Teng Gu’s route to discuss the history of Chinese art. Chen Zhenlian, for example, has suggested writing a cultural history of Chinese calligraphy without using the name of any calligrapher (Chen 2002: 3), a proposition which is exactly what Teng Gu promoted. Fan Jingzhong has republished articles written by Teng Gu, which he considers to be valuable to current Chinese scholarship. Fan has singled out Teng Gu as the only Chinese art historian who mastered Western art historical studies, and entered an international academic world in the first half of the twentieth century. Fan plans to translate Teng’s German writings including Teng’s PhD thesis into Chinese. He agrees too that style analysis is a useful method with which to study the historical development of Chinese painting²⁰. Fan and his colleagues have started a project to adapt Western methods in the discussion of Chinese art history in a much wider scope. Not insignificantly, their starting point has been a serial publication of translations of the leading Western art historians’ original texts with which Teng Gu began his academic research.

¹⁹ Personal communication from Lothar Ledderose.

²⁰ Personal communication from Fang Jingzhong.