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The Matter of Chinese Painting, Case studies of 8th century murals

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Acknowledgements

When I started my study of Chinese language and culture, I was convinced that this was the best way to gain an understanding of Chinese painting technique, and more specifically, to understand its differences from western painting techniques. As long as I can remember, I have had this interest in the material side of the fine arts. Growing up, I spent as much time as I was allowed in the painting studio of my father. My interest in the materials and technique of painting was fed by the hours I spent posing for him and his friends. Aside from several dearly-valued portraits of my childhood, these posing sessions gave me an understanding of the ways in which the different painters used their materials and how they arrived at the results. In the 1970s a five-year study at the Amsterdam Rietveld Academy trained me as a professional in painting and the graphic arts. Much later, in 1991, I started to study Chinese Culture and Languages at Leiden University. This put me on my way to understanding more of the language and culture of China. In 1994 a full academic year in China gave me the opportunity to personally get acquainted with the culture.

I would like first of all to express my gratitude to my parents, who although they never had the chance to attend high school, valued education highly for me and my siblings. Through the years my parents followed my progress both in the field of art and of science with great interest. Sadly, my father died in 1996, only a couple of months before my graduation in 1997. He would have been very proud.

Sometimes, I have had the feeling that the more I learned about China, the less I understood. This gave me an extra drive to continue my quest to understand Chinese painting. When I set out on my PhD research the outcome was by no means certain, and without the cooperation and help of many people it could not have been accomplished. I want to thank all of them for the time and work I asked of them, and for the comments and conversations that helped me along the way. I thank Burchard Mansvelt Beck for the endless hours he invested our discussions over the years, for his help with the translation of classical Chinese texts and for critical reading and for the best coffee.

I would like to state clearly that any mistakes in this book are mine.

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